HUMAN RIGHTS FILM FESTIVALS

Activism in Context

SONIA M. TASCÓN

Human Rights Film Festivals

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Sonia M. Tascón
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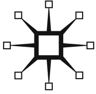

© Sonia M. Tascón 2015
Softcover reprint of the hardcover 1st edition 2015 978-1-137-45423-2

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First published 2015 by
PALGRAVE MACMILLAN

Palgrave Macmillan in the UK is an imprint of Macmillan Publishers Limited, registered in England, company number 785998, of Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire RG21 6XS.

Palgrave Macmillan in the US is a division of St Martin's Press LLC, 175 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10010.

Palgrave Macmillan is the global academic imprint of the above companies and has companies and representatives throughout the world.

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ISBN 978-1-349-49789-8 ISBN 978-1-137-45424-9 (eBook)
DOI 10.1057/9781137454249

This book is printed on paper suitable for recycling and made from fully managed and sustained forest sources. Logging, pulping and manufacturing processes are expected to conform to the environmental regulations of the country of origin.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Tascón, Sonia M.
Human rights film festivals : activism in context / Sonia M. Tascón, University of the Sunshine Coast, Australia.
pages cm
Includes bibliographical references and index.
Includes filmography.

1. Human rights in motion pictures. 2. Film festivals—History. 3. Film festivals—Argentina—History. 4. Film festivals—New York (State)—New York—History. I. Title.
PN1993.44.H83T38 2015
791.43′6581—dc23
2014028346

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

A catalog record for this book is available from the Library of Congress.

Dedicated to the loves of my life:
Jim Ife, my partner,
Trent and Isabel, my wonderful children
Tomás and Eugenia, my strong parents
And the extended Tascón tribe
This is yours

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Contents

List of Figures xi

Acknowledgments xii

Part I Framings **1**

Introduction **3**
Theoretical Frames 4
Programming 10
Book Structure 14

1 Human Rights: From Universalism to Internationalism **15**
A Brief Archaeology of Human Rights 17
Revolutions, Universalism, and Internationalism 17
Activism and Human Rights 27

2 Film Festivals: Activism and the Gaze **31**
The Humanitarian Gaze 34
Activist Film Festivals: Specta(c)tors 42
Closing Thoughts 47

Part II *Festival Internacional de Cine Derechos Humanos*, Buenos Aires **49**

Introduction **51**

3 Context 1997–2003: History and Politics **58**
Bringing Human Rights into the Public Domain: Dictatorship and Postdictatorship 58
Argentine Political Cinema and the Dictatorship 63
Neoliberalism and Postneoliberalism 68

4 The Festival 1997 to 2003: From the *Desaparecidos* to Neoliberalism **73**
A Broad Survey of Films: 1997–2003 73
Closing Thoughts 83

5 Context 2004–14: Postdictatorship, Postneoliberalism, and New Argentine Cinema **85**
The Festival and the Nation 85
New Argentine Cinema and "the Political" 88
Neoliberalism, Indigenous Peoples, and Migration 95
Closing Thoughts 100

6 The Festival 2004–14: The "Other" and Cosmopolitan Visions **102**
Broad Survey of Films 2004–14 102
Toward a Cosmopolitan Vision: Environment and Identity 108

Conclusion: Part II **117**

Part III Human Rights Watch International Film Festival, New York **123**

Introduction **125**

7 Context: From the Cold War to *The Yes Men* **132**
Helsinki Watch to Human Rights Watch (and) the International Film Festival: 1975–88 132
The Yes Men 138
Films, Truth, and Human Rights Ethics 140
HRWIFF and Independent Political Cinemas of the United States 144

8 The Festival: Presences: Eastern Europe, the Middle East, and the United States **148**
Eastern Europe 148
The Middle East 150
The United States 155

9 Context: From Latin America to Political Documentary in the United States **164**
Human Rights in the Time of Dictators 164
The Question of Audiences and the Humanitarian Gaze 170
"The Place of Documentary in the Current American Political Climate" 172

10 The Festival: Absence: Latin America **177**
The Films from/about Latin America: 1995–97; 2001–13 177
Environmental Films from/about Latin America 183
Costa-Gavras and Pamela Yates at the HRWIFF: Representing Human Rights 186
Granito: Gazing Out or In? 189

Conclusion: Part III **195**

Conclusions **203**
Films and Human Rights 203
Film Festivals, Audiences, and Human Rights 208
Universalism and Film Festivals 214

Notes 217

Bibliography 221

Film Index (by Film Title) 239

Index 243

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List of Figures

3.1 Members of the Madres de Plaza de Mayo attend the 15th Festival de Cine de Derechos Humanos in 2014. 62
3.2 Active discussions postscreening are common and encouraged at most HRFFs. 68

Acknowledgments

A book as broad ranging as this, covering histories and programming schedules of film festivals across two cities, has necessarily involved many other people. The content, which is to say, the new material in the book, could only come to light as the result of a research opportunity and support provided by Monash University. To Associate Professor Deane Williams, who first saw the potential of this work, I will be eternally grateful. But Drs Belinda Smaill and Therese Davis deserve an equal amount of gratitude for providing insightful feedback and for reading the number of drafts I produced.

It is not surprising that I ended up doing fairly close to what I had set out to do, but we often do these things circuitously, enjoying other enticing sights before settling on that which might yield something of significance. In those circuitous routes I have met and had influences from many people. Dr Susan Young had an immense influence on my past work on race and postcolonial issues, and much of that is still here. Dr Mehita Iqani, from Witwatersrand University, South Africa, introduced me to the work of Lilie Chouliaraki, whose ideas were central to what I developed around the humanitarian gaze. Evelyn Tadros and Naz Mantoo, who organized the first Australian Human Rights Arts and Film Festival, of which I was a part in 2007, were key in making my knowledge "from inside" possible.

As I visited the two festivals, I was helped by extremely generous individuals. For Buenos Aires, I am extremely grateful to Florencia Santucho, Julio Santucho, Silvina Baviacchi, and Diana Tancredi for their generous time and access to written and visual material. The images they made available from their festival have made this book richer. Scholars who so generously made time for me, met with me in cafes for long chats, need to be gratefully acknowledged also. Professor Mariano Mestman of Buenos Aires University helped me in my thinking through of Argentine political cinema. Dr Pablo Piedras, also from Buenos Aires University, met with me and similarly shared ideas on political cinema. Dr Gerardo Halpern, from the same university, guided me in my understanding of recent race and migration changes, and Alejandra Oberti shared her ideas about the current state of human rights in Argentina. For New York, my understanding was enhanced by generous

conversations with festival staff members John Biaggi, Andrea Holley, and Jennifer Nedbalsky, as well as past organizers Marina Kaufman and Bruni Burres. Without them the work on the festival could not have gained depth. I also want to thank from the bottom of my heart colleague (soon-to-be-Dr) Sean McQueen. His knowledge and discussions on film were astonishing; they gave me a depth of understanding of the field that I would not otherwise have. May the force continue with you, Sean.

I would also like to acknowledge the Curtin University Human Rights Centre for Education for providing me with an academic home, as well as a set of colleagues whose commitment to human rights and social justice for the vulnerable is truly inspirational. I would also thank the Social Work programme in the University of the Sunshine Coast for believing that my cross-disciplinary work can make a difference to them.

On a personal level, I could not do what I do without the love of my family and encouragement of friends. The joining of human rights and cinema comes directly from my mother, Eugenia, who studied law, and my father, Tomás, who could talk about films in his sleep. My brothers, Felipe, Queño, Manolo, and Alfredo, cared for, protected, and teased me all in that order, and taught me to stand up for others. My children, Trent and Isabel, gave me the reason to care. Lastly, and by no means least, is my partner, Jim Ife, whose love and professional support is writ large in this book; he has been inspiration, mentor, and coordinator of my life while finishing this. He also edited this work substantially, and without his "grammar Nazi" approach, the reader might have been totally confused.

Part I

Framings

Introduction[1]

This book sets out to consider how human rights, films, and film festivals have come together. This will be done specifically in relation to two human rights film festivals, in Buenos Aires and New York. I took on this venture from a purely personal interest, but nothing is ever just personal. It was also a professional interest, as an academic who was teaching both human rights philosophy and media theory at Curtin University in Australia, and at the same time becoming interested in films for activism. When I decided, in 2007, to set up a human rights film festival in Perth, Western Australia, I became involved with a team from Melbourne who had already been organizing this for a year or so. I entered the inside of the whale as it were, and came to realize that establishing a film festival was no easy task. The two women on whose coattails I rode, had done much of the hard work of organizing this from the other side of the country. For this book, I ended up deciding not to focus on the very festival of which I had been a part, for similar reasons to those that led Amnesty International to initially force activists to focus on other people outside their own country: being too close to the material, and personally invested in it, you lose the capacity to say some things (because you do not notice them or you have a direct interest in how and what you say). Also, I wanted to see how others do it, and I could not do justice to the two other festivals I chose by also including the Australian festival. I was especially interested in viewing the history and processes of the first human rights film festival worldwide (the New York Human Rights Watch International Film Festival founded in 1988), and another not from the affluent world, but whose language I could understand. That ended up being the Festival Internacional de Cine de Derechos Humanos (International Human Rights Film Festival), founded in 1997 in Buenos Aires. The decision to choose a film festival that was not part of the affluent world came from questions that originated from my background as a hyphenated hybrid of sorts, living in Australia as an immigrant from Chile and also as an academic teaching media theory and human rights, with a cultural studies/social work background. These foci had led me to develop theoretical and practical orientations toward questions of race, and I began to have vague

thoughts about representation and politics, and the politics of representation. This became merged with longer-standing concerns about the implicatedness of human rights in power relationships that formed and circulated at a global level. I was also interested in how they may be used to establish particular worldviews through a system that represented the human as universal (i.e., human rights), but could not help but have fissures in its foundations that were filled in with materials of its time.

Theoretical Frames

The questions about representation and global power relations turned into questions about the use of films to represent certain worldviews and ideologies, and how human rights may be implicated in a system of knowledge that, through being aligned with powerful political forces, has imposed a certain view of "human" on the rest of humanity. A Foucauldian perspective of power-knowledge seemed to be at the heart of the questions I had developed. That theoretical frame focuses on underlying epistemological questions about how we make knowledge; how we do so by a dual process of filtering out, or making some things absent, while at the same time enhancing, or giving presence to, others. But this perspective also highlights power as a set of forces that makes some knowledge more valid than others, and which then influences what we do. This enables certain things to be said (or screened) and others to be left out, according to the rules of the system, many of which are negotiated differently with time and by different people. These rules are intended to preserve a certain relational network, within which are hierarchies that give more visibility and dominance to certain knowledges and people as they come to be invested in these knowledges, and that make others invisible or less visible. Such an approach considers the "already-said," and the "never-said" (Foucault 1972), which bring something into being as a piece of knowledge and define the boundaries of what may be considered knowledge within them. These pieces of knowledge are reproduced through power relationships that permit and prohibit utterances and practices, and are subject to surveillance and control through institutions (Foucault 1979). For human rights, two terms become the basis of the discourse: human and rights. The first is a heavily loaded idea, on which much philosophical and other scholarly attention has been fixed, but for human rights "the human" can largely be said to be the humanist subject of the Enlightenment (Ife 2010). That subject was brought into being as a set of rights, which in modern times has been configured as legal claims, and has come to be housed in the

peak institution of the United Nations (UN). As films were introduced into this discourse, new ways of knowing were given entry. This produces tensions that the discourse must resolve, either through rejection of the new knowledge, subsumption, or modification. The language of the visual is a form of communication that also follows a particular logic, one that "constrains—but also enables—writing, speaking and thinking within . . . specific historical limits" (McHoul and Grace 1993, 31). I would add "looking" to that quote. As human rights and films come together they "come to mean, [and] become intelligible" (Chouliaraki 2004, 185) to a viewer concerned about humanitarian issues.

By bringing together two systems of meaning—human rights and the visual—but more specifically as the visual has been constructed through films, they come to mean something new, but are also an extension of each of these ways of writing, speaking, and seeing the world. As films of a certain kind are brought together to represent human rights, they are being asked to make meaning in a particular way, in a manner that in another context—that is, not human rights—would produce different meanings. This is further enhanced when they are positioned in a film festival. To add to that complexity, the histories of each of these three elements—human rights, films, and film festivals—bring their own set of developments, interrogations, orientations, and prestanding demands; what has gone before cannot help but influence how this new territory is being built. The turn to some of the histories involved, which the reader will find in this book, is also informed by a Foucauldian approach, which is a search for origins in knowledge formation. Michel Foucault would call this archaeology of knowledge (1972). Although, of course, what constitutes an origin is always uncertain, in this study three distinct areas are easily recognizable: human rights, films, and film festivals.

Human Rights

For human rights, I realized that much of its discursive history is heavily weighted as a history of the West, as European and American struggles to loosen the grips of kingly power. My definition of the originary moment of their full modern expression, recognizable in the institutionalized form that they now have, goes as far back as the American and French Revolutions. Why I do so is explained in chapter 1, so I will not say anymore here. Those origins, which essentially were revolutionary moments, established human rights discursively as a search for the manifestation of "being human" in political activities that were asserting forms of freedom from authoritarian power. This can help

explain the initial and contemporary focus on civil and political rights that I discuss further below. In their present-day shape, however, as they developed out of events from World War II, human rights became a way of reestablishing, or conserving, an old order, a turn away from the totalitarianism of fascism and communism, and distinct from what had taken place with the two revolutions. Their discursive power was intensified after that war through the use of a language that was to give them greater validity: the legal. These two key discursive developments—the attention given to civil and political events, and legal language—have been further overlaid by a principle that shows these orientations to be "natural" by being universal.

The concept of universality, an idea that humanity was one, endorsed the kinds of rights that would be drawn up as transferable across geographical and cultural differences, to provide a framework for claiming to be human. The idealized, abstracted subject of universality in fact represented no one (or perhaps a reduced few), while attempting to represent everyone, and needed to be reflected in its practical manifestation through contextualized structures such as the nation-state. This reduced the claim of universality concerning these rights considerably. The most extensive reach they have managed, therefore, is to be "internationalist," or to enter into other subjectivities as they are configured and regulated through the cultural, social, and political structures of the nation. Even while we may consider new forms of multiple subjectivities in the age of increased travel and communications, human rights are conceived as embedded in their practice through the nation-state. Universality, however, becomes an idealized orientation, which formulates as a discursive mandate to "look out" beyond our own borders of belonging. As universality is an organizing principle, which is manifest as an internationalization, it became one of the frames through which I looked at the festivals: to discover the degree to which the internationalizing impulse of human rights influences festival programming, as a "looking out." But the degree to which the looking out has to be composed through a viewer who is invested in a set of locally arranged looking relations, or viewing traditions, it ends up manifesting as a looking out that may end up being a looking in, instead. I consider this through context chapters that take into account local events to more fully understand how the looking out is being configured. Although the looking out has dimensions of looking in, I do not use the term "looking in" for this phenomenon, but for an actual orientation of looking at others beyond each festival's own national borders (see more on this below).

The "looking out" that human rights seeks is, in terms of images, also embroiled in a discursive regime, and this has been negotiated through a set of looking relations that I have called the humanitarian gaze. This way of looking is organized by a relationship of unequal power premised on humanitarianism, a discourse that shows some to be (persistent) victims, and others as aiding them. This then predisposes the privileged that aid them to seek "others" as figures of pity or, at best, as fighters to be "more like us." But it will also seek to find an effective self projected on screen. I discuss this more fully in chapter 2.

Films

As films are brought together in a film festival, elements of their discursive frame are brought to bear. As many of the films that appear in a human rights film festival (referred to hereafter as HRFF) are documentaries, questions arise immediately as to why this may be so. Documentary films are perceived as having a closer relationship to the reality of "the protagonist of life" (Getino and Solanas 1969), and film scholars have pondered this question substantially, some through political frames, and others through phenomenological approaches. I will include these discussions throughout the book as the need arises. Another set of questions that emerges from the use of films and documentaries has to do with truth telling. As films are being included as part of the activist repertoire of human rights, they are imbricated within the discursive regime of human rights, and expected to embody similar truth-telling regimes. As I discuss in chapter 1, traditionally this regime has been formulated by legal language and knowledge. Legal knowledges' truth regimes are highly specific, and follow an evidentiary and testimonial logic, and an adversarial process that is intended to produce a right/wrong, or guilty/innocent reply, which films only partially fulfill. As cultural artifacts and creative texts, films align closer to the messiness of everyday life, and do not follow those principles for truth telling, even within documentary films. This does not mean that they lie, but rather that they reveal for us aspects of a story that will be hidden by other forms of evidence gathering, and these must be seen as informing us (often by complicating the question and interrogating us rather than providing answers) and not implicating us in a final judgment. I would go as far as to suggest that although truth telling within legal processes appears to tell *the* truth, it only tells *a* truth, and that all we do is storied, even in telling the "truth" in a legal court. That is, although we accept certain forms of truth, it is only so because we have accepted the frameworks (the story or discourse) under which truth may be told. The legal framework has been

formulated through a long historical battle to understand the claims of opposing parties and to divest that system from the partisan interests of one person, and this is what has resulted. But these are debates best left to law philosophers.

Films act for different reasons. And films, I contend, have a responsibility. Walter Benjamin, writing about films in the early twentieth century said that they open up vistas previously unseen. I provide a lengthy passage from his writings because it is one of the most lyrical descriptions of film I have ever read:

> By close-ups of the things around us, by focusing on hidden details of familiar objects, by exploring common place milieus under the ingenious guidance of the camera, the film, on the one hand, extends our comprehension of the necessities which rule our lives; on the other hand, it manages to assure us of an immense and unexpected field of action. Our taverns and our metropolitan streets, our offices and furnished rooms, our railroad stations and our factories appeared to have us locked up hopelessly. Then came the film and burst this prison-world asunder by the dynamite of the tenth of a second, so that now, in the midst of its far-flung ruins and debris, we calmly and adventurously go traveling. (1936)

Film, he suggests lets us see our world anew and differently, but also to see parts of that world we never noticed before. Because they change our perceptions of things and direct our attention toward newness that has an effect on us, they have a responsibility. Different filmmaking traditions will formulate this responsibility variously, in relation to how films (should) relate to their viewers. For example, Third Cinema, as I will cover more extensively in Section I particularly, suggests that films' very form has a responsibility to engage the viewer in dialogue. To this end, *La Hora De Los Hornos/The Hour of the Furnaces* (Getino and Solanas 1969) was made as a four-hour film divided by distinct sections intended to permit the cessation of viewing for reflection and discussion. Costa-Gavras questioned the accepted reliance by political filmmakers on the documentary, and the tendency of the radical political tradition to focus on structural issues and not personal stories. His oeuvre, produced from the 1970s to today, has been called the fictionalization of politics and a way of engaging the viewer on political issues in a manner not seen in any explicit way before him. The question of the political and ethical dimensions of film is a complex one, and I cover some of that in later chapters, so will not say much here except to note the important

suggestion by some scholars that all film is political (Cineaste Eds. 2011b). In Argentina, this topic became a particularly significant one as its national cinema was virtually annihilated by the dictatorship of 1976, and this affected mostly the nation's ability to tell its own political stories. As its political cinema had been encased within its national cinema, it was that strand of cinema that was most affected, and this led to some soul searching for postdictatorship film scholars as to the nature of the political in films. As to films' ethical responsibility, Lisa Downing and Libby Saxton in *Film and Ethics* (2010) propose that all films are infused with ethics. Films, they state, are constructed within a moral framework, deploying notions of virtue both to unfold and resolve the narrative. Films' ethical impulse is not an issue to which I give extensive or explicit attention, as others have done this better than myself (Downing and Saxton 2010; Hesford 2011), even in relation to human rights visual material. Insofar as films will always be imbricated within the world of what Third Cinema called "the protagonist of life" (1969), or people, these politico-ethical questions will continue to be asked of them.

Film Festivals

It is when films are asked to serve human rights purposes that they become embroiled in a specific set of demands, some political, some ethical. While they may be asked to illustrate something about the human condition that coincides with the rights discourse, they are also making changes to that discourse by extending its frame. Some of this book is about that. But it is mostly about film festivals, as it is when films are located for screening within a film festival that they gain the layer of complexity that I am focusing on here. Film festivals, I argue, are adding an extra level to the discursive complexity, because these sites of exhibition have a history and development of their own. Film festivals originated in Europe in the first third of the twentieth century to subvert the dominance of Hollywood and provide alternative exhibition spaces for fledgling national cinemas. In that way they have been places of organized unruliness. In recent times, they have been organized by a different discursive principle, that of cinephilia, which places newness, and film as an art form for its own sake, at its center. They have also become a means to put a nation or city on display rather than just its national cinema per se. As I will discuss more fully in chapter 2, film festivals continue to be spaces of locatedness, even if they screen cinemas from all over the globe. Their location has to be noticed because it is where much of their audiences originate. HRFFs have yet to gain the international

attention of other world-renowned film festivals, and so their audiences largely come from within the city/nation that hosts them. These factors have produced an orientation that is about the local in some way, and to some degree the display of creative newness.

All of these elements produce tensions as human rights, films, and film festivals come together, and it will be the intention of this book to outline some of the strains and also some of the possibilities, this provides. In order to do this, I decided to focus on programming.

Programming

In order to grasp how the three discursive elements may be playing out in the two festival case studies that follow, I focus on programming. Programming makes something present, but always through leaving other things out. It is an active moment of decision-making for the festivals as they select what is to be included. What is there, what is included, provides clues as to how organizers have filtered the various demands in order to both appeal to and direct their audiences. What is included is also "the said" of Foucauldian theory. Audiences are, of course, another demand on festivals. They are not an explicit focus of this book, although I will provide some observations related to features of audiences that affect programming. The only element of audience reception to which I give more sustained attention has to do with how this may have been intersected by a preexisting gaze, a discursive formation that I call the humanitarian gaze, and which other scholars have covered under the term "distant suffering" (see chapter 2).

Programming, or film selection, makes manifest that which festival organizers deem to be of significance. In this way they are making visible a particular knowledge-power configuration, and the films are the knowledge texts the organizers wished their audiences to see as illustrative of human rights. Programming is, therefore, also a form of surveillance, a subordination of each film as knowledge text to something beyond each one. Each film is also capable of subverting that surveillance through an inescapable excess that cannot be controlled by programmers. Films, as creative texts, are cultural products that carry a kind of aesthetic surplus within them. That is, films are created as much to story our lives as to delight our sight with views unseen, as Walter Benjamin said, and in this can reflect for us elements of a social order, but can also represent its undoing. And so they have a heightened possibility to undo established order as well as to reproduce it. Programming in a HRFF is intended to conform to something bigger, namely human rights, and

this always bounds film selections. In discussing the New York festival, I explore how this was heavily influenced by the parent organization of Human Rights Watch (hereafter referred to as HRW), and how the programming mirrors HRW's work through its focus on others outside the United States and its emphasis on civil and political rights rather than economic, social, and cultural rights. But the festival also makes selections outside these boundaries and that, I suggest, is influenced by other demands. I explore how the discourse of human rights in Buenos Aires came to be of significance in the Argentine public domain historically, in order to understand the ways in which programming was influenced by that history. There I found an almost exclusive association between human rights and the activities of the dictatorship of 1976–83, which led to a corresponding set of programming decisions. But even in that there were other considerations and these emerged from, I suggest, cinematic considerations and those that film festivals themselves pose.

"Looking out-Looking in"

Programming is a form of discursive gatekeeping. As I considered programming patterns, I inserted another analytical dimension. This was related to the geographical direction in which the films turned. I called this the "looking out-looking in" dichotomy. This subcategorization is the "power" dimension of the power-knowledge Foucauldian theoretical frame I have used. The human rights' idea(l) of universality has produced a "looking out," which may be deemed a surveillance mechanism in order to ensure everyone (humanity) fulfills the features of being human, or it can be seen as an attempt to understand others and their stories, and lend a helping hand where needed. Which of these two impulses is present, can be seen not only in the sorts of stories used to represent others but also in how that looking out is implicitly fulfilling local/domestic needs rather than those of the people being represented. That is, whether the stories portray strength and agency in carrying out solutions as the people living the problems see them, thus framing the supplication of the viewer as framed by solidarity, or, whether the people are shown as overwhelmed by their problems, thereby triggering a helping relationship entirely bound by viewers' ability to write themselves onto the people and their problems. Films that were about the places/nations in which the festival was located were also of significance in this analytical frame. How these films framed their "own," as it were, is a signal of the relationship of that nation/place to others, and to human rights. This was the "looking in" dimension, and these films stand in direct relation to those that are "looking out" because they represent

those who are entitled to have efficacy and strength and agency, and who those who are weakened.

I devised different systems for categorizing the programming of each festival, attempting to capture the way in which each performed the act of cataloguing films. In Buenos Aires, the website contained all of its archival programming as it had been thematically organized; New York did not have that available, other than in a 1997 "remnant" website, where for that one year, films were divided into thematic "chapters." That act, in which films are placed together under one theme, is discursively significant because it diminishes difference between the films and imagines a similarity between them that may not be there. In that way, films are made to function differently and to direct their viewer's understandings of the films by predisposing them. Thematic divisions can be a means by which to acquiesce to the prevailing discourse, a reorganization performed through that dominant way of looking, and hence a form of discursive surveillance. This was apparent for Buenos Aires, where thematic sections changed from its inception in 1997 to 2004, from filmic categories (such as *Feature Films* and *Experimental Films*) to sociopolitical categories (such as *Migration* or *Dictatorship*), and mirror more closely the organization of the United Nations. I used their own thematic categories as further points for analysis for that festival, but this way of organizing the festival was not seen in New York, other than for 1997 and 2013.

The archival material for the New York festival was more difficult to obtain, and I managed to find film programming dating back to 2001, although the website where this was located disappeared in 2013, so I could not provide the online reference point. The reader will have to trust me on that material. The festival's online website provides material from 2009 to the present, and I did find a remnant website in HRW's online material, where films from 1995–97 were included, but I found this late in my research. When asked, festival staff did not have any way of verifying the pre-2009 material. Until 2013, the New York festival does not appear to have been organized thematically, so I conceived of an analytical frame of "absences-presences" that would enable me to consider how "looking in-looking out" was occurring. Here I was more interested in noting who was being looked at and what patterns this created. Given that much of HRW's work has concentrated on others outside the United States, and mostly in Africa, Asia, Middle East, Latin America, and Eastern Europe, while largely ignoring Western Europe, North America, and Australia, I was intrigued to see what pattern of watching was followed by the festival.

The act of "watching others" on film is, of course, of a different nature than the monitoring of nations that HRW does. The monitoring of political situations is transformed into the viewing of people and issues assembled as narratives, and hence appears to transfer the meaning of watching from the strictly political realm to a purely cultural activity. Watching others is, however, always a political activity because of the relative power relation between watched and watcher. To have permission to watch in the sense of monitoring, a surveillance of their policies, state practices, and civil activities, and to analyze and make others accountable based on that watching is to be in a position of relative privilege. To have the permission to watch others' lives unfold on screen, to enter into their pains and troubles, and to be given entry into that as a means of engaging one's assistance is also to be in a position of relative privilege. It acknowledges the relative disparity between monitor/watcher and also suggests that they have permission to apply to that situation their own frameworks for making meaning. This is the power/knowledge dimension of watching.

Methods

The websites for each festival provided the raw programming material for the analysis. These online archival sites also included self-descriptions of the festivals, which I used as discursive signals of the way in which each festival saw itself. What is placed online acts as a public statement of historical significance and is sanctioned by people acting under the guidance of the prevailing discourse(s). For each festival, other documentation also helped me understand the ways in which programmers conceived their work and their relationship to human rights. For New York, the parent organization's (HRW) website produced a range of material, the most useful of which were the Annual Reports, especially as some of these contained sections on the festival. For Buenos Aires, I also used a monograph published in 2007 on the tenth anniversary of the founding of the festival (Sel 2007b). I also held conversations with key organizers in each festival, as well as with others in the communities that surrounded them. In New York, I spoke to the three permanent staff members, in addition to one key organizing member from the past, Marina Kauffman, and one of the early festival directors, Bruni Burres. In Buenos Aires, I spoke to the two festival directors, father and daughter, and one of the then-current festival organizers. All of their comments added a layer of local wisdom that could not be obtained from a simple consideration of the programming schedules. I do not provide direct quotes from these people, as

their observations were not intended to be used as the data, but as guiding conversations.

Book Structure

The book has been organized in three parts, and one of the parts into two sections. The first part (chapters 1 and 2) contains the introductory ideas, which I have split into the two prevailing discourses of human rights and film festivals, and they also contain a discussion on the humanitarian gaze. The second part contains the chapters covering the Festival Internacional de Cine Derechos Humanos in Buenos Aires (an introduction and conclusion, and chapters 3 to 6). The third part contains the chapters covering the Human Rights Watch International Film Festival in New York (introduction and conclusion, and chapters 7 to 10). The book will also contain a concluding chapter, in which I draw the various threads together. Although I call them case studies, the festivals were more accurately instigators and originators of the thinking that evolved here, rather than places where I entered with a set of scholarly reading and fixed preconceptions in order to “find” certain things. In methodological scholarship, my study would have been classified as having an Emergent Design (Denzin and Lincoln 2011), which attempts to enter the field with as few predetermined ideas as possible (although only ever partially achieved), and to engage with the events that confront us on their own terms. Although we are not empty vessels when we approach an activity, we can give credence to the frames within which those whom we have the privilege to observe are functioning. I tried to do this as much as I could, acknowledging that I am an academic with my own set of lenses, biases, and analytical frames.

The festivals were the ground on which I gathered all my material and thus kept this work “grounded.” In the generosity of spirit with which the people involved gave their time and information, I hope that I have given them a fair representation and developed some ideas that can support and enhance the future work of these important and worthwhile ventures.

1
Human Rights: From Universalism to Internationalism

In 2007, students of human rights and I set up the first Human Rights Arts and Film Festival in Perth, Western Australia. This was to be an arm of a festival that had been planned and organized by two other women in Melbourne, on the other side of Australia, one a Law student, the other a Creative Industries student; it was our inaugural run. I had been teaching media theory to undergraduate students, and human rights philosophy to Master's-level students interested in films as a form of activism, after being involved in Amnesty International and activism around refugees. As we organized this foray into the coupling of films and human rights activism in my (then) home city, I became aware of the lack of awareness from each side about the other: human rights students went to the cinema to watch films, some of which were on social issues, but viewed them unproblematically as stories of fact; some film/media students were interested in social issues and justice, but knew almost nothing about human rights and what this meant. The films we screened that year were few, but one troubled me deeply (I discuss this film in the following chapter). That film screening started me on this path, and it has led to the development of the idea of the humanitarian gaze, which I discuss in the following chapter.

HRRFs appeal to a type of audience, some of whose viewing traditions will have intersections with that gaze, as this refers to a way of looking at troubled others that is also configured through a set of geopolitical relations. HRFFs are primarily organized by the discourse of human rights, one that has had a long history, mostly from within the Western tradition. Human rights "speak" social justice in a particular way, some of which may not be "listenable" by non-Western traditions, or those invested in legal knowledges. The first became apparent to me when I saw a map in the Human Rights Film Network that showed most HRFFs clustered in Western Europe (HRFN 2013). The relatively few HRFFs in

Latin America, and also Africa and Asia, suggest that this is a discourse that is not useful/familiar/recognizable, for activism or political/social change in all contexts. That set me asking questions about human rights as a discursive mechanism that may be trying to forge connections across borders, but that also operates through a fairly specific moral and political perspective. As human rights are not embraced by those very places where more monitoring of human rights violations takes place, this did not suggest to me that these places are deficient of a moral or political frame, but rather that the particular language being applied for these activities may not make sense in those contexts.

In this chapter I want to understand why some of the origins of that language may have made them foreign to many people. But I also want to appreciate how this ethicopolitical vision called human rights (McLagan 2003) has begun to expand into non-Western regions of the world, and is being used to create film festivals. As I studied one of these sites, in the shape of the Buenos Aires HRFF, I wanted to comprehend in what manner this discourse has been applied, and what this might suggest about the claims of human rights. What I noticed is that although human rights have a claim of universality, this is always made sense of through local perspectives, even if we put aside the fact that films and film festivals have a kind of "localizing" effect of their own (see chapter 2). That is, film audiences watching films on social issues, even when they are about others' troubles, do so from the perspective of their own lives, as the "anchor." Film festivals are sites that locate audiences that invest them in the place both by the nature of film festivals and by exhibiting in a material locality. I will have more to say about this in the following chapter.

Human rights themselves, however, are still deeply invested and embedded in the nation-state, as historically this is from whence they emerged as claims, and in contemporary times where they were made to reside. This intersects unevenly and problematically with newer forms of cosmopolitan belonging, but also with the discourse's founding principle of universality. Universality ends up becoming a type of -ism, or universalism: a belief that it is possible to transgress national borders, while already undermining itself by needing some form of locality to make sense of it. The programming at the festivals illustrates this superbly: screening decisions made in order to "hook" certain audiences, drawing attention to troubled others beyond their borders, while always mediated by biases and relationships forged from within a locality or a set of localities.

In this chapter I discuss one of the two discourses that came together as HRFFs appeared on the global scene in 1988, namely human rights.

Human rights are part of a discursive framework, that is, a system of telling and interpreting that follows a set of rules, or logic. In this chapter, I am largely concerned with the discourse and idea(l) of human rights, but also begin to point to how the idea of human rights works with dominant ways of viewing humanitarian-type images. That is, I examine how the discourse, through its dominant filters, has positioned some to watch, and others to be watched, as a form of surveillance. In order to see this phenomenon more fully, I trace some of the key discursive elements as they emerged historically. The two that I select as most significant are universalism and legalism, and I trace them through some of the written documentary history of the American and the French Revolutions. Each has imagined human rights in a manner that then filters certain events and actions as problematic, while making others invisible for watching or monitoring. Through these historical events, each discourse has become an accumulation of meanings for, and a reflection of, those who have had the most intimate role in constructing them. And yet human rights are also being remade as others take them up and perform them differently.

A Brief Archaeology of Human Rights

Human rights have a history. Much, if not all, of what may be considered today "human rights" emerged from Western Europe and what is now the United States, although there are some claims that non-Western religious and philosophical traditions also embody elements of what can be called human rights (Hayden 2001; Ishay 2007, 2008). It has been through a long series of conflicts and resolutions that human rights have been forged in their modern shape. Named among these are the Cyrus Tablets (UHR 2014a), and more often the English Magna Carta (Bradley 2001). It is, however, two revolutions that provided their modern flavor: one taking place in the "new colonies" of the United States of America, from 1775, and the other in France soon after, in 1789. As these two sets of events have received substantial attention, in what follows I will only focus on the two key discursive elements that emerge from that time, which have had a determining influence in the future shape of human rights: universalism and legalism.

Revolutions, Universalism, and Internationalism

Human rights as a language were given shape by a lengthy historical trajectory (Ishay 2008), but their modern shape has been achieved more

recently (Douzinas 2000). In their contemporary form human rights realistically only came into being after the Second World War, when the idea(l) of a universal humanity could come into fully imagined fruition. That idea(l) on which human rights are founded, has had a much longer gestation, however. I take the American Revolution (1775–83), the Declaration of Independence (1776), and the US Bill of Rights (1789); and the French Revolution (1789) and its Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen (1793) as focal points of their articulation, if not actual points of origin. This is because it is not until the basic principles of human rights were included within key nation-building documents with the capacity to be institutionalized that they had the power to influence both policies and hearts. That is, it is not until human rights could be imagined as forming the very backbone of, and incorporated into, the mythologies of nations that they could reach further than as laws applicable only to some classes of people. So, although some consider the English 1215 Magna Carta and British 1689 Bill of Rights as part of the articulation of human rights, these two documents sought to limit the powers of the sovereign and did not outline basic rights of all subjects, other than as rights of the citizen to be represented by Parliament against the Crown. For those reasons, these were not yet principles that could compel entire nations' imaginations, much less international visions, to define themselves through a set of universal(ized) principles. They remained encased within the purview of rulers of one nation and their realms of power.

It is not until the American and French Revolutions that two documents appear, which might be said to introduce notions of a universalized humanity. The US Bill of Rights of 1789 and France's Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen of 1793 each introduced the two features that were to remain in their modern incantations: universality and legal enforcement. These two elements began to map out a different landscape, one that had a broader reach than that gained by the Magna Carta, and into the realms of the national imaginary, accessible to a populace as mythological ideals. However, they retained some of their abstractions from that population by not being practicable in their quotidian lives, and were held within the understanding and practice of an elite expertise, namely legal practitioners. At this point it is useful to separate these two ideas, universalism and legalism, to discuss them further. Although it is more to the ideal of universality that I will continue to speak in future chapters, "the legal" as a language is also important to consider because it is one that formulates much of the emphasis on civil and political rights that has become the contemporary focus of "human rights."

Universalism

> [N]o universal is freed from its contamination by the particular contexts from which it emerges and in which it travels. (Butler 2000, 40)

The most powerful states, through the human rights discourse, made their priorities the universal concern of others. (Douzinas, 2001, 185)
The US Declaration of Independence includes the now-famous phrase, noted as one of the earliest articulations of human rights,

> We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.

Lynn Hunt suggests that "human rights require three interlocking qualities: rights must be *natural* (inherent in human beings); *equal* (the same for everyone), and; *universal* (applicable everywhere)" (2007, 20). The Declaration of Independence makes claim to all three of these. Although, clearly, each is reliant on the other, and all rely on a notion that there is such a thing as a universal humanity, and that claims can be made by anyone defined as "human," I want to focus on the ideal of "universality" because this principle, above the others, represents the way in which contemporary human rights have come to be seen as applicable to everyone, everywhere (Donnelly 2007). The claim that there is such a thing as a universal humanity has an intuitive appeal, as well as some basis in biology: it enables us to recognize all peoples across the globe as "human," whether they be racially, geographically, or culturally distant, and thus to imagine a bond. The sustenance of such a foundational statement begins to break down quite quickly beyond its abstracted idealization, however. As Judith Butler mentions, even at the point where the claim is made, it cannot stand outside a given language and cultural context:

> The claim to universality always takes place in a given syntax, through a certain set of cultural conventions in a recognizable venue. Indeed the claim cannot be made without the claim being recognized as a claim. (2000, 35)

That is, in order to speak a claim of being human, that act must already be subsumed within a system of knowing, a language and culture that mediate both the idea being conveyed and its recognizability as such.

The best illustration of this is through the context in which the very idea of "universal" emerges. If we take the above-quoted phrase from the US Declaration of Independence as declarative of a particular stance beginning to be taken, in the Western world at least, *and* as formative of it, universality is already compromised by being grounded in a set of struggles that cannot be abstracted outside "a particular people" (Hunt op. cit.). Universality must, in this case, be read in light of the events immediately preceding it: a war of independence. It is, in that context, a defense, a validation, and a punctuation of that rebellion, and not a claim that can include everyone. In the words "all men"—even if one reads them generously to include women, children, and people of color, which they most clearly did not—there is an appeal to a universal (e) quality that is, in fact, an attempt to validate a revolutionary act; without that claim the action would have simply been treason. An established order of ruling was being overturned, a wresting of power that would have, had the rebels been unsuccessful, been written otherwise.

The revolution and its subsequent success toppled this order and would have resulted in disquiet about what was to replace it, but also about what was to validate it so that it was not tainted with criminality, or repeated against the successful revolutionaries. I would suggest that the above statement is inscribed with such anxiety, and its universality a refuge from the act of rebellion by encasing it as a natural and God-given aspect of being-in-the-condition-of-human. The universality expressed is riven with such apprehensions, as is the appeal to equality, and a means to justify a *particular* act as a *generalized* principle. The justification of the act of independence as the natural state of being human (being equal) did not occur in order to then conceive of all human beings as equal, because not "all men" were included. Blacks, Indigenous peoples, children, criminals, and other distinctions of "men" were not envisaged in such a term. Although in intent the term "equality" was to be the foundation for the reasons the revolution occurred, it could not, however, be a universal equality; "all men" was always to be qualified. Equality was to be a new principle, under a new regime of knowledge, where human rationality was to play a more central role than before (Douzinas 2001; Headley 2008). But it could not, in fact, be a principle that would be "universally" practicable. As it replaced an older epistemological order, one that had centered on mystical forces of religion, it gained some of the same mystique through being a sublime abstraction. It remained a transcendent ideal right into its transformation into legal codes, where it has still remained removed from the everyday life

of citizens, although with the garnering force to pull a nation together. Whether equality can ever be conceived beyond some sense of placedness, which in modern times has managed to extend to the imagined community of the nation-state, is yet to be seen. In this study I have come to realize that a practicable notion of "humanity," one that is more than an ideal grounded in our own wish to see ourselves projected everywhere, may not yet be on the horizon.

France's Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen continued with the idea of universality. Its first principle, "Men are born and remain free and equal in rights," reinforces the idea that rights are natural to the human condition, indeed, inseparable from the fact of being human. Again, we must recall that the naturalness of rights and therefore their universality is here mentioned with a major revolution as a backdrop. The French Revolution not only brought into question prevailing ideas of the naturalness of class divisions but also overturned inherited privilege. In order to abolish the old order and cement these ideas in the social imaginary, abstracted principles with the mystical stature of extraordinary moral narrative force were brought into being. The universality of rights and of equality and freedom served as these extraordinary pieces of moral narrative for that time. I am here suggesting, therefore, that what became crystallized and subsequently formed part of the *story* of human rights were in part attempts to give a reason, but more accurately a moral justification, to particular political events that had overturned an old "natural" order. In effect, human rights in contemporary terms were born to provide a moral narrative for conflicts that had been pernicious and deadly, but that had also left questions open as to their meanings. The idea(l)s of human rights were a means to give them meaning and also cement the new order, and so they were appeals to specific questions of a time and place. A universal humanity was invoked as a way either of naturalizing the reason for the conflicts, or of mitigating their effects, or, more likely, both.

On December 10, 1948, three years after the end of the Second World War, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) was finalized and ratified by all but 8 of the 58 member-states of the UN. That it was named a universal declaration begins to identify the main difference between this text and the earlier ones, as well as the fact that it was debated, voted on, and signed by a significant number of nations around the world (although the 50 signatory nations, out of the 58 member-states, is hardly "universal"). The first Article, being one of 30 Articles,

establishes the universality of rights, but also an appeal to rationality *and* moral reasoning as the basis for action:

> Article 1
> All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.

This statement is almost identical to those quoted above from the two earlier documents. What is apparent is that this way of imagining human *being* is so familiar by the time it is articulated, and therefore an accepted part of the global lexicon, that it is almost banal. What is of more interest however is the Preamble, at least its first two paragraphs:

> Whereas recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world,
> Whereas disregard and contempt for human rights have resulted in barbarous acts which have outraged the conscience of mankind, and the advent of a world in which human beings shall enjoy freedom of speech and belief and freedom from fear and want has been proclaimed as the highest aspiration of the common people,

In these two paragraphs, universalism and legalism have become fully integrated but also much more fully formed than in the earlier versions. The legalism is evident in the use of the very first word used, "whereas" (see below). This universal humanity remains an abstracted ideal; the difference is that it is invoked not to herald a new order, but to allow the continuation of the same order, that is, Western modernity (Cmiel 2004; Headley 2008) with its stress on scientific rationality. The Second World War had brought into question the quest of modernity in its malevolent possibilities with the Holocaust. Some scholars suggest that this was modernity's logical conclusion (Arendt 1951; Bauman 1991; Tascón 2002) and that the methodical, instrumental and utilitarian rationality to which modernity gave expression could only lead to such deadliness. The reaction of the Western world was revulsion, and this is evident in the sentence "disregard and contempt for human rights have resulted in barbarous acts which have outraged the conscience of mankind." That the genocide of World War II, the Holocaust, had taken place in the geographical heart of modernity was what made it particularly repellent. The Armenian genocide

had occurred in the early twentieth century (Kèvorkian 2011), and yet had not produced these sorts of reactions. This new appeal to "universal humanity" was a way to validate modernity's ongoing trajectory, to provide it with a moral dimension it apparently had failed to acquire. As instrumental rationality had permitted such horrific acts to be committed, so human rights were to prevent them from being repeated. The reaffirmation of this "human" was, indeed, not to negate the rationality at the heart of the acts but to overlay it with a moral dimension that would soften rationality while still retaining its primacy. These events had made apparent the excess of scientific rationality with its moral code undergirded by practical instrumentalism and utilitarianism (Bauman 1991, 1993), but ironically it was another form of modern rationality that was applied to repair it: the legal-rational.

Legalisms

> In an over-legalised world, rules and norms discourage people from thinking independently and discovering their own relation to themselves, to others, to language and history. (Douzinas 2001, 190)

The law and the legal are prominent in all the documents quoted above, and it is apparent that they are seen as significant mechanisms for ensuring the preservation of rights. In the early documents—the US Declaration of Independence, 1776; US Bill of Rights, 1791; and the French Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen, 1791—either the law is specifically mentioned (in the case of the French Declaration *and* the US Declaration of Independence), or legal language is used (in the case of the US Bill of Rights). This effectively gives the authority of which the kings had been divested, to judicial structures that centered on the power of human reasoning. In the US Declaration of Independence, the law is mentioned repeatedly in relation to the charges laid against King George III for his failures as a regent. The laws he failed to pass "for the public good" and those he transgressed in his creation of an "absolute tyranny" appeal to a new framework, beyond king and the Church (Charters of Freedom 2014). Laws were no longer the province of the regent or the church, but came to reside as separate functions.

In the French Declaration, the law is given expression as that which is to "limit" freedoms that may be "hurtful to society," but is always to be "the expression of the general will" and participatory (Articles 4, 5, and 6). In that document, the law is mentioned as the means by which

freedoms must be tempered, but it is not seen as the mechanism for upholding rights. These principles were retained as philosophical values of intent (Lauren 2003, 32) rather than to be ensconced as legal requirements. The distinction between the two articulations of human rights is important, and yet it is the first that has come to dominate.

The US Bill of Rights of 1791, as ten amendments to the 1789 Constitution, and said to have followed and expanded on the British Bill of Rights of 1689, largely prescribed freedoms: in particular of speech, religion, and assembly, but also freedoms from unfair treatment by the judiciary and the state. All of these were couched in legal language, and as legally binding, although needing ratification by all States. Much of our modern understanding of human rights can already be seen in some form in these documents. Laws and the legal system as the means by which these principles can be encapsulated in their most binding and enforceable ways, ensured that their ongoing significance could not be lost. The emphasis on "freedoms" also demonstrates a modern emphasis on civil and political freedoms in modern times. Their legal enforceability did not extend to the French Declaration, however, as the French embodied their rights narrative primarily in philosophical rather than legal language.

It was not until the Second World War and the Holocaust that the modern rendering of human rights, embodied within legal language, emerged fully. Although the law could be seen to be turning into a refuge from the absolute powers of kings in the earlier documents, by this stage *the legal* was more than just laws; it had *moral* authority to regulate between right and wrong. This kind of language not only already carried a particular type of authority in the Western world, as beginning to be noted from those early developments, but from this moment onward also gained a mandate over moral domains, to enact precise principles of universal ethics. So, the UDHR begins its work with the word "[w] hereas," which as Hunt mentions "is simply a legalistic way of asserting a given, something self-evident" (19) and then immediately encompasses all humanity ("all members of the human family"). As Butler comments, to make claims of universality this way is to have grounded it "in a given syntax, through a certain set of cultural conventions in a recognizable venue" (35), and it cannot, hence, escape its place and time. The discourse of *the legal* had, by this time, become the authority that had fully replaced the kings (and the Church), and emerged out of philosophical and political struggles that took place within what might broadly speaking be called the West, including the colonies that remained cultural satellites.

Human rights are no more than a moral vision that emerged from events of particular times and places, layered with the power of legal authority and thereby enforceability. Costas Douzinas argues that the wide proliferation of legal regulation and codification of rights occurs to "relieve the burden of ethical life and anxiety . . . of postmodern humanity" (2001, 190), which is the condition of modernity, albeit in its "post" iteration. I suggest that this way of speaking justice of a social type occurred before postmodern anxieties about the fragmentation of life into a myriad of possibilities, or difference, took hold. It has been taking place over a very long time, and has been a means of relieving anxieties, but ones that were born when modernity was threatened. The construction of human rights within legal discourse, and claims of their violation through legal structures and language, has had consequences. This has mostly to do with "the legal" being part of an expert, and elite, knowledge system in most cultures and nations. In order to make human rights enforceable, they have been made justiciable. In turn, this has placed them out of reach of the understanding and finances of many people in the world (Meckled-García and Çali 2006). One other consequence has been the focus on civil and political rights. This is because civil and political issues are more readily justiciable by being "negative" rights (Ife 2010). That is, they are of a type that positions the state in a minimalist relationship with individuals, as protector of their freedoms rather than provider of the conditions that permit the fulfillment of human potential. This aligns with the liberal tradition of politics (Ishay 2007) and reduces the role of the state in social, cultural, and economic matters. The slant toward civil and political rights in traditional human rights practice—and this will certainly be seen in the case studies to follow—suggests both an ideological assumption and an emergence out of events in Western Europe and one of its former colonies, the United States. In both of these places the seats of power were being contested, with the emergence of new forms of power where royal sovereignty did not have absolute authority, and where individuals' freedoms were more important than communal provision for survival and thriving. This was, in effect, the birth of the Western liberal political tradition, which would not necessarily reflect the worldview of all peoples everywhere.

Internationalism

As human rights discourse has a grounded history, epistemological foundations, and an ideological position, it has also required specific locations for its application. Human rights conventions are signed by the governments of individual nations, and this binds each to the

principles of that treaty. The status of signatory requires each nation to then transform those principles into domestic laws that fulfill their requirement. So, for example, Australia, my country of residence, is signatory to the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (1951) and its 1967 Protocols, and its immigration laws relating to the acceptance and processing of asylum seekers and refugees should reflect this accordingly. What this, in effect, means is that universalized—or abstracted—principles become *practice* through the medium of the nation-state and its institutional organisms. This is in order that human rights principles can be made manifest in a way that is domestically meaningful. And yet this establishes the paradox of the nation-state for human rights, whereby the power of the very entity that is asked to protect them is what human rights seeks to diminish. The nation-state is where human rights may be practiced in their local context, but human rights treaties already demolish some of its sovereignty by making states accountable to another, inter-national-ized, organism. Not only that, but as Hannah Arendt most famously argued, the grounding of human rights in the nation-state disabled those most in need of human rights, refugees (by definition noncitizens), from claiming them (1951). This, in effect, brings into question the very nature of human rights themselves. The nation-state has also been the most recent and sustained source of identification for many people. This political entity, a historically modern invention, has produced in contemporary times a sense of wholeness and coherence that Benedict Anderson called "imagined communities" (1991).

The "imagined" element signals that for many of us the nation has been the final and largest group to which we have felt belonging in contemporary times. Human rights discourse demands an allegiance to an even larger group, to humanity, and this is proving difficult to imagine. As Douzinas says in his discussion on modern human rights and legal subjectification, "[n]ations owe their legitimacy to myths of origin, narratives of victory and defeat, borders, and imagined or real historical continuities but not to humanity" (2001, 192). Although he is specifically speaking of the practical locality of human rights, the nation, this does suggest that (in recent history at least) the final resting place for imagined and institutionalized belonging is still the nation, even if a newer cosmopolitan and globalized subjectivity is being forged through increased travel and the Internet. How much this new(er) subjectivity will be able to transgress those national myths of origins, is yet to be fully manifest. I suspect that the idea of a shared humanity has not yet reached proportions beyond a cosmopolitanness (a familiarity with living with difference and an imagined affiliation with others beyond any

one nation (Thompson and Tambyah 1999; Appiah 2006, 2007; Caine 2010)), and this will certainly be seen in the discussion of the Buenos Aires festival. What takes place through the inclusion of human rights discourse in a film festival is, therefore, more accurately to be called an internationalization, or an attempt to seek an interest beyond one's borders, yet still retaining a foothold, negotiation, and investment of the self within some form of spatial locality, even if this is often fragmented and multiple (Bauman 2000, 2004). Universality is, hence, always cut through by, and interrupted by, "the local," in whatever shape this locally produced and invested subjectivity is assumed. For example, in the discussion of the New York festival, this will be particularly apparent in the appeal to Jewish audiences, a significant ethnic group in New York both in terms of numbers and politico-economic power. The number of films on the Palestine question acknowledges the multiplicity of identifications for the subset of the Jewish community the festival is attracting. These are people of Jewish identification, with some sense of affiliation with the nation of Israel, living in the United States, and sympathetic to the plight of neighbors of Israel. They live there and simultaneously elsewhere. Those films acknowledge that they are a substantial group in New York, how that place has shaped the direction of their sympathies, but also that the target of their compassion is intricately tied to their national, albeit diasporic, belonging.

Activism and Human Rights

The idea(l) of universal humanity, and of the equality on which it is premised, can be seen to have been formulated from specific contexts and events, and therefore is always already laden with the meanings of its origins. In intent as much as in actuality the term was created to serve specific purposes. Like any idea(l), while it is bound to its origins as well as the parameters that constrain it, it also has the possibility of transformation through its lived practice. I contend that the spaces where this organicness is occurring, and where the idea(l) of human rights is being reconfigured, is in the practice of activism, and this is even more accelerated in those spaces where the activism accepts artistic practice as part of its repertoire of activities. This is so mostly because these other practices bring influences from other discourses, other ways of seeing and speaking the world. Films as creative visual texts have developed within a set of demands that, even while seeking a social effect, as in the case of Third Cinema and Imperfect Cinema (discussed in later chapters), also demand attention to aesthetic elements. Some of these include how narrative is constructed, whether to build tension or have a closer fidelity to the rhythms of life,

how point of view is developed through camera angles and voice-overs, and so on. The positioning of films within HRFFs adds yet another layer to the complexity with which the traditional discourse of human rights has to contend. This has to do with the original motivation for film festivals being to promote national cinemas, which has transformed in more recent times to a cinephilic (love of the art of films) intent.

These demands are in tension, as they require conflicting things: some a closer attention to local factors, others a gaze that looks beyond their own troubles, and in each of these steps many other considerations. For example, "looking" at others' troubles takes place as part of power relationships in which spectators and those they view are embroiled (see following chapter). Yet all of these things are transforming the way in which human rights are being consumed and understood, bringing them down to earth as it were, while widening the audiences that are exposed to the discourse, as well as hedging closer to an affiliation with a belonging that can be called humanity. In the case studies, I have called this a move toward cosmopolitanization and internationalization. Yet a sense of locatedness always forms part of the ways in which this is achieved, for films are programmed for a particular audience, with their experiences and biases.

It is at the point where films and film festivals are used for the practice of human rights activism that some of these changes are taking place, as this is where the former become a "tool" for the latter. Films and film festivals are, nevertheless, forever transforming human rights to reach closer to that universal principle of humanity, while keeping grounded within more localized meanings. These two—locatedness and a wider sense of belonging to humanity—are, and will always be, in tension. HRFFs are part of a set of activist networks (Iordanova and Torchin 2012) in which human rights' universalism is being worked through to become something new, with a body and soul rather than as an abstracted principle. As advocacy/activist groups apply this ideal, it translates into a set of issues that crisscross political and cultural borders: a transnational identification and bonds of solidarity with others with similar problems (Tsutsui and Wotipka 2004). Much traditional human rights activism, however, has relied on two discursive elements: a focus on violations (Spivak 2004), and on civil and political rights. Human Rights Watch (HRW) is the best example of the first, as their name suggests. I will have more to say about HRW later, but in one particular human rights website, run by United for Human Rights (a Los Angeles-based nongovernmental organization [NGO] promoting human rights more widely), HRW is described as set up to "investigate and expose human rights violations,

hold abusers accountable, and challenge governments and those who hold power to end abusive practices and respect international human rights law" (UHR 2014b). The abuses that human rights organizations have traditionally been established to notice, furthermore, have been of a civil and political nature. So, for example, although Amnesty International (AI) now premises some of its work on a human rights culture worldwide, so that "every person [can] enjoy all the rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international human rights standards" (AI 2014a), AI was first established in the United Kingdom in 1961 to deal with the issue of political prisoners of conscience (AI 2014b). This traditional focus enabled the Madres de Plaza de Mayo in the mid-1970s in Argentina to invoke human rights in their struggle. This group of women mobilized to denounce the Argentine military dictatorship of 1976–83 and the political disappearances. Their work was assisted and supported by AI and other groups through the invocation of the language of human rights (see part II), but only because their issue coincided with AI's focus on the rights of political prisoners.

Many films across the two festivals covered in this book center on dictatorships, prisons, and the judicial process, issues that stay within traditional conceptions of human rights. The "watching," as monitoring, has therefore come to impact on the visual watching of films, and programming has been influenced by these traditional understandings. But festival organizers have expanded the gaze of human rights as well, and I suggest that this has been made possible by the inclusion of films in film festivals. Alongside those focusing on dictatorships and so on, there are many films in the two festivals that extend beyond civil and political issues. The best examples are recent films that have become available on environmental issues. This set of films begins to decenter human beings to some degree, as the environment is an issue not traditionally encompassed by human rights, *and* is a cross-border topic unlike any other. Films that enter into a HRFF are not explicitly made for such exhibitions; rather, they are produced for broader interests. Even those that were named "human rights" at the festivals as a special category, or filmmaking that was thus defined (for example, Pamela Yates' oeuvre in New York) were never exclusively about human rights. Programmers for a HRFF, therefore, need to filter their understanding of human rights to make some films fit that understanding. What takes place is a kind of compromise, with films being asked to give a body to human rights in ways that only partially fulfill the traditional means of understanding them, while also making human rights step outside those traditions.

As films and human rights are given a place within film festivals, they come to be organized by yet another set of competing demands. These requirements both constrain and expand what films for human rights can achieve. Film festival discourse, as I will discuss more fully in the following chapter, originated through the motivation to produce alternative exhibition spaces, and so festivals have always been "organised unruliness" (Zielinski 2012), or spaces for subversion of dominant forces. This became manifest originally through an emphasis on exhibition of national cinemas in the face of incursions by Hollywood (Czach 2004; De Valck 2007), and later through the principle of cinephilia (Czach 2010), or the search for cinematic newness in the face of generic conformity. Under these principles the traditional means of understanding human rights, as civil and political, and as universal rights, need to compete with subversion of dominance and reestablishment of some type of localness, whether that be to celebrate national cinemas or a city/nation (Stringer 2001) through the position of the festival.

What emerged from the study was a set of programming decisions that attempts to draw its audience's gaze to others within the nation, the region and/or across the globe, but always from an identification with something that can be considered more local. The manifestation of this locatedness differed in each of the two sites. For Buenos Aires, the nation as it had been perceived to be under attack ideologically and from outside became the foundational principle for the use and understanding of human rights, while for New York, the local became the point from which to begin subverting dominant views and ways of viewing, while also (re)producing some blind spots of its own. The "local" in each case refers to programming that is drawing a particular audience's attention from prestanding, and historical, viewing traditions, while guiding it toward new visions as well. In that locatedness the most that may be achieved is to facilitate a bond of solidarity with others, stepping across (by crossing rather than bypassing) the powerful dimensions noted by Slavoj Žižek on the question of human rights: "the developed countries are constantly 'helping' the undeveloped (with aid, credits, and so on), thereby avoiding the key issue, namely, their complicity in and coresponsibility for the miserable situation of the undeveloped" (2004, 505). As I will show in the two case studies, the two HRFFs have negotiated this terrain deftly, drawing on features of their audiences' viewing traditions as these are largely configured through the humanitarian gaze I discuss in the following chapter, while extending them toward something closer to that bond of solidarity with others across geopolitical space that human rights intends. I suggest that it is the addition of creative texts that is enabling this move to take place.

2
Film Festivals: Activism and the Gaze

As we set up the first Human Rights Arts and Film Festival in Perth, Western Australia, we became part of a larger festival that now encompasses most Australian capital cities. Our first year in the city of Perth was one with few finances, and we screened very few films. One of those was *The Day after Peace* (Gilley 2008). It was a film that, in many ways, gave birth to my disquiet and questioning that have resulted in this book (for a fuller analysis of this film, see Tascón 2012). In the reflections below, which, I hope, will help ground the more theoretical material, the selection of this film highlights the difficulties confronting programmers for HRFFs. In what I discuss, I do not stand outside of it; I was, after all a part of that process. An activist film festival is often faced with such dilemmas, of an economic but also ideological nature, and many decisions are compromises.

The Day after Peace (DAP) was a film produced and directed by Jeremy Gilley, tracing his own journey through seven years of attempting to establish a day of peace with an organization he also set up, Peace One Day. In the film Jeremy takes center stage: his voice, face, and story filling the early sections. He initially fails abysmally as he approaches various organizations including the Arab League and the United Nations (UN) (which see him as something of an oddity), to help in his attempts to organize a day of global ceasefire. After enlisting such Hollywood and music celebrities as Jude Law, Angelina Jolie, and Annie Lennox, and partnering with and being funded by Coca-Cola, Jeremy succeeds in the face of all adversity to have the UN declare September 21 as International Day of Peace. He manages to facilitate the cessation of conflict in one region of Afghanistan for a single day so that children can be immunized safely. His organization grows from a one-man show to one that now has hundreds of volunteers and funding from various sources. This is a film, however, primarily celebrating Gilley and his achievements, his

lone quest to achieve his goal. The first voiceover word uttered in the film is in Gilley's voice, and it is "I." He commits every crime in the book in terms of diplomacy and engaging with others with whom one is unfamiliar, which normally requires listening and taking stock of the complexities. He disregards the advice of a well-meaning UN representative who can see the political complexities, he places the Arab League offside by naively showing them a video that includes a speech by Ariel Sharon, then the Israeli prime minister, and he rejects the views of African children who tell him that such days are numerous and that what they need is food and political equality. In spite of these adversities, Gilley marches on, and much of the rest of the film is used to show him meeting and recruiting Jolie for a concert, and traveling with Law through Afghanistan in UN armored vehicles. This was a film in which, as Marina Hyde of *The Guardian* newspaper declared in a British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) interview (YouTube 2014), the message is so simplistic that it is astonishing Gilley succeeded in doing what he did. And yet he did.

As we screened this film at a human rights film festival, one that I had been centrally instrumental in organizing, I was left feeling uncomfortable. DAP had not only been made available gratis and shown in the entire inaugural program of this HRFF but it was subsequently used for a gala night screening to launch the 2011 program on the Melbourne leg, and raised substantial funds for the festival. One of the items on the auctioning agenda was a dinner with Gilley, and attendants bid ferociously for this item. Nathan Farrell, writing on the use of celebrities for humanitarian purposes, calls this "philanthrocapitalism" (2012), and in a more recent article that specifically looks at the Gilley organization Peace One Day, aligns their activities with the neoliberalization of the nonprofit sector (unpublished). I, with my own whiteness lens (Tascón 2004, 2008), saw someone whose appeal centered on his being a "young, white, English, male who is physically presentable" (Tascón 2012, 879), and attributed his success to this. I could not escape the connection between the first scene in DAP—a long shot of Egyptian pyramids and a lone man on horseback in the distance—and Indiana Jones. The narrative of the film just seemed to be too coincidentally a "hero's journey" (Campbell 2008), showing signs of "classical Hollywood cinema, [where] the agent embodying the role of 'hero' is typically a straight, white man," standing in as "universal subject" (Downing and Saxton 2010, 17). And yet his simplistic message has, as Hyde says, "achieved a lot" (op. cit.), and by this, we must read: has received a lot of attention and funding, but also managed to stop fighting for one day to immunize children in Afghanistan.

The film and filmmaker's galvanizing ability raised many questions for me about the intended audiences' responses. What was it that we/they saw in him that drew such attention? Was it something about themselves/ourselves we have seen reflected on the screen? What was that? And what is the relationship to those Gilley whom set out to supposedly help that he reflects for us? He does, more than less, almost totally disregard anyone who is not a major corporation, or music/acting celebrity, in the film. He manages to recruit Law to travel with him to Afghanistan (that moment, shown on the film, Hyde calls "cringe-worthy"). They travel through the landscape in highly protected bulletproof vehicles and gear, neither of them talking to those very people whose streets they use to fulfill Gilley's "dream." In only two short instances is the plight of the Afghan people made known, one in the words of a young girl who tells of her father's inability to provide for his family because he was injured in crossfire. The young girl's story—as brief as it is poignant and tragic—is told to us in her own words, her face and words directly addressing us on the screen. She does this with aplomb and calm: her life shared so that perhaps someone might help. When she arrives at the moment of telling of the bravery of her father, who in his disabled state manages to try and eke out some kind of life for her and the family, she breaks down. The camera continues rolling, her cries continue and intensify, and she becomes embarrassed and needs to declare to the cameraman "that's enough" in a voice that asks permission for the recording machine to stop invading her pain, but she also needs to assert for herself what should not need to be articulated: that this pain is private and cannot be shared. Still, it is there in the film. This scene, then, stays in primarily for effect, to show us, if only briefly, the filmmaker's raison d'être for being there. It serves to remind us of other heroic tales of masculine adventure traveling through uncharted wilderness, conquering and displaying prowess, in the activation of "higher ideals." So, again, I asked, what did we see in this white, young male trudging through unheedingly of others' concerns, and pain? Was it a community searching and recognizing heroic actions only from within the Same (Lévinas 1979; Davis 1996)? If most of the images displayed in human rights films, according to Safia Swimelar (2009) are "negative," and can become reasons to avert the gaze, this was not a film that produced such an effect. In such a case, one must ask, along with Michele Aaron (2007), what is the contractual alliance between spectators and (human rights) films?

In what follows I attempt to understand this phenomenon as a visual relationship that has developed over time, as a type of communal

tradition of watching humanitarian images that has to consider who does the watching and who is being watched. It is a relationship that many scholars have termed "the spectacle of suffering" and that centers on a powerful watcher, and one who is watched appealing for help. I use some of this work as the basis for what I call "the humanitarian gaze." For this concept I am particularly indebted to Lilie Chouliaraki's work in her development of "the humanitarian imaginary" (2012), although my perspective differs slightly because I also engage with the idea of "the gaze" to organize this as a particular "way of looking." It also differs in that I then continue to pose the film festival space as a productive habitus, where this gaze is used to draw the attention, but then also at times works to undo it. This latter phenomenon will be seen particularly as I discuss *Love Crimes of Kabul* (Eshaghian 2011), a film screened at the New York festival, and will be covered in Section B. In film festivals—spaces of "organized unruliness" and with origins in subversiveness—human rights films, I suggest, are positioned to upset the unequal geopolitical relationship of the humanitarian gaze.

The Humanitarian Gaze

This concept emerges from a number of sources, but the most obvious are "humanitarianism" and "the gaze." Let me deal with humanitarianism first, although in this context the two are intrinsically entwined. Humanitarianism is a powerful discourse and practice of intervention in others' troubles, much of which is informed by an unequal power relationship between giver and receiver, based on both economic and political factors, and is premised on a form of relief that emerges from "suffering" in conditions of immediacy and emergency (Middleton and O'Keefe 1997; Lischer 2005). Humanitarianism as an institutionalized undertaking has a lengthy history, but it has mostly been associated with aid in times of crises as a result of natural disasters, or "man-made" violence such as civil unrest, genocide, war, famine, and so on (Barnett 2013). This already begins to draw out some of the primary elements in the relationship on which I focus here, that is, abrupt events that result in catastrophic dislocations, violence, conflict, and immense suffering. As a result, most of the scholarship centering on the visual material that is used to provide information on humanitarian issues focuses on on what has developed into a discourse, of "distant suffering." Before turning to that scholarship, it is necessary to discuss briefly the notion of "the gaze."

To anyone in film or media studies, this is a most familiar term, and intuitively anyone outside of those disciplines can understand that to

which it refers. It is a term largely associated with an area of scholarship that has pointed to the dominance of visuality in contemporary life, or "scopic regimes" (Debord 1994; Foucault 1979; Metz 1982; Jay 1988), but after Laura Mulvey, its analysis also became organized through what she termed the "male gaze," which incorporated much psychoanalytic thinking. Mulvey's analysis worked, and reworked, the notion that much of what we are presented with visually on screens appealed to an implied male spectator. In this way, women's spectatorship was both subjugated to the male "way of looking," or gaze, and also reconfigured through male ways of looking (Mulvey 1989). Other scholarship has further reworked this idea. For example, Kaplan (1997) applies it to racialized gazing as well. Others used the concept for analyses of even wider social effects, an example being Denzin's (1995) work on cinema in general, which suggests that the visual emphasis has contributed to a culture of voyeurism and surveillance in contemporary life. Although much of the conceptual work has entailed the use of psychoanalytic frameworks, I prefer to use the idea to focus on sociocultural dimensions, some of which are global, in which the viewing subject is caught in a broad web of power and knowledge. I am also using it to understand programming decisions at film festivals, as this gaze must be acquiesced to in order to draw audiences, and yet festival organizers may also set about undoing it. In the humanitarian fields of practice, in which HRFFs are situated, images are used with an implied spectatorship that has a particular relationship to images of suffering, and the authority and desire to watch them, but in that way of looking, a set of globalized power relations also enter into it.

The humanitarian gaze, as I conceive it, organizes what we may expect to see when viewing others' troubles, and seeks to find it. I call it a gaze because it is constitutive of a way of looking, of expecting to see, as well as being reproduce-able. It organizes who we will expect to see in these (humanitarian) circumstances, and includes who is not permitted into such a frame. This gaze has a well-established and assumed relationship between who will watch and who will be watched, and within this who is the assumed helper and the helped. Finally, it contains the features of its own reproduce-ability. I can best illustrate this by the differences between the two HRFF case studies. The Buenos Aires festival discussed in Part II is located in a nation where human rights have come to be understood almost exclusively around a domestic issue: the dictatorship of 1976–83, when some thirty thousand people were "disappeared" (CONADEP 1984). Human rights have been configured as a public discourse that is limited to claims around this topic. At the festival,

particularly in its early days, this translated into a programming schedule dominated by films produced and with content related to Argentina, and on that dictatorship. At the New York festival, on the other hand, the gaze has been turned toward those outside the United States, to mirror the work of HRW, the parent organization hosting the New York HRFF. From its inception, HRW has had a specified list of regions that it monitors, mostly Africa, Latin America, Asia, and the Middle East. In the early 1990s, a section titled "United States" was created for the first time. Many, although not all, films at the festival are about regions of the world outside North America, and this includes many produced in association with, or by, U.S. filmmakers. The direction of each festival's "looking" confirms and acquiesces to a set of geopolitical power parameters that permits some to watch, and others to be watched as they experience trouble. This makes some regions problem saturated, while others have "no such problems" (Laber 2002), a comment made by one of the founders of HRW as it was Helsinki Watch, about the United States, as they set out to monitor the Union of Soviet Socialist Republic's (USSR's) fulfillment of the Helsinki accords (see chapter 7). This view, then, "cannot help but nourish the belief in the inevitability of tragedy in the benighted or backward—that is, poor—parts of the world" (Sontag 2004, 65). The idea of human rights, with its universality principle, thus appears to be encouraging programming that authorizes a set of looking relations in which some may watch, while others are watched.

As human troubles are disseminated as images, they are immediately mediated by the discourse of humanitarianism, largely because these troubles first arrive as news items. Michael Barnett, tracing the history of humanitarianism, draws the direct connection between the growth in humanitarianism as a profession, and news. These images are distributed

> by twenty-four hour news agencies, the world could now watch the horrific spectacles of state failure and civil war, ethnic cleansing and genocide, the use of children as soldiers capable of committing war crimes, and the flight of people from all forms of violence, only to find "safety" in city-sized refugee camps without adequate food, shelter or medical care. (Barnett 2011, 2).

Human troubles are then equated with images of violence or disaster; emergencies or catastrophic situations of deprivation and displacement; war, unrest, and genocide, and also longer-standing social evils such as sex trafficking (Brown et al. 2009). While sex trafficking represents a set of social ills that are not immediate emergencies, the moral panic with

which it is often greeted adds it to the list of "horrific" spectacles. These are the stock matter for the humanitarian gaze.

The humanitarian gaze, as a way of looking at others' troubles, has therefore been heavily influenced and configured through a set of images that represents extreme conditions of violence and deprivation, and a viewer who is expected to respond to these images in some manner. The ubiquitousness of these images, through a continuous feed of terrible news, as the quote from Susan Sontag above suggested, simply reinforces that only certain parts of the world "suffer," while others do not; moreover, through these images, the ones who suffer, become mendicants of those who "watch" them. The insistent bombardment of such images then overwhelms the viewer, who experiences fatigue as a result of their ubiquitousness. This leads to the possibility of the viewer's feeling pity (Boltanski 1999), disdain (Sontag 2004), apathy/irony (Chouliaraki 2006, 2012), and shame as the prevailing motivation to act (Keenan 2004), but also enabled to enter the suffering as a spectacle and then withdraw (Hesford 2011). Suffering is deemed a spectacle for those whose primary relationship to images is as little more than an entertaining story. Thus Luc Boltanski (1999), who is principally concerned with the effects on the spectator of television news coverage, viewed as the "massification of a collection of unfortunates who are not there in person" (13), asks,

> how might the contemporary spectators' anxiety be reduced without averting their gaze from misfortune or by abandoning the project inherent in the modern definition of politics of facing up to unnecessary suffering and relieving it[?]. (159)

The question is underwritten by an anxiety, that the "contemporary spectators'" gaze can, and will, be averted as these images bombard them to the point of "compassion fatigue" (Moeller 1999; Chouliaraki 2006). These images, these scholars suggest, produce an effect on the viewer that distances rather than approximates, and disconnects the viewer from rather than connects the viewer to those people on the screen.

Scholars in this area have, hence, taken up the notion of "suffering" as the starting point for analyses of images of people in trouble or seeking change, and "distance" as that which positions the spectator. This maps an assumption about the "contemporary spectator" as someone who inhabits a specific geopolitical matrix that permits agency to avert his/her gaze, and that this gaze must be appealed to. That is, that spectator has accumulated sufficient power and wealth for others to wish to

appeal to her/his gaze, and yet that plea has to be configured in a manner that does not overwhelm or weary. In this situation there is an obvious power relationship. For example, Boltanski's analysis centers on the distinction between the "politics of pity" as opposed to the "politics of justice," concepts he borrows from Hannah Arendt. Sontag denounces the powerful Western spectator of war photography as having the authority to denude "others" of social/moral meaning when viewing their dead bodies (something that would not be permitted for "our own"). Differently from Arendt's definition of pity, Chouliaraki opposes the *ethics of pity* with the *ethics of irony*, the latter being the most recent modality for modern Western spectators of humanitarian suffering, where "doing good to others is about 'how I feel' and must, therefore, be rewarded by minor gratifications to the self" (2012, 3). In that view, the spectator is positioned as a self-enclosed subject, reaching out to others in order to simply reach into their own need to be instantly rewarded.

The humanitarian gaze is configured through an axis of power and knowledge (Foucault 1980) in which knowledge production reproduces a particular form of power—here cultural knowledge for the creation of a politically active subject—to which it must refer in order to produce effects, even when questioning it. As a result of the research for this study, I concluded that the powerful spectator seeks one, or more, of three figures on the screen: the overwhelmed, passive victim of powerful forces such as "modernization"; the active "freedom fighter" who is working to become more "like us"; and a third, which is a version of the second, but which emerges when we are watching "our own." This last category is seen in films that do not portray emaciated, overburdened victims of circumstances, but rather fully active subjects innovating for their survival. In this case, people are shown as subjects of their futures, and fully participatory actors; these films often show different forms of activism—whether successful or not—which reveal active agency in seeking social change. At both HRFFs under consideration in this study, the third figure was prominent in the films from/about each nation/region where the festival was located. In the example with which this chapter began, elements of that gaze were engaged: a smattering of suffering Afghan children in need of saving from lack of immunization, and the agentful Western fighter who intervened successfully.

The humanitarian gaze as I have been describing it is close to Chouliaraki's conception of "the humanitarian imaginary" (2012), but there are also significant divergences. One of the obvious similarities is in the power analysis in the humanitarian relationship that we both perform. Another similarity is in viewing the relationship between giver and

receiver as one that is premised on something about the giver, rather than the receiver of aid, support, or funds. Chouliaraki identifies the shifts in the humanitarian impulse in the West from 1970–2010 as permitting a greater instrumentalization of aid and the gradual increasing of distance with vulnerable others through a retreat from "grand narratives" of solidarity and the technologization of communications. This, Chouliaraki says, has resulted in "a generalised reluctance to accept 'common humanity' as the motivation for our actions." The West, she further remarks, is becoming a "specific kind of public actor—the ironic spectator of vulnerable others," where irony is defined as a "detached knowingness" (all Chouliaraki quotes here from 2012, 2). Further, this signals an epistemic shift and

> a retreat of an other-oriented morality, where doing good to others is about our common humanity and asks nothing back, and the emergence of a self-oriented morality, where doing good to others is about "how I feel" and must, therefore, be rewarded by minor gratifications to the self—the new emotionality of the quiz, the confessions of our favourite celebrity, the thrill of the rock concert. (2012, 3)

The reader can readily see the connections between her analysis and my description of the Gilley film above. At this point I want to indicate a similarity between Chouliaraki's framework and the ethics of Emmanuel Lévinas, but in reverse. I say "in reverse" because Lévinas proposed a relationship between a Self and an Other in which the Other demands attention and ethical responsibility, while not being consumed by the Self for her/his needs (Lévinas 1998). It is an ethical stance about which I have written elsewhere, in relation to refugees and the response to "difference," or what Lévinas called "alterity"—that is, the radical difference of the Other that is to remain in place (Tascón 2002). Chouliaraki condemns the contemporary situation, which enables the powerful spectator of the West to write themselves onto the scene rather than as concern for another. In this critique she echoes the ethics proposed by Lévinas, although she does not name him as the source of her thinking. While I agree with Chouliaraki's premise overall, I also diverge from it slightly. My first point of departure is at the point where my concept is specifically geared toward "relations of looking" (Gaines 1986). Although these modes of looking intersect quite clearly with what Chouliaraki is discussing, I am most specifically interested in how this positions a spectator of films for human rights purposes, and where the space (in this case, film festivals) must be taken into account as a place

where a different sort of spectatorship may be produced. I agree that the humanitarian imaginary/gaze is a powerful framework, but I also contend that there are activist spaces where the possibility of engaging a spectator to act for another (as opposed to simply the self) may be more fully achieved by the nature of the images, as well as the spaces within which they are exhibited.

Other spectating positions are made possible, or encouraged, within such spaces. One of these is a discomfiting of the complacency of the powerful viewer through the screening of films that upset the traditional viewing of victims (examples to be discussed in later chapters are *Love Crimes of Kabul* in New York, and all the films on Indigenous issues and immigration in Buenos Aires). Another is the screening of films that are not about the suffering of others, but about the complicity of themselves in structural inequalities (e.g., all the anti-neoliberalism films at both festivals). And another is a celebration of the activism/agency of "Others," that is, people not considered "their own" (there were instances in both festivals of this type of film). These films suggest a move away from the discursive focus on "suffering" and a move toward thinking of others' troubles as appeals to *join* in issues in which we are implicated, and are not saviors. In this way that side of the humanitarian relationship that holds constitutive power and "reproduces the prosperity of the [West] while perpetuating the poverty of the [South]" (Chouliaraki 2012, 3), can be modified to include other spectating and acting positions.

In the programming decisions of the two activist film festivals discussed in the following chapters, an acquiescing to this "imaginary" is manifest, because it is a prestanding means for the West to relate to the troubles of others. But at times the festivals also attempt to restore some of what Chouliaraki says has gone missing in the "helping" relationship between the West and distant strangers. It must be mentioned that some of what I will be discussing takes place within a film festival that is not strictly "Western," although what this means in the Argentine context is immediately suspect when a large section of the population is of Western European background, and, until recently, has identified culturally mostly with Europe. Nevertheless, I am suggesting that activist film festivals offer an alternative to the "ironic" and detached knower of others' troubles because, largely, they are a habitus that encourages "engagement." In that regard the humanitarian gaze as a way of organizing a particular way of looking, may be interrupted. I also differ from Chouliaraki's position in another important respect as I propose that a self, encased in ironic, distanced detachment, as a familiar viewing position, is not necessarily a barrier to facilitating a social specta(c)tor that

will engage in social change for others. As I will show in the case studies to follow, HRFFs can inveigle that gaze in order to, at times, interrupt it and engage a citizen in a politicization that may be less possible through other means.

Human rights practice fits within a broader scope of humanitarianism, as the latter is broadly understood to be about events of immediate urgency. Human rights practice, however, also encompasses activism, albeit much of it mediated through the language and structures of the legal system. Activism, distinct from humanitarianism, is a sustained activity the aim of which is social change of a longer-term nature, and often entails a politicization of activities that aim to disrupt, subvert, and transform social structures rather than simply alleviate suffering (Schragge 2013; Mikula 2005). Activism of any type, and the HRFFs that I discuss in later chapters, are activist film festivals (Iordanova and Torchin 2012), aspires to facilitate an active spectator-citizen who will assist in social change of a more enduring character. The festivals are negotiating the humanitarian discursive landscape from whence their spectators arrive, but are doing so through a set of "looking relations" (Gaines 1986) that includes the discourse of humanitarianism, and the discourse of human rights that has primarily been constructed through legal mechanisms.

Here I want to begin outlining other possibilities as well. This is because this work detected many instances when the powerful "humanitarian gaze" was being overturned at the festivals by including films that were not simply about "suffering" victims, and others that questioned the very system of inequality within which that powerful gaze is situated. The inclusion of Pino Solanas' films in the Buenos Aires festival was a clear instance of this, while the presence of Costa-Gavras' films and *The Yes Men* (Ollman, Price, and Smith 2003) played similar roles in New York. In both HRFFs there were examples of films that portrayed fully agentful, active subjects from within their own national or regional screening contexts (that is, Argentina and the United States), but there were also many instances of the recognition of the same figure in films from/about other nations/regions. In New York, for example, this was seen in the films about environmental activism in Latin America, and in Buenos Aires, similarly in the films on environmental issues from within and outside Latin America. The possibility of the subversion of the humanitarian gaze is heightened, I suggest, at a film festival, because of a number of factors, the most significant of which is the disruptive discursive framework of film festivals. Film festivals originated through oppositional "unruliness," and activist festivals have built in participatory

practices such as post-screening panel discussions. The "unruliness" factor opens out to the interruption of established practices, while the participatory activities encourage a spectator who questions openly within the space. Media scholars dealing with the "spectacle of suffering" in news coverage, where much of the theoretical discussion of "distant suffering" has taken place have, since Boltanski's investigation, complexified the field by exploring various contextual and viewing factors, and how these change spectators' perspectives and responses (Scott 2014; Ong 2012; Cameron and Seu 2012). One study in particular noted that the length of time given to a topic produces greater audience responsiveness (Scott ibid.), for example, when comparing documentary films with time-limited news coverage. This clearly demonstrates that the time and space of reception have an effect on the way in which spectators absorb the material with which they are confronted.

Activist Film Festivals: Specta(c)tors

> I think the whole point of having this type of film festival is the transfer that takes place from the screen to the audience. This transfer hopefully inspires some form of action (Sean Farnel, in Fischer 2012, 227)
>
> The networks in which the image circulates and the platforms by which it is manifest rest upon differing epistemologies and infrastructures. These different modes of circulation address distinct publics and make possible varying forms of political action, enabling particular claims to be made while foreclosing others (McLagan and McKee 2012, 10)
>
> The collective actions collect the space itself, gather the pavement, and animate and organize the space architecture . . . assembly and speech reconfigure the materiality of public space and produce, or reproduce the public character of that material environment (Butler 2012, 117).

I want to propose that activist film festivals enhance the possibility of an engaged and questioning spectator, even one invested in the humanitarian gaze, because such festivals embrace spectators differently. At an activist film festival, the viewing of films is but one part of the usual fare; the screenings are part of a network of activities both within the festival and beyond it, so that spectators are guided toward a life "beyond the film" (Iordanova 2012; Fischer 2012). In a similar manner to Third Cinema's positing of the viewing of films as an "act" (Solanas and Getino

1969; Mestman 2003) rather than as passive consumption, these settings present films as being in a different relationship to the spectator. Festivals, as Ger Zielinski points out (following Mikhail Bakhtin), are organized by “the possibility of social unruliness and limited rebellion but always within the constraints set by some larger authority that permits it to take place” (Zielinski 2012). As he further mentions, it is a contained space for the celebration of “otherness” and deviance, but always within boundaries that are authorized by the communities and the discourse within which it performs that social unruliness. In that way, festivals are, what I will continue to call, sites of organized unruliness, with a heightened possibility of interpellating a spectator toward active questioning and a relationship to the images configured through disruptiveness. The favoring of documentaries in activist film festivals adds to the effect of images’ being triggers for other things, a spectator actively questioning and acting in the life-world.

Vivian Sobchack (1999) offers a partial explanation for this, as her comments are made in the context of a spectatorial identification with documentaries as distinct from fictional films. Using a phenomenological model, borrowed from Jean-Pierre Meunier, she proposes that viewing documentaries has a distinctness that sets it apart from fictional films due to the type of identification the viewer has to the cinematic object. She notes that the viewer’s engagement with “those we regard as documentary representations of ‘the real’ from those we regard as real representations of a ‘fiction’” are structurally different. In the latter the “viewer’s attention is focused on—rather than through—the screen object”; in the former we “see beyond the screen’s boundaries and back into our own life-world” (Sobchack 1999, 244). In viewing documentaries, she suggests, the viewer is drawn into the screen in order to be thrown right back onto the world we inhabit; the identification with the screen image is structurally different because it is a documentary. The distance between watcher and watched, this seems to suggest, is closed because the cinematic object is different. I would also suggest that the context of viewing, as was alluded to by the Scott Martin study above, also influences how the spectator engages with the image, and that a film festival provides a particular interpellatory context.

Sobchack’s exploration of the differential identification by the spectator with distinct cinematic objects in some ways mirrors Third Cinema, a cinematic project that began in Latin America but went on to permeate other cinematic traditions, particularly in Africa (see Part II for a fuller discussion of this). Created originally to deal with issues of representation and production, Third Cinema saw film viewing as a relationship

centered on the spectator as an active "protagonist of life" (Solanas and Getino 1969). This required films to be produced with this in mind, so that the spectator would achieve that close identification with the image as part of the life-world and not primarily of the screen, which Sobchack discusses. Whether this would exclude fictional films from achieving such an effect is a relevant question that must remain unexplored here. Activist film festivals, and HRFFs, often include fictional films, as well as animation and other genres, and these may be producing a similar effect on the spectator as the documentary, in terms of relating these to the life-world. I do wonder whether the festival effect is significant enough in such cases that fictional films in these contexts are read as nonfiction.

Film festivals, in common with Third Cinema, were initiated through a concern for sustaining local cultures through the promotion of national cinemas, in the face of what were seen to be cultural incursions from Hollywood and other foreign cinemas (Elsaesser 2005; De Valck 2007). And Third Cinema itself was disseminated and propagated through film festivals (Mestman 2013/14). This pronationalist platform has given way to a proliferation of film festivals centered on a variety of issues and themes, and a more recent organizing discursive principle, of cinephilia (De Valck 2007). The proliferation of film festivals in recent years has led to increasing specialization, and the rise of the "thematic festival" (De Valck ibid., 178) as a result; the activist film festival falls within this category. Activist film festivals differ from other film festivals because they operate on a platform of social/political change (Iordanova 2012) rather than cinephilia, although elements of the latter are still present. Much modern film festival activism centers on a set of claims for social change organized by the politics of identity, such as those from the Lesbian/ Bisexual/ Gay/Transgendered (LGBT), the disabled, the migrant, or the Indigenous peoples community, among others, or from a wider political platform such as human rights or environmental issues. These platforms act as hailers of certain communities and their sympathizers, but it is what takes place in these spaces that interests me. In this regard, a comprehensive volume edited by Dina Iordanova and Leshu Torchin, entitled *Film Festivals and Activism*, covers some of this ground. As Iordanova mentions in this tome, activist film festivals do more than screen films and perform "outreach and community building." They also encourage a fuller discussion engendered by the film:

> The topical debates are probably the single most important feature that makes a festival activist: it is in the context of these discus sions that a more complete understanding of a film can crystallise

> and a call to action can take place. In fact . . . the discussion is as important as the film screening and undoubtedly constitutes an inherent part of the festival structure. In this respect, discussions at activist film festivals differ from the Q&A sessions at mainstream festivals: the goal is not to receive insight and information about the film's making and message, but to go beyond the film and address the issues that the film is concerned with, as well as to influence the thinking of the audience. Thus, audience engagement is of prime importance. (2012, 15–16)

Films are located within these festivals in a relationship with their audiences that closely resembles the "film act" of Third Cinema. In the phrase "beyond the film," Iordanova points to the function of films as primers of the action in which Third Cinema's "protagonist of life" (Solanas and Getino 1969) is encouraged to be involved; one element in a community of events, symbols, artefacts, and people whose role is to view life differently and then act to change the life conditions for another. Whether these audiences enter these spaces to see "suffering," or to join in a "common humanity," in solidarity with others, is almost irrelevant; the discussions have the potential to excavate meanings and dimensions of that relationship that are not available through the individual consumption of images. It is the collection of all of these things in one space, a space that is then transformed for collecting and unearthing new meanings, that makes activist film festivals a place where a particular spectator is facilitated.

Hamid Naficy calls this sort of spectatorship at an activist film festival a "hailing and haggling" (2003). The term emerges from his experiences of running a festival of Iranian films at University of California, Los Angeles. In his words, "film festivals are prime sites for intensified national and transnational translations and mistranslations, as well as hailing and haggling over acts of representation" (197), spaces for collecting competing interests and visions, and negotiating. Of course, the negotiations are never absolutely equal, as film festival scholars have pointed out (Stringer 2001; De Valck 2007) point out. Film festivals are types of public spheres with their own hierarchical networks, acting as a "contact zone for the working through of unevenly differentiated power relationships" (Stringer 2001, 138). But they also provide spaces for the haggling of which Naficy speaks, and to that extent they hail spectators to haggle. For me, this has been a constant source of inspiration, as occurred in the discussions that took place after the screening of *Love Crimes of Kabul* at the New York festival (see chapter 8 for a fuller

description). But it was also evident at the Buenos Aires HRFF, where the interjections (particularly by the women in the audience) during and after film screenings, and the impassioned discussions following the screenings, bore a close resemblance to Naficy's descriptions of his childhood viewing of films in Iran, where the experience was a noisy, odorous, engaged activity (2003). Teshome Gabriel describes something similar when contrasting spectatorship among African and U.S. audiences:

> The Western experience of film viewing—dominance of the big screen and the sitting situation—has naturalized a spectator conditioning so that any communication of a film plays on such values of exhibition and reception. The Third World experience of film viewing and exhibition suggests an altogether different route and different value system. For instance, Americans and Europeans hate seeing a film on African screens, because everybody talks during the showings; similarly, African viewers of film in America complain about the very strict code of silence and the solemn atmosphere of the American movie theatres. (2014)

These experiences, of a collectively shared form of viewing, while potentially merely illustrating a different cultural style of watching films, are also an alternative epistemic possibility for understanding spectatorship. In this description is an ontological relationship with film that invites films to be part of an everyday existence. This does not mean that films need to be about "our" experiences, but that they are regarded as part of that life, which includes extending our experience of the world and seeing others and other places otherwise inaccessible, and in that viewing reside political and ethical implications. The kind of viewing Gabriel and Naficy describe, and that Third Cinema directed its viewers to have, is not characterized by "distance" between spectator and film (subject), but rather a close, intimate bond that forecloses distance. Seeing other people's troubles on the screen, therefore, becomes not always and everywhere a burden, but an extension of ourselves into another universe. As Michael Chanan says,

> What is needed is a paradigm shift, an epistemological break, so to speak, that recovers the dialogical nature of the gaze, in which the camera is an actor and reality is the coauthor (as José Carlos Avellar recently put it). There is no ready formula or recipe for this paradigm shift. In fact, it is born in the act of viewing itself, in the special

moments when the passive spectator becomes an active viewer, filled with empathy for the ghostly figures on the screen. (2010, 152–53)

Closing Thoughts

Gabriel, following Solanas and Getino, suggests that films “develop a new film language” (1982, 3) in order that a new relationship between the film and its spectators can be enabled, one that enhances participation in the world “beyond the film.” Films, in that sense, become part of a broader set of relationships, and one of a network of activities seeking social change of one kind or another. In this chapter I have attempted to outline how we can view participation as already configured through a powerful relationship, established through notions of humanitarianism and the means by which humanitarian images have been disseminated. I suggest that HRFFs, by being part of activism that is not entirely reliant on the modality of “emergency news,” provide a habitus that enhances more thoughtful engagement. In what follows, the festivals illustrate how this can occur.

Part II

Festival Internacional de Cine Derechos Humanos, Buenos Aires

Introduction

The Festival Internacional de Cine Derechos Humanos (FICDH), Buenos Aires, screened its first set of films in 1997, almost a decade after the New York film festival (to be covered in Section B). The motivations for FICDH, however, are in contrast to the politics that informed the New York festival, and reflect a set of factors that have brought human rights and cinema together in a distinct way. In order to fully understand the dimensions that made this festival what it is today, it is important to consider the historical and contemporary elements of both *human rights* and *films* (particularly political films) in Argentina. As these two come together in a film *festival* they merge with yet another discourse, which historically is informed by 'unruliness,' by the subversion of dominant forms, and by the creation of alternative spaces for the exhibition of national cinemas (see chapter 2). In this festival, it is a specific strand of cinema that is relevant: political cinema. This tradition has a long trajectory in Argentina, so I will give some space to that, but will concentrate primarily on *militant cinema*, which emerged from two cinema movements of the late 1960s and early 1970s, *Grupo de Base* and *Grupo Cine Liberación*. I place more emphasis on the latter, as this was the brainchild of Fernando Ezequiel "Pino" Solanas, one of the coauthors of Third Cinema and its manifesto, and one of the filmmakers of *La Hora de los Hornos/The Hour of the Furnaces*. Many of his films appear at the festival, and I perform a slightly extended analysis of this particular film and its significance in order to illustrate a politics that is present at the festival as a continuation of an older political tradition.

This festival is, in fact, embroiled in a set of national identity struggles, in which cinema had been a significant player prior to the dictatorship. Third Cinema, with its emphasis on local productions and dialogical exhibition formats (discussions after the screenings, or "the film act"), had been at the forefront of a movement intended to create stories that would ground them within the realities of their viewers. Film festivals, as discussed in chapter 2, originated from a similar impulse, to stem the importation of foreign films that could then swamp fledgling national cinemas. As a film festival that was established after significant legal changes within Argentina (the 1994 *Law of Cinema*) that reinvigorated

its national cinema, FICDH entered into the scene at an important cinematic period. The revival of its national cinema, what has come to be called "new Argentine cinema," coincides with those legal changes, and with the origins of the festival.

Argentine national cinema suffered devastating setbacks during the period of the dictatorship, as well as during the period of the state's application of neoliberal policies—begun during the dictatorship, but continued into the 1990s by successive governments. During that entire period, cinematic exhibitions were inundated with foreign films, particularly from the United States. This did not begin to turn around until a new law was introduced in 1994, the *Ley del Cine* (Law of Cinema), under which new taxes and funding arrangements were made possible in order to inject the necessary subsidies that would allow filmmaking to be reinvigorated. This festival began its life three years after this law came into effect, with an exhibition menu dominated by Argentine films, as I will show in the following chapters, especially chapters 3 and 4. This begins to shift in 2004 with a broadened outlook, and the period this signals is covered in chapters 5 and 6. With this shift, I argue that an institutionalized human rights discourse begins to have a stronger "pull" on screening choices, or programming.

Human rights as a discourse of any public significance has had a much shorter history in Argentina than its cinema, and has been largely associated with the dictatorship of 1976. Human rights were publicly deployed during the dictatorship of 1976, and gained public significance through the activism of the Madres de Plaza de Mayo (Mothers of Plaza de Mayo) and the Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo (Grandmothers of Plaza de Mayo). (From here on, I will refer to both groups as Madres). The Madres' activism is important in what follows as I wish to demonstrate how a human rights discourse came to develop in Argentina, and how that has been influential at the festival. The Madres' activism was seminal in that development, but the festival has expanded the meanings that these groups gave to human rights, specifically in relation to the dictatorship, in ways that possibly no other human rights organization in Argentina has done. If programming is a form of control of the parameters of the prevailing discourse—in other words, a surveillance to maintain the borders within which human rights function—the concentration on a very particular domestic event appears to undermine human rights' claims to universalism. And yet the intense focus on a political issue also complies with the traditional discursive bounds of human rights. This poses questions as to why the nation remained largely confined to the topic of the dictatorship, and why the festival has stepped outside that perspective in recent years. I

suspect that most of the answers lie with the fact that the dictatorship was the catalyst for the deployment of human rights in the first place.

Much of the programming of the early editions of the festival was dominated by the theme of dictatorships and, until 2004, focused largely on domestic issues. For this reason, I have divided the discussion of the festival into two time periods—1997 to 2003, and 2004 to 2014. Each time period has a "context" chapter and a "festival" chapter. The period divisions are not strict, as it is more a thematic breakdown than a strict temporal boundary, and some themes are seen to continue into the next period, while others begin earlier but are more fully formulated later. In 2004, significant new trends are noticeable that see a reduction of films about the Argentine dictatorship, or even regional dictatorships, and the festival's visions are expanded beyond the domestic and regional spheres. It was also the time when the films began to be organized according to different schema that more closely mirrored the UN's treatment of human rights. For that reason I call this the beginning of a "looking out" trend that is more closely aligned with cosmopolitanism than internationalism. I call it cosmopolitanism because it is a partial internationalization that stems from a response to immigration patterns that confronted the nation with "difference." I suggest that the demands of the human rights discourse, with its universalizing/ internationalizing impulse discussed in chapter 1, have contributed, but remain rather limited. Part of the reason for the shift in emphasis toward cosmopolitanism must be attributed to a change in the directorship of the festival. Julio Santucho, who founded the festival, handed over the directorship to his daughter, Florencia Santucho, in 2011, but she had been the creative director from 2002. Her birth in Europe during her father's enforced exile had significantly exposed her to the international discourse of human rights, as her grandparents lived in Geneva (Zimerman 2013), where the UN housed the Human Rights Commission (now the Human Rights Council).

What became apparent as human rights and cinema converged in Argentina was that two important historical events provided a significant explicatory frame for the festival: the dictatorship of 1976, and the financial crisis of 2001. The first was clearly a significant influence for the festival, and the financial crisis had similar tectonic effects on Argentina, socially, politically, and culturally, and thus on the programming of the festival. In that crisis, the festival's critique of neoliberal politics is affirmed, while always couched as a celebration of the nation's resilience and inventiveness in the face of economic adversity. In fact, at this festival human rights become a frame for fulfilling grander visions,

and through the responses to these two significant events it is clear that those visions had/ have had more to do with nation-building than an affiliation to an abstract ideal of humanity. Human rights had been invoked by the Madres to lend international validity and support to their claims in relation to their children, and the festival utilized the same discourse for a similar purpose. I contend that the use of human rights to found a film festival at a time when Argentina's national cinema had just began to make a comeback, suggests that the language was used to fulfill a similar role to that of the Madres. That is, it was used to rebuild a national cinema, and rebuild a nation, through a reengagement with older political visions in a new body and language. By the use of that language an international validity could also be gained, one that a fledgling cinema, and a new festival, needed. But it was always to be in the service of something local, something of national importance rather than a connection to something outside; and hence, the initial concentration of attention on the dictatorship, to ensure that it could not return. By continuing to place the moral weight of human rights on those events, that which had destroyed the political visions with which Julio Santucho was reengaging could never reappear. This coincided with what the discourse could traditionally recognize, and a kind of commensalism developed between the festival and its uptake of human rights. That is, human rights were to serve a limited purpose for the nation of Argentina, confined to the terms that the festival and the wider community deemed important. Human rights had, in effect, been used to draw international attention through the very language that the United States owned as part of its nation-building and foundational narratives (see Part II). As the United States was deeply implicated in the dictatorships in South America (see Part II), the use of their own moral frame had been a highly strategic move. As Argentina confronted the 2001 crisis, the festival continued to employ human rights as a frame to denounce policies imposed through foreign influences, this time of an economic nature. The need to assert and continue to rearticulate a national sense of self, and to depose foreign influences follows on the tradition of Third Cinema, and this impulse is seen particularly in the inclusion of Pino Solanas' film *Argentina Latente* (2006), with its strong nationalistic themes, which I discuss in a later chapter.

The "looking in" orientation of the festival, maintained for most of its life, suggests that human rights have been recruited to fulfill strictly domestic needs by the festival. But human rights discourse is a powerful discourse that has also made its own claims on the festival. As Argentina emerged from the 2001 crisis, financially devastated, many people left

the country, while others came in from other parts of Latin America and elsewhere. For a nation premised on strong racial and cultural alignments with Europe, this had significant results. This point, where the festival engaged the nation with a set of racial tensions in facing a previously unfamiliar "other," is also when the shape of human rights discourse gains fuller expression in its programming decisions. This is seen in festival programming that pays attention to nations beyond Latin America, and that is organized through terms and schedules that more closely mirror UN categories. It is likely that as the nation was confronted with "difference" unparalleled in recent history, the internationalist orientation of human rights came to have more meaning for the festival.

My analysis of the festival has been informed by two sources: statements gleaned about the origins of and motivations, intentions, and aspirations for the festival as made available through their online presence or in other publications (for example, an edited book produced on the occasion of the festival's tenth anniversary, in 2007), and interviews I held with a number of key figures at the festival, and with human rights practitioners and film scholars in the city of Buenos Aires in 2011. The data on which I centered most of the analysis, however, was the schedule of film selections over the entire life of the festival up to 2014, and the patterns these formed according to my "looking in/looking out" frame. This frame revealed some interesting patterns and suggests an ambivalent relationship between the festival and human rights, one guided by the needs of the Argentine people rather than anything broader.

The section has been divided into four chapters, as well as this introduction and a conclusion. Two of the chapters are context/analysis, and two outline some of the films screened at the festival. The first context/analysis chapter begins earlier than the first festival in 1997. Given that human rights and cinema came together two decades after the dictatorship, they merge as a direct progeny of the politics of that time. As Julio Santucho stated in a publication produced to celebrate the festival's first decade, "[i]t is impossible to speak of the festival of human rights cinema in Argentina without mentioning history and politics" (2007, 59). Santucho's personal history follows a lengthy association with the militant politics of the subversives, and this is manifest in his two books, *The Last Guevarists: Emergence and Eclipse of the Revolutionary Army of the People* (Santucho 1988), which was reprinted and expanded in 2005 as *The Last Guevarists: Marxist Guerrilla in Argentina* (Santucho 2005). Cinematically, this radical tradition had produced Third Cinema.

Later chapters consider the more recent history, from the financial crisis of 2001, to changing immigration patterns, to a growing emphasis on environmental topics, and how these are reflected in the festival programming. With each of these topics I will show the ways in which the festival is expanding its, and the nation's, ideas about human rights, while always retaining a sense of nation-building at its heart.

The relationship of the festival to "the humanitarian gaze" discussed in chapter 2 is of interest, as this comes into being at the point where human rights becomes enmeshed with humanitarianism. That gaze has to be configured quite distinctly here as it is premised on an unequal relationship between watcher and watched, and is intended to engage the ethical compassion/pity of the viewer to act for another. Humanitarianism differs from activism, in that the latter is a more sustained and deeper engagement with issues in order to change the causes of inequality or injustice, while humanitarianism usually occurs in the context of emergency activities, to alleviate suffering in conditions of immediacy and panic. Activism is more closely connected to notions of solidarity, of suffering that implicates all who see it, rather than a privilege that distances and permits withdrawal. I was interested to note the effects of either discourse in this festival, and to look at those to whom compassion/pity might be directed, as opposed to those viewed with a sense of solidarity. In order to find the first, I decided that the clearest signal would be films about those considered more widely to be "the other." For the second, I looked for films that portrayed resilience and resourcefulness. The festival surprised me on both counts.

As a festival that was the brainchild of one man, Santucho, it is worthwhile giving his voice a lengthier space. In the following statement, Santucho has encapsulated the orientation the festival clearly has, in its earlier editions at least:

> Felipe Casalz and Chicho Durán, judges for the first festival, told me: "in the nineties, human rights occupy the place of the socialism of the seventies: they call forth the subversives." They were somewhat correct, although in our country "the subversives" had already regrouped in diverse ways, including in new political parties. What is original in our initiative was to unite cinema with human rights, two concepts that in Argentina have a history and longer tradition. And that in order to do politics in the sense of supporting national transformations, of participating in the battle of ideas towards an Argentina that could put an end to its decadence and reverses the tendency to exponential growth of hunger and injustice. We were convinced,

> and more so every day, that in our nation the formula cinema and human rights has an amplified capacity to summon us in ways that are much beyond the old and new ways of the subversives. And that, mostly, because Argentina has the sad privilege of having been the stage for a genocide.[1] (Santucho 2007, 59)

The *Festival Internacional de Cine Derechos Humanos* was a fascinating festival to study. So clearly enmeshed in the internal politics of its nation's past, it appears to have engaged with human rights as a byline, and created a kind of utilitarian association that has served primarily domestic/national purposes. In this, I suspect there is a strong thread of wanting to limit the influence of a foreign discourse and to shape it into something that suits the nation.

3
Context 1997–2003: History and Politics

> It is impossible to speak of the festival of human rights cinema in Argentina without mentioning history and politics (Santucho 2007, 59).

Bringing Human Rights into the Public Domain: Dictatorship and Postdictatorship

Human rights as a widely used discourse entered the Argentine public imagination at a fairly specific point in that nation's history. This was the period of the military dictatorship of 1976–83, which ended with the failed attempt to wrest the Islas Malvinas (Falkland Islands) back from the British. As a discourse that could wield wider political influence, it was the dictatorship of that period, as opposed to previous dictatorships, which produced the conditions for its possibility. Although the association between human rights and the 1976 dictatorship is now taken for granted, I want to take a brief look at some of that history, particularly as it was embodied by the activism of one group: the Madres Plaza de Mayo. These were a group of women who mobilized soon after the dictatorship came to power, seeking answers from the military about their missing children/grandchildren (see more below). Their activism brought the issue of political prisoners to prominence in Argentina and entrenched a corresponding discourse of human rights in the national psyche.

Until the dictatorship of 1976, only three explicitly "human rights"[1] organizations existed:

- *Liga Argentina por los Derechos del Hombre* (Argentine League for the Rights of Man), established in 1937;

- *Foco por Derechos Humanos*, whose report formed the basis of a 1973 film on torture and disappearances carried out by a previous military regime: *Informes y Testimonio. La Tortura Política en Argentina 1966–72*/*Reports and Testimony: Political Torture in Argentina 1966–72* (Eijo et al. 1973)
- SERPAJ (*Fundación Servicio de Paz y Justicia*/Foundation for Peace and Justice), established in 1974.

The term had already gained some associations with the rights of workers and labor issues,[2] although one of the above organizations focused on political imprisonment. Globally, human rights at this time were traditionally understood as claims made within the civil and political spheres. For example, Amnesty International was established in 1961 explicitly around civil and political issues. Political imprisonment was, therefore, readily identified with early human rights work, globally and within Argentina. It was not until the dictatorship of 1976, however, that human rights began to have anything close to the type of profile that might wield political influence. A website that houses a list of major human rights organizations in Argentina states,[3]

> Most human rights organisations were born during the last military dictatorship, as tools for denouncing the violations committed by the state, and to support families and victims. (Equipo Nizkor 2013)

The same page, hosted by Equipo Nizkor, an organization describing itself as making connections across Latin America, the United States, and the European Union through human rights (Equipo Nizkor 2012b), then lists over 20 other human rights organizations either based in or born in Argentina, most of them organized by the activities of that dictatorship. Human rights in Argentina, therefore, are now almost completely associated and institutionalized around the events of the 1976 dictatorship and the political "disappearances" from that time. Together with labor organizations, human rights organizations are said to have been instrumental in helping bring back democracy to Argentina after the dictatorship (Drake 1996; Munck 1998).

Julio Santucho in the epigraph above pointed to the dictatorship as a founding moment for the festival, because he, like other Argentine activists before him, continued to associate human rights with it. Activism in Argentina during the dictatorship had been severely curtailed, if not stifled completely. One of the few groups that managed to emerge and remain active in the public space was the Madres Plaza de Mayo, and this largely because of their strategic use of human rights language. The

Madres have remained a meaningful presence in both Argentine society and in the festival. Their foundational and ongoing significance can be most clearly seen in their position within the program brochures, a tangible discursive illustration of the way the festival organizes the layers of information hierarchies. In the 2014 brochure, they appear immediately after the address by the director of the festival, Florencia Santucho; this is a pattern repeated in other program brochures (for example, the 2012 brochure [IMD 2013f]). To bypass their history would be to deny a crucial element in the discursive development of human rights in Argentina, and the festival.

Madres Plaza de Mayo

It was largely the activism of one group, the Madres de Plaza de Mayo, that brought together the international discourse of human rights and the activities of the Argentine military regime of 1976. The Madres' activism began in 1977, at a time when the language of human rights was at its strongest in the United States, as President Jimmy Carter came to office and nominated it as the centerpiece of his foreign policy (Carter 1977a). It had been a language that had also been used by the Nixon administration previously but, perversely, to prompt Argentina's military regime to achieve their ends more rapidly (National Security Archive 2003) (see chapter 9 for more). It was a language that the Madres deployed early in their activism, becoming aligned with it through their association with organizations whose work was named as human rights.

The Madres were a group of women who in 1977—in the early days of the dictatorship—organically came together to appeal for information about their offspring. When their appeals were met with silence, they gathered once a week in the Plaza, a site of historical and national significance for democratic and independence movements, and circled it silently in pairs for a couple of hours, holding photos of their children in front of their bodies. Their nonviolent activism intentionally left out men in order to draw attention to themselves as mothers and grandmothers, roles revered in most Latin American cultures (Bouvard 1994; Jetter et al. 1997; Gibbons 2010).

Their continued actions in the Plaza, however, did eventually draw the attention of the military, and a number of the women were arrested during 1977 and 1978, including one of the leaders, Azucena Villaflor, who was subsequently disappeared. Some of their bodies were later found washed up on beaches (National Security Archives 2002). In 1978, the Football World Cup took place in Buenos Aires, which led to increased international media attention for the country. As a result, a Dutch women's

group (Support Group for the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo Argentina, or SAAM) formed specifically to raise funds in Europe to support them (Gibbons 2010). Amnesty International lent support quite early in the life of the group, inviting them in 1979 to travel as their guests to nine countries in Europe and the United States to speak about their situation in Argentina. According to Meghan Gibbons (2010), the funding provided by SAAM and the Amnesty invitations enabled the Madres to approach "heads of state, the pope, the United Nations, the Organization of American States—anyone who would receive them" (268). The extent to which the Madres actively used the discourse of human rights to further their case in the early days is unknown. Nevertheless, the term "human rights" became identified with their work quite early, as the alliance with Amnesty occurred only two years after their first appearance in the Plaza. Their claims also coincided with a traditional understanding of human rights as those of political prisoners. In this way the Madres' work was validated by the traditional language of human rights and gained international attention and resources.

The Madres' work in bringing human rights into the public arena in Argentina cannot be underestimated. But it is mostly because they were able to strategically use a language that had already gained international traction. Their activism has been important to mention not only because it allows some understanding of the origins of the human rights discourse in Argentina, but also because they represented a shift in political activism; indeed, it mirrors shifts in cinematic representations of "the political" that I explore more fully later. Theirs incorporated personal, micro- and interpersonal dimensions for activating rather than seeking to achieve macro-level revolutionary change. These women simply wanted loved ones returned, whether that was in body or as beautiful memories (Tascón forthcoming). What they did was political in a different sense from traditional conceptions of such. Although many scholars suggest that their work was primarily of an apolitical nature because it was motivated by the emotions of love and anger, and that their actions relied on symbolism[4] (D'Alessandro 1998; Bouvard 1994; Gibbons 2010), and on emotional work of bonding and relational networks (Bosco 2006), these interpretations border on gender stereotypical and diminish the very political work the women performed. The activism of the Madres was extremely dangerous and, as described above, some lost their lives, but it was also highly strategic through the deployment of the language of human rights, and the alliances they made. They managed to achieve some of what they set out to do, which was to keep public awareness on their disappeared children. They continue to this

Figure 3.1 Members of the Madres de Plaza de Mayo attend the 15th Festival de Cine de Derechos Humanos in 2014.

day, mostly through the work of memorialization of their children and grandchildren, and they have had a sustained presence at the festival.

The politics that human rights embody and that enabled the Madres' claims to slip through relatively inoffensively were not those of militant revolution. Instead, by incorporating personal, emotive work, and the liberal politics of human rights, they signaled a new, subdued approach to activism for social and political change. Although this shift has wider origins and manifestations, and a basis in the fragmentation of politics post-1980s, these women's activism took place before these events, and may have been an early indicator of such changes, as a form of gendered nonviolent activism (Bouvard 1994; Bosco 2006; Borland 2006) entered the public sphere. The feature film by Costa-Gavras, *Mon Colonel* (2006), which screened at the New York festival in 2007, makes reference to these shifts and to the Madres' activism, as in the final scenes the father of the main protagonist, Guy, holds a photo of his dead son in front of him as he faces the Colonel seeking explanations for his death. He then later declares his reasons for subsequently murdering the Colonel as "for myself, and Guy," and because "the Colonel scorned my son's honour." The reasons given are of a private, emotional nature, but with connections to the political act of defiance of authority. This fictional film about the Algerian war, fought to a large degree on ideological grounds, centers on the issue of state repression and the impunity of the army generals who carry it out, and mirrors the events of the

Argentine dictatorship; hence, the reference to the Madres, but also to other events. In the reference to the Madres' actions of holding photos of their loved ones against their bodies, and in the quoted dialogue, Costa-Gavras signals a skepticism toward utopic political visions, and the recognition of proximal relations as a valid basis for justice.

The Madres' activism, based on intimate familial relationships, was a turn in political action that was to make an impact in social life, and in filmmaking. Their contribution to this period of Argentine history has been included here because of the decisive role they played in bringing human rights into the public imagination, so that in contemporary times the association between the time of the dictatorship and human rights is seamless. The Madres' place in the festival has also been central.

Argentine Political Cinema and the Dictatorship

> The overriding feature in Argentine theatre and cinema of the post-dictatorship period is without doubt the anxiety to re-establish their agency as politically and socially engaged art forms: to recover the Utopian sense of passion and engagement that both theatre and cinema had experienced during the 1960s and early 1970s. (Page 2011, 1)

In Argentina's public imagination the almost exclusive association between human rights and denouncing the activities of the 1976 dictatorship has restricted its meanings to a domestic issue and the ideological war of that time. For that reason, many of the films in the early editions of the festival covered this topic. Those films, in turn, are largely concerned with reincorporating the desaparecidos as valuable members of Argentine society by memorializing them as heroic figures (Tascón forthcoming a). The desaparecidos were members of a radical politics, which found cinematic expression in the 1960s and 1970s within specific movements, but whose politics has a lengthy history in Argentina. *Grupo de Base* (Foundation Group), and *Grupo Cine Liberación* (Liberation Cinema Group) of the late 1960s, are two key groups, members of which also formed the cinematic movement that went on to have global reach: Third Cinema. Octavio Getino and Fernando (Pino) Solanas' film *La Hora* is the movement's founding and seminal film, the structure and content of which embodied the values and visions of Third Cinema (Mestman 2003). Solanas' films appear at the festival quite regularly, and a number of his films appear in a separate "retrospective" section entirely dedicated to his films, suggesting their presence has some significance for the festival.

Political filmmaking in Argentina has undergone radical changes since 1976, because of its suppression by the dictatorship, but also for other reasons. Domestic filmmaking and the exhibition of nationally produced films were seriously curtailed by the military junta through a tightening of censorship of domestic films as well as the encouraging of more foreign films to exhibit (mostly from North America) (Barnard 1997; Falicov 2007). As a comparison, in the 1940s, an average of 42 feature films were made in Argentina for a population of 15 million inhabitants, while in 1983, "only twelve feature films were produced . . . the smallest number of films produced in many years, [when] the population of Argentina was then thirty million" (SICA 1997, 457). The reason had been largely ideological as "movies . . . were severely circumscribed during the Proceso de Reorganización Nacional (Process of National Reorganization), the name given by the military to the political programs it put into effect after the 1976 coup" (Foster 1997, 468). The ideological reason for the censorship was a reaction to the fact that much filmmaking in Argentina had been produced not purely for its artistic or entertainment merit, but to present social commentary and to have an effect on social life (Lusnich and Piedras 2009; Foster 1997; Falicov 2007). Two large volumes on the history of political and social cinema in Argentina identify this type of cinema as dating back to at least the turn of the twentieth century (Lusnich and Piedras 2009, 2010). The 1950s films of Fernando Birri, as well as the 1960s films of Humberto Ríos receive special mention in that tome, and Birri's 1962 classic *Los Inundados/The Submerged* was screened as part of the *Argentine Cinema of Human Rights* section in the 2005 edition of FICDH (see next chapter). The history of films' being political in Argentina is, therefore, lengthy and substantial.

The "Process" destroyed much of the explicitly political in Argentine cinema, along with the means to produce stories for itself, resulting in "a new, and by no means fixed, set of parameters conditioning what it means to be political" (Page 2011, 2) (see chapter 5 for more on this). The reinvigoration of its national cinema has occurred erratically since the return to democracy in 1983 (Falicov 2007; Copertari 2009), and there have been other setbacks, including the most serious during the 2001 crisis, when funds for the fledgling national cinema were diverted to assist in economic recovery. The festival continues to have a strong allegiance to "the political," as a type of "cinema whose aim is to investigate inside society's hidden parts, in order to focus on the relationship between individuals and power" (Amelio 2011, 8). Although in later iterations of the festival this is manifest in different modes of

filmmaking (see chapters 5 and 6), using personal stories, in the earlier versions it is more clearly a continuation of an earlier type: militant cinema. There is a strong thread of this cinema at the festival, particularly in the films of Solanas. *La Hora* was screened in 2005 as part of a "retrospective" section for this filmmaker, which also included many of his older and then-recent films; his film *Argentina Latente,* formed part of the anti-neoliberalism/celebratory films that emerged after the 2001 crisis. That his films are considered in a separate section of the festival, as a "retrospective"—a looking back—suggests that by 2005 this sort of cinema may have been losing its grip on the cinematic imagination, and at the festival. It is nevertheless important to consider this militant cinema, and then to consider how it remains in the festival, as well as how the festival has moved away from it.

Militant Cinema at the Festival

What has been termed "militant cinema" (Brenez 2012; Marzano 2009) is a tradition in Argentina that was instigated by two revolutionary groups from the 1960s and '70s in particular: the socially committed *Grupo de Base* (Foundations Group) whose best-known representative was the filmmaker Raymundo Gleyzer, and *Grupo Cine Liberación* (Liberation Cinema Group), which had been spearheaded by Solanas and Getino. (As a short anecdotal aside, as I traveled through Buenos Aires in 2011, I was astonished to discover how many street vendors actually sell copies of older films produced by the aforementioned filmmakers. These were often copies of films from the 1960s and '70s by Gleyzer and Solanas, as well as other films about the dictatorship such as *Night of the Pencils,* and *La Hora*. This demonstrated to me that the films and the filmmakers retain a high level of significance in Argentina). *Grupo Cine Liberación* was central in initiating the anti-colonial cinema movement, Third Cinema, which gained global recognition from its manifesto, "Towards a Third Cinema" (Solanas and Getino 1969). While these groups were important in the development of the militant versions of political cinema in Argentina, it is usual to associate this type of cinema with Solanas' film *La Hora*, which was included in the festival in 2005. No description of political cinema in Argentina, indeed, of Argentine cinema in general, is complete without including Solanas' work (Elena and Díaz Lopez 2003; Page 2011; Andermann and Fernández Bravo 2013; Shaw 2003; Martin 1997; Copertari 2009; Falicov 2007).

While some scholars point to the Cuban revolution of 1959 as the genesis of the idea for Third Cinema (Marzano 2009), it was not until Solanas and Getino produced their manifesto that this new film movement was

given concrete shape. It was conceived as militant cinema (Solanas and Gitano themselves called it "guerrilla cinema" [1969]), which was "defined in opposition to Hollywood Cinema (First Cinema) and seeks to surpass the limitations attributed to the so-called "Auteur Cinema" (Second Cinema). Militant cinema was conceived as the most advanced category of Third Cinema and associated to a more immediate type of intervention" (Mestman 2003, 127). The militancy centered on an

> anti-imperialist struggle of the peoples of the Third World and of their equivalents inside the imperialist countries [and] constitutes today the axis of the world revolution. Third cinema is, in our opinion, the cinema that recognises in that struggle the most gigantic cultural, scientific, and artistic manifestation of our time, the great possibility of constructing a liberated personality with each person as the starting point—in a word, the decolonization of culture. (Solanas and Getino 1969 online)

Mariano Mestman[5] (2003) in an extended analysis of *La Hora*, notes that its structure is purposefully designed to fulfill its ideological tenets. It is divided into three parts, between each of which audiences were to engage in political discussions engendered by the film. This direct engagement between visual images and their audiences, Solanas and Getino called the "film act" (1969). A review found in the *Harvard Crimson* as this film was screening in Massachusetts in 1971[6] describes this as a deliberate strategy in its production:

> Solanas designed the length and structure of his film with an eye to resisting its being co-opted into the alienated conditions of the "entertainment" industry when distributed in capitalist countries. He intended the breaks in the film to provide the necessary opportunity for debate and analysis by the audience, not to create bite-sized chunks for exhibitors to exploit most effectively for high grosses. (Anon. 1971)

The engagement of a spectator as actor is an intrinsic element of the production of films as well as their exhibition, according to Solanas and Getino's vision. At the heart of Third Cinema's philosophy was the hope of "transforming spectators into responsible historical subjects" (Brenez 2012). In the *Harvard Crimson* it is described as "praxis."

The analysis of images that portray others' troubles in order to act as catalysts for spectators to become social change agents has a relatively

long history of scholarship, most of which centers on questions of the relationship of power between the spectator and images of the suffering of “others” (Boltanski 1999, 2004; Sontag 2003; Chouliaraki 2013; Tascón 2012) in what I called earlier “the humanitarian gaze” (chapter 2). Most of these debates center on the privileged viewers of affluent Western nations being able to make decisions on how much or how little, and in what ways, to intervene in others’ lives, “others,” moreover, who are less “fortunate.” Although much of that literature is concerned with similar (post)colonial questions of the power and politics of representation raised by Third Cinema, it concludes by being derisive of the powerful spectator of the West who is mobilized through shame (Keenan 2004), who may seek a quick fix by clicking a button to contribute financially or to sign an online petition (Chouliaraki 2012), or who is projected onto the scene of trauma only to be free to walk away from it (Hesford 2011). Although not all the scholars cited are exclusively concerned with cinema, they are all dealing with the use of visual material for political activism/human rights advocacy. In the context within which *La Hora* was produced, however, this relationship was intended to be subverted by demanding the production of films that directly represented and performed the needs of local people and their struggles, and invited a cinematic experience that inverted what was seen as the usual passive consumption of images toward an engagement with the immediate social conditions.

Third Cinema charges the film, a symbolic mediated text, with social effects and, indeed, is to be produced and screened for this purpose. The counterculture politics of the 1960s and ‘70s cinema, from within which this film emerges, is a significant part of this film movement and its practice of “the film act” (Mestman 2003), an interruption of the dominant ideology by the irruption of critical discussions. The influence of Third Cinema and its foundation on “the rejection of Hollywood dominance and the Hollywood model of cinema, the creation instead of a new kind of cinema with local roots; in short, a call to revolutionise both form and content, both the mode of production and that of representation” (Chanan 2014, online), has been significant worldwide, producing ongoing interest in its vision and accomplishments (Wayne 2001; Guneratne and Dissayanake 2003; Marzano 2009; Brenez 2012; González 2013 online). Nicole Brenez, French film critic, in a 2012 poll by the film magazine *Sight and Sound*, argues that *La Hora* should be included in the top 50 films of all time.

Third Cinema proposed the spectator as an active viewer of films, imagining a relationship with images that goes beyond viewing suffering

Figure 3.2 Active discussions postscreening are common and encouraged at most HRFFs.

as a distant event. Here I want to reclaim that film festivals' very habitus, that is, bringing together people in a particular place to perform similar rituals, and their practices of postscreening discussions, are also elements that sustain the vision of "the film act." This has been a common practice in the HRFFs I have visited. In FICDH, the notion of passive spectator could not be conceived, as postscreening panel discussions often became highly participatory events. These practices call into question the dominant critiques of humanitarian and human rights images as producing a distant (Boltanski 1999), privileged (Sontag 2005; Frann 2007), and passive spectator (Hesford 2010).

The above has considered the topic of political cinema in terms that are broader than the festival, but I have done so in an attempt to understand the historical and political threads this festival follows, as cinema and human rights merge in this context. While the dictatorship and Solanas' films remain important to the festival, there are other, more recent events that have also affected how the films have been selected. I turn next to another significant political dimension in the festival: neoliberalism and its effects.

Neoliberalism and Postneoliberalism

From its origins, FICDH has presented a steady and significant stream of films related to neoliberalism—critiques of its effects and popular

responses to it. The Argentine experience of neoliberalism has been of specific origin, and has had a distinct reaction politically, economically, socially, and also culturally. I explain broadly the meanings of the term as an ideology and philosophy, relying on cultural/film analysts to do this, rather than economic or political commentators, as is more usual. I do this because film festivals are sites of cultural expression, and, while it is the economic dimensions of neoliberalism that had the most direct effect in Argentina, it is films that are being used to critique it.

Neoliberalism and Culture

Neoliberalism is, as Wendy Brown suggests, an orientation toward free market values that goes beyond the market and has affected "all institutions and social actions" (2005, 39). Culturally and socially it organizes our worlds differently and redirects us to think of ourselves as freely negotiating individuals anchored and authenticated by "the market" as the primary (and only) form of collectivity; we gain our identities and meaning from the market, which becomes the ultimate reference point for our sociality and ethical decisions. The market and its values, in effect, reconfigure other forms of social and collective arrangements, which are replaced by individuals competing with each other for the benefits the market will provide. As Jon Stratton states, "[i]n this new order individuals replaced groups of any description as the basis for life" (2011, 3). Trent Hamann links this orientation to its precursor, liberalism, except that

> whereas liberalism posits "economic man" as a "man of exchange," neoliberalism strives to ensure that individuals are compelled to assume market-based values in *all* of their judgments and practices in order to amass sufficient quantities of "human capital" and thereby become "entrepreneurs of themselves." Neoliberal *Homo economicus* is a free and autonomous "atom" of self-interest who is fully responsible for navigating the social realm using rational choice and cost-benefit calculation *to the express exclusion* of all other values and interests. Those who fail to thrive under such social conditions have no one and nothing to blame but themselves. (2009, 38)

The subject in "neoliberal ideology," therefore embodies a "terribly lonesome individual" (Kapur and Wagner 2011a, 20), mediated by "[t]he anarchy of the market, of competition, and of unbridled individualism (individual hopes, desires, anxieties, and fears; choices of lifestyle and sexual habits and orientations; modes of expression and

behavior towards others)" (Harvey 2005, 42). This has ethical consequences (Hamann 2009; Thompson 2007[7]), as individuals are ultimately held together through the forces and mechanisms of the market, which in the present iteration of neoliberalism (Rose 1999), is motivated by the production of excess capital, or profit. Connections with others, therefore, occur as a function of competition rather than of care or cooperation.

The extent to which neoliberal ideology penetrates the functioning of activist film festivals is a complex question, as they must, to some degree, engage with its tenets if for no more reason than to critique them. FICDH has used its space to consistently interject neoliberalism and its applications, even before the collapse of the "neoliberal experiment." As a film festival it had also suffered during that phase, as Argentina's national cinema had been deeply affected by the neoliberal experiment, when state funding for films was almost totally removed post-2001 (Rocha 2011; Page 2009; Rocha 2009). A festival, as Ger Zielinski points out (following Mikhail Bakhtin), "offers the possibility of social unruliness and limited rebellion but always within the constraints set by some larger authority that permits it to take place" (2012). As he further mentions, it is a contained space for the celebration of "otherness" and deviance, but always within boundaries that are authorized by the communities and the discourse within which it performs that social unruliness. As spaces that produce communal-type encounters (Bazin 1955; Elsaesser 2005; Iordanova and Cheung 2010), film festivals have produced what Thomas Elsaesser calls a "special kind of public spheres, where mediatization and politicization for once have entered into a quite felicitous alliance" (2005, 103). FICDH, by taking on human rights as its defining discourse, did so in a place where human rights was limited, but this limit also permitted them to expand on it, as well as use it to question the prevailing ideology of neoliberalism. In this way, FICDH also used an element in human rights discourse that had more or less disappeared in its modern incantation: its revolutionary dimension.

The activist film festival is posited as celebrating a particular type of contained unruliness, relying on a modified form of cinephilia in the search for the "new" (which in activist film festivals may be a form of political subversion or opposition) through the possibility and performance of deviance (Zielinski 2012). These festivals, therefore, must function within the authority of the prevailing regime, guiding the cultural spaces within which they are situated, but they may do so in order to construct alternative "politicized" public spheres intended to interrupt, question the practices, oppose and subvert the broader public spaces

within which they are situated. The utopian ideal of "social change" (Iordanova 2012) that organizes much of the impetus for activist film festivals can position these festivals to do that in relation to neoliberalism, a dominant mode of economic exchange globally, that is, to *change* the parameters set out by neoliberal philosophy and practice. In Argentina, the festival clearly located itself in opposition to these policies from the outset, very possibly also fueled by the changes in state policies toward the funding of national film production, an area of cultural expression of deep importance to the Argentine national identity (Page 2009; Rocha 2009). Most of the opposition was made manifest in the early life of the festival through the effects neoliberal policies had on Indigenous peoples and their claims to land, as these were impacted by the private selling of land post-dictatorship, to pay national debts. Later, the opposition was in relation to the effects on workers, as the 2001 financial crisis was blamed on neoliberal policies. I focus on the films relating to Indigenous land claims in chapters 5 and 6, as they also refer to a discussion on national identity and the festival's role in subverting dominant Eurocentric views. The entire nation of Argentina, indeed, the region, has rejected much of the neoliberal experiment and its implementations as policies that encouraged privatization (Taylor 2009; Mcdonald and Ruckert 2009), so the festival is located in the present moment within social and political trends in the region that coincide with its directions.

Neoliberalism in Argentina had specific dimensions and responses. Jyotsna Kapur and Keith B. Wagner (2011), in tracing the origins of the term, suggest that it originated in Latin America, as *neoliberalismo* (17). This is most likely because in the 1980s and 1990s Latin America in general underwent major economic changes as free market values and privatization were applied widely (Mcdonald and Ruckert 2009; Heidrich and Tussie 2009; Wylde 2012) through structural adjustment programs overseen by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (Mcdonald and Ruckert 2009). In 2001, Argentina suffered one of its most debilitating financial crises, which many attributed directly to the neoliberal economic policies of the previous decades (Carranza 2005). Their application had resulted in a massive increase in poverty: by the end of 2001, the number of poor people was up to 57 percent, and the number in extreme poverty to 27 percent; unemployment had risen to18 percent; and the currency had devalued by more than a third, with more devaluations to come after the end of 2001 (Riggirozzi 2009). Late that year a total economic collapse was imminent, people were withdrawing their money from bank accounts, the state froze accounts in

response in what became known as *corralitos* (corralled), and mass protests began to take place, climaxing in extreme violence on December 19 and 20 (Riggirozzi 2009; Sitrin 2012). A number of films about these protests were present in the festival in subsequent years, such as *19/20* (Menassé, et al. 2003), and *19/20: Ecos de Una Rebelión/19/20: Echoes of a Rebellion* (Adamovsky et al. 2003). Groups such as the Madres gave their explicit support to the anti-neoliberal protests (Borland 2006), and thus human rights became part of the politics of the rallies (Guest 1990).

As a result of the 2001 crisis, a number of factories closed down through insolvency or as multinational corporations pulled out. A large proportion of the population was unemployed, with few or no savings as the Argentine peso continued to devalue; the total destitution of large numbers of people was imminent. This possibility catalyzed groups of people into what the festival called "auto-organizations," or "the resurgence of political activism and society's capacity for self-organization" (Riggirozzi 2009, 102) at that time. Where factories had been left abandoned by their previous owners, they were taken over by local groups and reopened as fully productive cooperatives (Pearson 2003; Petras and Veltmeyer 2005). Many films related to these takeovers found their way into the festival, including Solanas' *Argentina Latente* and Naomi Klein's *The Take* (2004). Most of these films, as will be seen in the following chapter, were celebratory, in that they portrayed the proactive ways in which civic groups organized themselves to reverse the economic effects of the crisis induced by neoliberal policies, and the resilience and ingenuity of the Argentine people in the face of extreme crisis. While most, such as Solanas' *Argentina Latente*, denounced the application of neoliberal policies as well, they simultaneously applauded the emergence of self-organizations that forestalled the worst excesses of the crisis. These films focused on providing alternative models for the hardships to which that the crisis led, which had different results for other groups. Among the wealthy and the middle classes, it led to a mass exodus. As Argentina attempted to correct its fortunes, future policies intended to forge connections with the rest of South America led to the liberalization of immigration. In later years this to led to an influx of poorer people from neighboring countries seeking work. The migratory effects of the neoliberal policies are considered in a later chapter, as well as the effects on Indigenous peoples and the films used to portray their plight. The celebratory dimension of the films about "auto-organizations" is part of a nationalist impulse that reemerged as civil society was able to organize itself to formulate solutions at a time of crisis.

4
The Festival 1997 to 2003: From the *Desaparecidos* to Neoliberalism

A Broad Survey of Films: 1997–2003

The FICDH in Argentina began its life five years after Julio Santucho returned to Argentina from exile, and two years before the Buenos Aires Festival Internacional de Cine Independiente (BAFICI) was started (Copertari 2009). This last event is significant because BAFICI is a festival of some international renown, but it is also of direct significance to FICDH. This is so firstly because BAFICI is funded and sponsored by the city of Buenos Aires, and its appearance may have had something to do with the removal of civil funding for FICDH that the city provided, soon after BAFICI started. FICDH had a hiatus in 1999 (the year BAFICI launched), and then again in 2001 (due to the financial crisis), after which it resumed as a yearly event, with funding provided by relationships forged with European embassies.[1] Secondly, BAFICI includes a "human rights" category and provides a prize for this category. It is of particular interest that BAFICI, a festival largely established on principles of the promotion of independent cinema (Buenos Aires Ciudad 2014), should include such a category, an obvious marker that human rights has become embedded not only in the public imagination but also in the cinematic one. This placed these two festivals in some competition for the few Argentine film submissions as the fledgling national cinema made a comeback (Wander-Argentina 2014), as well as for the definitions of human rights in that nation. As pointed out above, however, these two festivals do illustrate the extent to which the cinematic landscape had recovered by the time they appeared, and was able to accommodate at least one other, the International Film Festival of Mar del Plata, that had lain dormant for 26 years, as it made a comeback in 1996.

FICDH's programming can be divided roughly by the year 2004, after which films are organized according to social-political thematic sections. Although such screening categories are seen in 2003 as well,[2] most

of the screenings prior to this year were organized according to film categories, such as "documentaries" and "experimental films." Until 2004, most films that were screened by the festival were from Argentina, but there was also a significant number from elsewhere in the Latin American region; those from Argentina form part of that nation's new increased cinematic output.

Argentina, Latin America, and Dictatorships

Throughout the life of the festival, the focus on Argentina has been dominant, and much of this has been around the dictatorship, although other topics are also covered. Second to this is the emphasis on the rest of Latin America. At no time in the festival's life were both of these emphases more apparent than in the first edition, in 1997. In that year, over 70 films were screened, and more than two-thirds were about or produced in Argentina (about 60); about a third of these were about the Argentine dictatorship and its aftermath (about 21). Two films screened that year, *Madres* (Subiela 1996), and *Plaza de Mayo* (Bayer and Job 1997), were specifically about the Madres Plaza de Mayo, whose physical presence has remained a staple throughout the life of the festival. Indeed, the first year is overwhelmingly an edition devoted to dictatorships, mostly the Argentine one of 1976, but also others in the region, particularly in Brazil and Chile, or to revolutionary movements oppressed by the state. One of the few both produced and about matters outside the region, *Mater Gloriosa* (Pereda 1996), was produced in Spain, although even this short film (ten minutes) deals with dictatorships in general.

Most films in this edition were Latin American productions, or collaborations between a Latin American country and another country (e.g., with France, or Spain). Aside from the Spanish production mentioned above, only eight more films were produced entirely outside the region, although all of them deal with Latin America and some type of political issue, for example, *School of Assassins* (Richter 1996) about the School of the Americas, where many Latin American counterinsurgents were trained; *Close Protection* (Knox 1994), a fictional film about a Chilean general's visit to the United Kingdom; *Carla's Song* (Loach 1996), about Sandinista Nicaragua; *Speaking with the Enemy* (Kakoseo 1994), about the civil war in El Salvador; *La Hija del Puma/The Puma's Daughter* (Hultberg 1994), about Guatemalan activist Rigoberta Menchú; *Four Men on a Raft* (Welles 1942), an unfinished documentary by Orson Welles about Brazilian activists of the 1940s; *Tierra de Avellaneda/Land of Avellaneda* (Incalcaterra 1993), about a team of Argentine forensic anthropologists who

excavate remains in the cemetery of Avellaneda; and *Scilingo* (Polizzi 1996), about an Argentine naval officer interviewed in jail.

The festival's archives do not contain details for the second edition, 1998, and the third, which did not take place until 2000. The fourth edition, which was in 2002, only contains information on films that were awarded a prize, but these continue the emphasis on Latin America and on military dictatorships. Uncharacteristically, however, in this year, one of the festival's top prizes was presented to a film from Iran, about Iraq (*Marooned in Iraq*, Ghobadi 2002), and another from Switzerland, *Escape al Paraíso/Escape to Paradise* (Jacusso 2002), about the Kurds, received an honorable mention. The Best Film prize was, however, for a Chilean film about Chile's dictatorship of 1973, and two of the Special Jury Prizes were films about the Argentine dictatorship, thus retaining the importance of this topic to the festival.

In the fifth edition of the festival, held in 2003, just over a year after the December 2001 financial crisis and protests, a shift toward films and topics from outside the region begins to be glimpsed, although it does not become pronounced until the following year. The emphasis on Argentina, military dictatorship(s), and the Latin American region continued, but three films were screened that were from and about elsewhere: two films from Germany, *The Interview* (Farocki 1997), about work as social identity, and *Workers Leaving a Factory* (Farocki 1995), about workers, the subject of the first Lumière film; and one from Canada about Mexican immigrants in Canada (*The Contract*, Lee 2003). The Harun Farocki films, produced by a significant filmmaker (Elsaesser 2002), are of some interest, as these are not Argentine films, so presumably were included for some purpose other than to promote Argentine cinema. The theme of the films gives an indication of their aim, as these are two of Farocki's films that dwell on the invisibility of factory work, and work as it constructs social identities. The films, screened immediately after the financial crisis, must be seen as addressing that time when work was scarce and factory takeovers were beginning to take place. Farocki, in discussing *Workers*, does so through the symbol of the factory gate, as it "forms the boundary between the protected production sphere and public space" (2002), and which, in a strike "transform[s] an economic struggle into a political one" (2002). The factory takeovers were indeed achieving this transformation, and so the Farocki films are clearly included as a validation of these events. The rest of the films screened at the festival in 2003, almost 70 in total, are predominantly from and about Latin America, with two-thirds again from or about Argentina, and a third of the latter specifically about the Argentine dictatorship.

The number of films on the Argentine dictatorship diminished over time, but their importance remained. Their reduction began to become pronounced in 2004 when the festival organized film screenings according to thematic sections for the first time. Three sections were created that year—*Dictatorship and Repression*, *Memory and Identity,* and *Political and Militant Cinema*—each of which might potentially hold films of this type, and yet of the 17 films housed therein, only two such films are included: *Germán/Herman* (Schindel et al. 2004), and *Reconstrucción/ Reconstruction* (Rada and Medina 2004). The latter, an eight-minute short on the excavations of the foundations of a house that had been used as a clandestine detention center during the dictatorship is, however, described in the festival website (IMD 2013a) as not only about this forensic work but more broadly the overall history of the house. What is most significant is that this film is included in the section *Memory and Identity,* terms that continue to be used more in later festivals to house films about the dictatorship and the militant past that it represents.

By 2007, a decade after the first festival, only four films about the Argentine dictatorship were present among the total of 12 in the section *Memory and Dictatorship*, although films about other dictatorships around the world were shown. In 2008, the number was 3 of 11 films in a section called *Memory and Dictatorship*, although in 2012 there were 7 of 10 across two categories, *Memory* and *Open Memory* (a term used specifically for the Argentine dictatorship). These numbers do not suggest a diminishing interest in this topic, however, as its significance remains continuous throughout the life of the festival. Included in one of the opening sessions of the 2011 edition, for example, was a debate related to new evidence on the "flights of death,"[3] which became a volatile and heated discussion; members of the Madres Plaza de Mayo were present and highly vocal. The consideration of new evidence about the activities of the military, and the ongoing presence of the Madres, suggests that this is not a topic that will be allowed to disappear in the near future. And the types of films included in the new category of *Memory* contain films about a militant past that continue to remind new generations of their ancestors' politics. For example, in 2011 for the thirteenth edition, of the six films included in this category, four were about the Argentine dictatorship, one specifically about a militant labor organization (*Cecilio Kamenetzky*, Haddad 2010), and two about the Spanish dictatorship of Franco. *Cecilio* was described in the festival website as

> Cecilio Kamenetzky, law student, militant member of the P.R.T. [Partido Revolucionario de Trabajadores/Revolutionary Workers' Party],

> was abducted by police, commanded by the repressor Musa Azar Curi in 1975, tortured in a police building and kept in criminal prison N°1 for men. In a failed attempt to escape, he was shot in the back at a distance of one metre at point blank range. (IMD 2013b)

The addition of this film as late as 2011 illustrates that the theme of the state terror of 1976–83 had not been forgotten either by Argentine filmmakers or by the festival organizers. Furthermore, another category exists in 2011, intended largely as a schools program, which contains 12 films, all of which explore the economic, social, or political policies, or aftereffects, of the dictatorship. This last section suggests that the memory of the dictatorship and its impact are more than the formation of human rights in Argentina. The dictatorship is to remain an acknowledged and integral part of future considerations in nation-building, to act as a warning. What this section shows, moreover, is that the dictatorship has more recently become a topic on which to educate the next generation, and thus the festival is part of the politics of the memory of this period.

In 2004, as thematic sections were created by the festival, the theme of dictatorship continued fairly constantly. As noted above, however, its naming transformed from *Dictatorship* to *Memory* or *Open Memory*. In this way, a topic that had had largely political overtones was gradually bound to a nonpolitical term and signified by a human/biological function. The act of naming at a film festival is a significant act discursively; it begins to organize and direct the gaze of the spectator. In Foucauldian terms, it is surveillance of the discourse, and in film festival thinking, the organized dimension of the "organized unruliness." This is where explicit decisions are made to direct the attention of spectators. That which is used to name and house films that are distinct from each other occurs in order to pin down meaning, suggest intersections and new frames of meaning, and bind the films through a tenuous and superimposed meaning-categorization; changes to the signifier are attempts to bind the films differently, and are more than suggestive of a shift in the meanings the films are to carry. The shift from *Dictatorship* to *Memory*, toward a term that denotes a cognitive human function rather than a political phenomenon, redirected the meanings this section was to represent. This could be said to be related to the temporal distance between 1976 and the present, as this is now almost four decades and close to two generations ago. What took place then are, in effect, a store of memories worked and reworked collectively to recall that time. The change is also, however, part of a wider phenomenon that is discussed more

fully, at least cinematically for Argentina, in chapter 5. That discussion considers social and cinematic changes that may be attributed to the dictatorship and the neoliberal period, which have necessitated new frames of reading "the political" in films (Amado 2007). As "the subjective turn" in the documentary (Bruzzi 2005; Chanan 2007; Bonotto and de Barcelos Sotomaior 2008) and in the Argentine documentary (Piedras 2010; Andermann 2011) took place, films were produced that admitted personal, emotional dimensions that could lead to a new set of questions being asked. The Albertina Carri (2003) film *Los Rubios/The Blondes,* screened in the 2007 festival (I will have a little to say about this in chapter 5) illustrated this well. The repudiation of grand narratives, or structural loci of explanations for events and political interventions, led to an acceptance of fragmentary narratives of personal meaning making and experience. This could also be seen in the film *Mon Colonel* by Costa-Gavras (2006), screened at the 2007 New York festival, and discussed briefly in chapter 3.

Neoliberalism: Indigenous Peoples, Workers, and Migrants

Although there was only one instance when the festival named a thematic section with the term *Neoliberal*—in 2003—I have used it to cover a broad range of films because it is a widely recognized period in Argentine history (Macdonald and Ruckert, 2009; Taylor 2009; Friesen 2009; Rigirozzi 2009), when a number of radical social and cinematic shifts occurred. This section is defined by the set of policies of privatization instigated during the 1976 dictatorship and continued thereafter, which culminated in the economic devastation of the 2001 financial crisis. Neoliberalism is the cover-all term used in Argentina for this period, and post-neoliberalism is the fallout of the policies after 2001. As already mentioned, three spheres were most affected: Indigenous peoples' claims to land; migrants and migration; and workers. Indigenous peoples had been affected for some time before the crisis through the issue of land use. After the crisis, the other two major areas continued to be affected, as was Argentine cinema.

Workers, but mostly factory workers, were touched by the financial crisis primarily through the closing down of large and small factories and the massive loss of jobs. Many retrenched workers reacted to the crisis by becoming proactive, organizing and reclaiming abandoned industries through "factory takeovers." The crisis had an impact on migration and migrants as regional treaties and a liberalization of immigration occurred in order to rectify the "bleeding" of people emigrating overseas. This has had profound consequences on the racial composition of

Argentine society, one that has historically identified with Europe, and this will be covered in later chapters.

In what follows, I discuss only the films that depict the struggles and responses to neoliberal policies and the 2001 crisis by workers, leaving the other two groups to be discussed in later chapters. A point I want to raise here is something that I was told in passing by one of my informants in Buenos Aires during my research in 2011, but which I have been unable to support with documentary evidence. That is that human rights in Argentina had been used prior to the dictatorship in relation to labor issues, to further the validity of claims by workers to better working conditions and rates of pay. This might suggest that either "human rights" as a language was actually used in relation to work, but not extensively or formally enough to leave a trace, or that those struggles are now being read retrospectively as human rights issues. What is known is that the world of work was, and has been, a familiar site for political struggles in Argentina, as it became one of the main arenas of socialist politics and activism in the 1970s (Mestman 2013).

Auto-Organizations and Globalization

As Tamara Falicov observes, Argentine cinema suffered major setbacks after the 2001 crisis when funds were confiscated by the state through a set of emergency laws (2012). This, however, did not deter filmmaking and "Argentine filmmakers continued to produce good-quality, low-budget films" (2012, 207), with 67 feature films being released in 2003. Similarly, civil society in general was responding to the crisis, and it became a time when "citizens began to rethink the old system and make changes to help people cope with daily life" (207). As a result of the crisis, the festival did not run in 2001, and films dealing with the crisis did not appear until 2003. When they were screened, they were films that I have called "celebratory," about the strength of Argentineans to pull through an extremely difficult time, when the levels of unemployment were excessive, by collaborating creatively. An example of this was the creation of "swap meets, where one could barter food, crafts, and necessary items" (208). These films, one of which is Pino Solanas' *Argentina Latente* (2006), are similar to the set of films in the New York festival considered later, of a celebratory orientation when local activists/activism is portrayed. Those films in the New York festival, like these Argentine ones, celebrate their citizens as they mobilize for social change, or in the face of opposition and difficulties.

Most of the Argentine festival films dealing with this event and its effects are either reflecting and critiquing the neoliberal policies that

led to the crisis or celebrating the civil reactions to it. Solanas' 2002 *Memories of a Sacking* (a documentary at the 2005 festival) and his 2006 *Argentina Latente* (a documentary at the 2007 festival) were each a treatment of these two aspects of the crisis. The term "neoliberal" was first used to catalogue this type of film in 2003, and thereafter the term "globalization" was used exclusively. At the 2003 festival, a separate section called *Work and Globalisation: Oppositions and Destinies of the Neoliberal Model* appeared, including films of this type, and in subsequent years a category often named simply *Globalisation* housed them. Likely this refers to the fact that the two terms have been used in close association with each other, if not interchangeably. As was discussed in the previous chapter, the term neoliberal has been used primarily to describe an economic regime that favors private interventions in the public space guided by competition, a profit motive, and market mechanisms of supply and demand (Stiglitz 2003; Sachs 2006). Cultural analysts have used the term to describe a philosophy of individualism that permeates all institutions and cultural exchanges (Kapur and Wagner 2011; Stratton 2011; Brown 2005; Tudor 2012) (see chapter 3). Globalization, on the other hand, focuses on the *global* flow of cultural knowledge and material resources (Stiglitz 2003), and is often used to refer to its ideological underpinning by capital-accumulation philosophies that are similar to those that produced neoliberalism.

The two terms merge as they are both used to denote an ideological position that promotes the ideals of the free market and liberal democracy (Guttal 2007; Kapur and Wagner 2011a). As the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the World Trade Organization have applied these ideas in the regulation of global trade and finance, they have come to dominate worldwide. They are also said to have produced global poverty and unequal wealth distribution (Stiglitz 2003; Sachs 2006). Kapur and Wagner (2011a) make the connections between these two terms and global cinema, and prefer the term neoliberalism to globalization

> because the former term identifies a history, structure, and a set of relations—i.e., free market capitalism. In contrast, the latter appears to suggest that globalism is something new and without a structure or direction even as it is clearly animated by nineteenth-century ideas of free trade and free market. (Kapur and Wagner 2011, 18)

The ideological distinction they make, however, is not altogether a fair assessment, as scholars writing on globalization, in particular Stiglitz

(2003) and Jeffrey Sachs (2006), do so from a position that sees the productive possibilities of globalization, while noting the ideological parameters within which it is currently functioning. These discussions foreground the ideological nature of the ideas behind the terms globalization and neoliberalism, and it is to this that the festival is making reference.

The cultural consequences of neoliberalism and globalization occur as foreign ownership gradually changes production and consumption patterns both domestically and globally. In the case of Argentine cinema, the consumption patterns had been shifting toward Hollywood films since the dictatorship, as domestic film production had been drastically reduced (Barnard 1997; Foster 1997; Falicov 2007; Rocha 2011). At the festival, the films that focus specifically on work/workers and the effects of neoliberalism/globalization on them, take the form of a critique of the unregulated market and its social/employment effects, as well as the celebration of forms of solidarity that developed to counter its effects. Both of these orientations are celebrating something that is intrinsically local—the strength and resilience of Argentineans—and denouncing the failures of a value/ideological system imposed from outside. This has to be understood as an attempt to create and maintain a boundary between that which is deemed as distinctly different (the local) from that which is being imposed from outside and unwanted. At the same time, the opposition emerges from a sense of national identification that sees neoliberalism as an incursion that harmed not just jobs but the nation.

In relation to the festival's categorization of film sections, the shift from the use of the term neoliberalism to that of globalization, however, must be seen as occurring at a time when neoliberalism had entered a phase of being "post" in Argentina. As such, the term neoliberalism could well be seen to describe a phenomenon that had been rejected and overturned by 2004, in Argentina as well as regionally, while globalization[4] retains a similar analysis, but makes the connections with wider global forces.

At the festival, the films within the neoliberal/globalization categories are best characterized by the two Solanas films mentioned above, that is, as critiques of the application of neoliberal policies and their social effects, and the celebration and demonstration of the manner in which Argentine civil society organized as a response to the extreme economic situation post-2001. The distinction between "critique" and "celebratory" films is often indistinct, and most films fall within the latter category, except for the 55-minute documentary *Pescadores, La Ciudad de Los Ojos Cerrados/Pescadores: The City with Its Eyes Closed*

(Jarmoluk 2004), screened in the 2004 festival, which is a critical portrayal of the fallout of privatization on the city of Mar del Plata. The film *Días de Cartón/Days of Cardboard* (Souto 2003), which screened in the 2005 festival, is probably the best representative of the "critical" films, but it moves into the "celebratory" as well. It is described this way on the archival website:

> An army in the shadows composed of men, women, children and older people, arrive each afternoon from the peripheries to the rich suburbs of Buenos Aires. They are known as "cartoneros"[5] and they arrive by foot, in trucks, in cars, but mostly by train. The most emblematic of those trains, for being the first and its dilapidated conditions, is White Train. The train is a metaphor for the nation: destroyed, ancient, unsafe, broken, violated, but still running. The "cartoneros" are at once the most eloquent victims of the politics of the *neoliberal* adjustments and the visible side of a huge business: the illegal collection of rubbish, whose principal beneficiaries are the large economic corporations. The film explores the different forms of auto-organisation, the daily struggles and the diverse forms of solidarity and cooperation that exist in its wake, while also seeking to unmask the intermediaries and business men who benefit by speculating in others' misery. (emphasis mine) (IMDc)

As a result of the crisis, many people formed solidarity groups to advocate collectively and more effectively for themselves, and such films as *Cartoneros de la Villa Itatí/Cardboard Collectors from Villa Itatí (*Mignogna et al. 2003), screened at the 2003 festival, illustrate this through the story of a group of "cartoneros" who do this. Others appropriated abandoned factories and made them work again, as cooperatives. Quite a number of films on this topic have been screened since 2003. One from that year was obviously on this topic as seen in its name: *Laburante, Crónica del Trabajo Recuperado/Laborer: Chronicle of Work Regained* (Mamud et al. 2003), but half the number of films on Argentina that year dealt with the topic of factory takeovers (18 out of 36).

The description for one of the documentaries screened at the 2005 festival is indicative of the "celebratory" films in this category, *FASINPAT, fábrica sin patrón/FASINPAT: Factory Without a Boss* (Incalcaterra 2004):

> In the province of Neuquén workers in the ceramics factory Zanon carry on production without bosses since the end of 2001. (IMD 2014d)

Another film, *Grissinópoli: El País de los Grisines/Grissinópoli: Breadstick Ville* (Doria 2004), documents a takeover by its retrenched workers, in this case mostly women, and has been described as a key film in this "genre" (Falicov 2012). The festival describes it this way:

> Indebted and bankrupt, the bread factory Grissinópoli is abandoned by its owners. In spite of this, its 16 workers decide to occupy, live and resist their dismissals so that the factory may continue. Forming a work cooperative they attempt to keep it functioning with the available resources, but this desperate and utopic solution to their looming unemployment does not come easily. With little or, in many cases, incomplete primary education, these workers must transform into entrepreneurs. Soon forced cohabitation, the threat of eviction, lack of money and experience in running a business prove huge barriers to carrying their project forward.[6] (IMDe)

These types of film continued to be screened from 2004 to 2008, although in 2009 the category was lost as other topics became more important.

Two films in this thematic thread are of special interest, both released in 2004 and produced outside Argentina: Naomi Klein and Avi Lewis' *The Take* (2004) and Mark Dworkin and Melissa Youn's *Argentina: Hope in Hard Times* (2004). Both films deal with the phenomenon of factory appropriations after 2001. The first, a Canadian production, sees factory takeovers as emblematic of the possibility of reversing the excesses of globalization through active civil organization, and the second, a U.S. production, throws into relief the resilience of Argentineans and their hope in reconstruction. The manner in which Argentineans responded to the crisis, through what they term "auto-organisation," drew the attention of the international community, but particularly of those for whom these collective and cooperative events revealed a proactive civil society willing to stand against neoliberal policies.

Closing Thoughts

The time period covered in this chapter illustrated the early emphases of FICDH. Through the manifest patterns of film selections, or programming, the festival has displayed the orientations it sought for its audiences over this time. When human rights and cinema were brought together, they had already accumulated meanings specific to Argentina. Human rights as a language that gained currency in the public space had a relatively short history, and this was almost entirely associated with

the dictatorship of 1976–83, and much of it originated with the activism of the Madres. Cinema in Argentina had a much longer history, but had suffered severely during the dictatorship when censorship and the removal of funding had destroyed much filmmaking capacity. This had been repaired to some degree by the introduction of the *Ley del Cine* (Law of Cinema) of 1994, but the industry was already floundering. As the festival began in 1997, the resurgence of its national cinema must have been a significant motivating feature. Cinema has played a central cultural role in debates and negotiations of national significance in Argentina, and could well be said to have been a fount of much national pride. Its demise during and after the dictatorship must have hit many in that nation hard, especially those for whom its political dimensions were key in the formation of nation. The resurgence of its national cinema after 1994 resulted in an overemphasis on Argentine films at the festival during the period covered here. The use of film genre categories to organize the films, rather than the social-political ones used after 2004, suggests that cinematic frames of organization were of greater interest for the festival to begin with. The emphasis on Argentine films and the manner of categorizing in this early period suggests that the idea of human rights was not at the forefront of the creation of the festival, other than as a means of referencing a very specific period in Argentine history and to make claims for not erasing it from collective memory. As a discourse that entered at a fairly specific time in Argentina, it is through the strategic work of the Madres that human rights were appropriated mostly for strategic purposes rather than for their intrinsic visions. This had been made necessary during the dictatorship, as the political landscape of that time had destroyed, along with its national cinema, the possibility of deploying radical language or methods. Human rights were a language with some international credibility, and in the post-1980s global scene became one of the few viable options for articulating social change. In Argentina, furthermore, human rights had simply become a means to an end, one that the Madres took up and developed, and an end that was entirely domestic: that associated with the desaparecidos and the dictatorship. Florencia Santucho, however, has taken the festival into new terrains, ones that confront a new set of challenges. The next two chapters follow some of these trends.

5
Context 2004–14: Postdictatorship, Postneoliberalism, and New Argentine Cinema

The Festival and the Nation

The films on the civic responses to the 2001 financial crisis, which the previous chapter described, illustrated a fidelity to earlier political and cinematic visions by the festival. Those films, celebrating "auto-organisations" that emerged organically as responses to the crisis, were part of films' role as transmitters of national narratives, desires, and struggles. In this way, the festival, and the films selected to represent that time, form part of a wider struggle that had to do with reassertions of a nation in the face of external invasions both economically and cinematically. The origins of FICDH were entwined with the reassertion of a national cinema that had all but disappeared until the law of 1994 (Copertari 2009; Falicov 2007; Page 2011), one that had, furthermore, played an integral role in Argentine nation-building (Lusnich and Piedras 2009). The festival can be seen to be part of the rejuvenation of a cultural industry neutered in its ability to tell its own stories to itself. But it was also part of the repositioning of a politics that had been decimated. In this way, FICDH forms part of a broader vision both politically and cinematically, one that was trying to rescue a nation from disintegration. Its national cinema and the anti-imperialist and radical politics of Third Cinema, with its emphasis on self-representation and autonomous self-definition, had been a significant element of that prior to the dictatorship. As a HRFF, FICDH aligned the discourse of human rights to an exclusively domestic set of events, but this in order to rescue all that was in danger of being lost and forgotten: a version of the nation that had been gradually diluted by outside interventions.

Third Cinema, in part, originated to stem cultural importations that were drowning out local expressions. It proposed a cinema that would

rewrite and retell stories situated and influenced by local, domestic, and national struggles, in order to expel powerful external cultural influences. As Nicola Marzano says,

> Solanas and Getino contributed greatly in building one of the most important columns and reason of debate within Third Cinema such as the notion of national culture and identities. Enhanced by this concept of specific national roots that comes from African, Asian and Latin American Third Cinema, *La hora de los hornos* (Hour of the Furnaces) has mirrored the pursuit in avoiding the industrial-political domination of Hollywood. (2009)

Denise Tavares (2010) goes further than that when discussing Pino Solanas' complete oeuvre, declaring it to be "a political nationalist project, conceptually structured by Peronism and enlarged by the utopianism of a 'great Latin American homeland' as envisioned by the leaders of independence of the countries of Spanish South America" (7). In this sense, Third Cinema and Solanas are attempting to deflect outside influences while simultaneously advancing a distinctly Latin American sensibility.

The film *Argentina Latente* (2006) is the clearest example of this, a film that was screened in the ninth festival in 2007, soon after it was released, which suggests that Solanas has strong associations with FICDH. As the festival describes the film, it is

> The third instalment in the Argentine saga by Pino Solanas, it covers the reconstruction of the nation (after the crisis of 2002), beginning from outlining its natural resources, industries and scientists. This work proposes a debate on the technological models to demonstrate that efficiency and modernity are not antagonistic in relation to human and social rights. (IMDm)

Latente is, indeed, a film that covers a lot of ground, from the way in which technological advances have been made in Argentina, by Argentineans, to the active ways in which workers across different industries have organized themselves to keep their factories alive since 2001. It is the tone of the film, however, that betrays its intensely nationalistic aims, the first few minutes filled with aerial views and statistics intended to inform the viewer of a land rich in resources, able to sustain its population adequately, yet with deep social inequalities due to the export of much of that wealth as neoliberal policies have sold lands and resources out of the country. It is a film that proposes, narratively, that as a nation

the crisis can be overcome if its people can realize the wealth and strengths of which they are a part. *Latente* was produced at a time when the financial crisis had produced a mass exodus of the middle classes (see below). The deep attachment that Solanas holds for his birthplace is apparent in this film, but it seems to be an anxious reassertion as he must have been too aware of its fragility after his enforced exile during the dictatorship. *Latente* celebrates the nation as a collective of people who responded with resilience, underwritten by an anxiety that it can be so easily corroded.

Carolina Rocha, discussing neoliberalism and its effects on Argentine cinema, declares that "Argentine film production and consumption between 1996 and 2006 has been punctuated by the impact of economic recessions triggered by Argentina's neo-liberal economic model" (2011, 19). The loss of the possibility of representing its own issues to its own people as before and the erosion of national film production, which was reduced to 4 films in 1994 (Rocha 2011) in contrast to an average of 42 in the 1940s (SICA 1986), must, in part, be an explanation for the large number of Argentine films at the festival. Human rights were recruited for a struggle to reassert a nation perceived to be under attack, and therefore the troubles they viewed were mostly of a domestic nature or, at most, regional. The humanitarian gaze, reliant as it is on an unequal relationship that permits others to be watched from a position of privilege, is here plainly subverted. The watching is of themselves as "others" of global and foreign interventions that have eroded their own sense of capability and strength. Human rights are enlisted to recover something lost, a national struggle that had been taking place prior to the dictatorship. That recovery, however, is not framed as taking place or needing to be justified as a struggle of being human, and therefore of all humanity. That is, unlike the American and French Revolutions, this struggle was seen as primarily Argentinean.

A number of factors got in the way of anything close to a full recovery of that earlier vision: the shifts that were already taking place within political cinema, and in the sociocultural composition due to increased immigration from sources outside Western Europe, as well as the demands of human rights discourse. As to the last point: this would have been felt more acutely by the new director, Florenica Santucho, whose birth and childhood outside Argentina provided her with a different, more cosmopolitan, outlook. Human rights discourse, with its claims to universality, places demands on those who use it. As I mentioned in chapter 1, this is translated at most as an internationalization, or looking at others beyond one's own national borders. In this festival,

I suggest, it becomes a type of cosmopolitanizing instead: a motivation to become part of a wider set of global struggles and to work in the world of cultural difference. This coincided with Argentina's facing increasing immigration from areas outside its traditional sources—namely, Western Europe—and the growing interest by Santucho in environmental issues. The latter, a subject that cuts across national borders, has become of such significance for the festival that it launched an inaugural subset of the festival in 2012 exclusively on this topic, the International Environment Film Festival (FINCA). Before I turn to the growing cultural diversity in Argentina and its meanings for the festival, I want to discuss briefly some of the cinematic changes taking place in Argentina, specifically in political cinema, as this had an impact on notions of a return to earlier cinematic models by the festival.

New Argentine Cinema and "the Political"

Although Argentine cinema is a vast landscape, even if confined to what has become known as "new" Argentine cinema (Foster 1997; Aguilar 2008; Page 2009; Page 2011), in this section I focus on what Philippa Page called "a new . . . set of parameters conditioning what it means to be political" (2). Further, she adds,

> This shift in the political field can be attributed to the collapse of the Left and the fact that politics can no longer be mobilised along specific ideological lines, a result both of Argentina's traumatic experience of dictatorship, as well as of its opening up to policies of neoliberalism and processes of globalisation which are symptomatic of more widespread de-politicising trends in the Western world. (2011, 2–3)

Films in the Argentine context have had a long tradition of being "political" (Piedras and Lusnich 2009, 2010; Amado 2007; Aguilar 2009; Page 2011). A number of scholarly works were produced in the mid- to late 2000s that considered the question of "the political" in Argentine cinema (for example, Rangil 2007; Sel 2007), Particularly significant is an extensive history of political and social cinema in Argentina, in two volumes covering the period from 1869 to 2009 (Lusnich and Piedras 2009, 2010), which a reviewer called an "enlightening panoramic vision" (Crowder-Torraborrelli 2011). But in what follows I have drawn largely on Ana Amado's *La Imagen Justa: Cine Politico de Argentina: 1980–2007* (The just image: political cinema of Argentina, 1980–2007), in which

she focuses on aesthetic and ethical questions on the politics of memory and representation in the period after the dictatorship.

In both of these works the question arises as to what can be deemed to be "political" cinema. Ana Laura Lusnich and Pablo Piedras suggest that all cinema that is counterhegemonic, is political, and one of its reviewers (Lanza 2010, online) suggests that this is then a definition that can include almost all Argentine films. Indeed, their two volumes cover a large number of films from the two periods. Amado takes a less direct route. She sees the connection between politics and cinema as a historically constructed one, of which aesthetic criteria shift with time, but of which ethical demands remain connected to the social/political realities, albeit in "forms of intervention that compose and decompose reality by means of a poetic invention"[1] (2009, 10). Amado's comments allow for the complex interplay between social reality and aesthetic mediation to be seen as a *politicidad* (roughly translated as "politicization"), a response to the ethical demands of the [social] time—"its critical moments, the weight of struggle, the duty to testimony, the responsibility to memory" (ibid. 10).[2] She continues, "[t]hese affirmations do not entail an obligatory link between cinema and the political and/or social, but the construction of a *politicisation* that in direct or indirect ways alludes to that reality"[3] (emphasis mine, ibid., 10). Hence the political in cinema, in Amado's terms, is an active and perennial intervention, a "politicization" that takes place as a response to a set of events in a particular time, in a particular way, but that can include many expressions of it. This way of considering the political in cinema allows many more films to be included in its definition, as Lusnich and Piedra have done, even though they define "the political" quite differently. This, Patricio Fontana suggests, permits a "return to politics in film studies that does not require for there to be films ostensibly political, but critics . . . who can read how, sometimes in spite of themselves, the political is inscribed in their images"[4] (2010). This new(ish) way of seeing films, as "politicized" rather than political per se, is, of course, not new, as others have made similar comments, along the lines of "all films are political . . . they clearly have things to say about the world in which we live, the social roles we inhabit, and the identities we adopt" (Hill 2011, 6), and, as Michael Chanan says, the documentary has "politics in its genes, though not always expressed" (2008, 16). Although all films can be considered politicized in the sense Amado uses the term, because they "poetically" re-posit the world they portray, and position the viewer, even if only through stylistic devices of camera angles, lighting, and music, there is still an urge to locate "the political" as that element in films that

explicitly "investigate[s] inside society's hidden parts, in order to focus on the relationship between individuals and power" (Amelio 2011, 8). The wider inclusion of films under the term "politicization," however, in the Argentine context, must be read as addressing shifts that were taking place as "the subjective turn" (Bruzzi 2005; Chanan 2007; Bonotto and de Barcelos Sotomaior 2008) and more particularly the Argentine documentary (Piedras 2010; Andermann 2011) became more widespread. The traditional mode for films to question power had been to do so at the societal structural level, produced in the mold of something approximating Third Cinema's *La Hora*. The locus for the investigation of power that Amelio mentions is hence the individual rather than society. The irruption of the first-person documentary from the early 2000s in Latin America, is noted by Argentine film scholar Pablo Piedras, as

> based on the impossibility of classic documentary film to tell a historic truth about the traumatic events of recent history. Giving a new meaning to the reading of the past through the filmmaker's own subjectivity, subjective documentary film has partial, tentative and provisional truths that are deeply ingrown and operative for the construction of a close memory that passes from the individual to the collective sphere, thus reversing the parabola of the militant political cinema of the seventies. (2010)

Julio Santucho may be alluding to this new approach to politics in the statement in the Introduction before chapter 3: "in the nineties, human rights occupy the place of the socialism of the seventies: they call forth the subversives" (2007, 59). A little later in the same text, he then clarifies that it is a new type of subversive politics that human rights, and by extension the film festival, embody, a politics that goes "beyond the old and new ways of the subversives." A similar transformation had occurred worldwide. The decline of radical politics, as the Cold War was reaching its climactic end, occurred in Argentina through a dictatorship that had killed or exiled their revolutionaries. This had included radical filmmakers, and hence a strong tradition of blatantly political cinema was curtailed and transformed. So the more diffuse understanding of "political" in Argentine cinema that Amado proposes is a necessary intervention of its own, as all of these factors had changed the locus of the analysis of power and therefore the very nature of what constituted political cinema.

As some scholars have suggested, the films during and immediately after the dictatorship denounce the military regime's activities in fairly

muted tones (Burucúa 2009; Kriger 2003; Oubiña 2003). Constanza Burucúa (ibid.), for example, points to two films made during the dictatorship by Adolfo Aristaraín, *Tiempo de Revancha/Time for Revenge* (1981), and *Ultimos días de las víctimas/Last Days of the Victims* (1982), which were veiled critiques of an already failing regime. As she mentions, *Tiempo* "was immediately recognised by its reviewers as audaciously and subtly critical of the regime" (ibid. 78), without direct reference to the regime itself (Oubiña 2003), while *Ultimos días* clearly signals its impending end allegorically. These films begin a trajectory that continued after the dictatorship ended, and that is significant for the festival as it too moves into the new phase being considered here.

Luis Puenzo's *La Historia Oficial/The Official Story* (1985) was the first film released about the dictatorship after its demise. It dealt with children who were born to political prisoners and handed to members of the military or supporters to raise as their own, and received international acclaim and many awards, including the Academy Award for Best Foreign Film in 1986. It is, however, quite subdued in its condemnation, as Clara Kriger comments: the film "lacks a radical voice. It does not make a social denunciation because it is not directly focussed on the victims . . . [n]either does it contain proposals for the future" (ibid. 181). Puenzo relied instead on traditional aesthetic and narrative modes of cinema because, as he said, he wished to appeal to a broader audience and "traditional political cinema . . . only catches the attention of people who are previously convinced" (in Kriger 2003, 181). "Traditional political cinema" is read, by Puenzo, as ideological indoctrination, while the scholars above are using the term to capture a broader set of films by determining them as "politicized" or "counterhegemonic." Costa-Gavras' "fictionalised politics" (Michalczyk 1984), which I cover in chapter 10, were also attempts to move away from the traditional form of political filmmaking. But there is possibly more than that in Puenzo's statement. The film was produced and released at a time when reports such as *Nunca Más* (Never Again) (CONADEP 1984) had just disclosed the full extent of the crimes committed by the military regime, and while the generals were still free to wield political influence. It was circulated in a society burdened with guilt, exhaustion, and some trepidation that the military could return, but also at a time when militant revolutionary politics were losing their potency and were under attack globally as the Cold War drew to a close. All of that meant that this film, as well as others that followed, aligned less with "conventional political film, appealing instead to a kind of 'unveiling'" (Kriger op. cit. 181). Even one of the more aggressive films denouncing the dictatorship, *La*

Noche de los Lapíces/Night of the Pencils (Olivera 1986) takes on a psychologized hue, exploring individual horror rather than state terror as a social or political event.

A much softer, mellower, personal, and psychological turn occurred in postdictatorship Argentine cinema, and Puenzo himself points to this new approach, saying that he had "deliberately used the format of intimate, not political cinema" (in Kriger op. cit., 181). Albertina Carri's *Los Rubios/The Blondes* (2003), screened at the 2004 festival, displays the subjectivization of politics in Argentine films postdictatorship. The film, about her parents' disappearance during the dictatorship, was produced at a time when there was a marked increase in first-person reflexive documentaries of this type (Piedras 2010), which "began to ask hard questions about the motivation that drove their parents' political activism. Most children agreed with the ideology, but questioned why their parents preferred militarism over safe family life" (Edelstein 2012).

Los Rubios

In *Los Rubios*, Carri uses a diversity of narrative strategies to advance her argument that truth is always partial, split, and positioned, one such strategy being the use of an actress to portray her as she seeks the testimonies of her parents' surviving compatriots to answer her question: "why did you choose to leave me behind living?" She splits her self, presenting the film through a multiplicity of eyes: from that of herself as a child of three left behind by parents who were removed and murdered in 1977, to friends and colleagues of her parents, to second-hand retelling of her siblings' words. The theme of mediated stories, of uncertainty of truths according to who tells them, styles the film: the filmmaker exposes the second-hand nature of stories by exposing the filmmaking process, and by giving her voice to an actress, who intertwines with her real person in the film, confusingly at times. It is an intended confusion, one that Albertina Carri suffered throughout her childhood, wishing repetitively for her parents to return. She articulates that confusion when she says, "All I have is a diffuse memory contaminated by all these versions. I think that with every attempt to get closer to the truth I end up becoming more distant." Her parents are specters that hover and return to her, but through the prism of many others' eyes. Piedras suggests that Carri's intent was to "break a tradition of documentary cinema that gives a strong value of truth to testimonies. In canonical documentary practices, testimonies occupy a central space. A new attitude of distrust towards testimonies" (2010) infuses her documentary.

This, to my understanding of the process of memorialization of the dictatorship and the desaparecidos since the 1980s and 1990s, is a phase that begins to split the certainties represented immediately after the dictatorship. That phase had been characterized by attempts to counter the dictatorship's silencing of "the subversives." As Piedras states, "In these last documentary films, the doubts, questions and tentative propositions about Argentine history replace the speeches of certainty displayed by documentary films of the nineties" (2010). Joanna Page (2009) sees in this trend a corrective to the positioning of the politics of the militants as without blemish, forcing us "to see the symmetries of violence at both ends of the political spectrum" (162) as they affected different groups: in *Los Rubios,* these were the children of the desaparecidos. For Page, this repositions "the political" as a filter through which violence may be experienced differently. Piedras suggests, on the other hand, that "the expression of this subjectivity implies a relegation of the collective, but never its complete disappearance from the sphere of representation, and this is the strategy used by the director to break up, according to her own statements, a generational discourse that does not cease to be formed politically" (2010). For him, the fragmentation of points of view about the same event questions the absolute authority of either the individual experience or the collective frame, but these are still held together through a "political" that formulates both generationally. These two views coincide in their description of a process of collective memory, which involves an ongoing set of historical assertions and revisions.

Although much of the discussion on "the subjective turn" in cinema generally, and Argentine cinema particularly, suggests a new filmmaking attitude arising from recent social circumstances, the acceptance of personal/emotional loci for telling political stories had occurred previously, and had slowly taken shape over some years. This is apparent in the filmmaking of Costa-Gavras, some of whose work I will cover in Section III. But the validity of personal/emotional dimensions had already been given credence in the world of political activism through the Madres in Argentina during the late 1970s. Therefore, although Jens Andermann (2012) claimed that the "subjective turn" had not taken place in Argentine cinema until much after 2001 because of the political activity that accompanied the financial crash, I would suggest that the softening of politics to include personal, subjective experiences had already begun to take hold in the imagination through the Madres' work. Although, of course, much analysis sidelines their work as not political, as discussed in chapter 3, I would nevertheless say that this form of nonviolent,

but dangerous and ultimately effective agitation had made its mark in Argentine public life already. The loudly spectacular but yet nonconfrontational protests originated by women in the *cacerolazos* (pot-banging) (Fernandez 2004; Borland 2006), where pots were banged loudly in unison, also represented protesting alternatives to militant activism. That the inclusion of this form of personalized politics does not make its way into cinematic expression more fully until the early 2000s may have something of a gendered element to it, as *Los Rubios* certainly makes use of the personal, and was produced by a woman filmmaker. While Piedras is specifically referring to documentaries in his appraisal of the subjective turn in Argentine cinema, and some of the films produced during and immediately after the dictatorship were fictional feature films, the "personal" approach had already occurred in other ways. And yet the more insistent turn toward subjectivism in documentaries did pose difficulties for traditional definitions of the political in Argentine cinema. In order to retain a sense of the political as an analysis of power and its various narrative expressions, a different definition of "political" was invoked by Argentine film scholars. This is to counter the possibility of forgetfulness of films as political, as Amado and Fontana above assert, in the face of the loss of a tradition that had been present in Argentine cinema for some time.

Another factor that needs to be considered in relation to the cinematic landscape within which the festival operated, is the 1994 *Ley del Cine* (Law of Cinema), enacted three years before the first edition of FICDH. This law increased the funding for filmmaking considerably by taxing all box office takes at 10 percent (Eseverri and Luka 2003; Batlle 2002; Falicov 2007; Copertari 2009; Rocha 2011; Piedras 2010; Page 2011). The increase in funds had a direct effect on fictional feature films, and by 1998, 37 films were released (Copertari 2009, 5). In 2007, resolution 632 was added to the law, which provided a system of subsidies for noncommercial documentary filmmaking and had the effect of increasing the number of documentaries made, which had a direct impact on activist film festivals such as FICDH. As mentioned, the appearance of FICDH in 1997 must, in part, be read in conjunction with these legal changes and the reinvigoration of a national cinema that had suffered considerably under the dictatorship of 1976 and the neoliberal period that followed. These legal changes also point to the level of importance accorded to Argentina's national cinema by successive governments, by turn strangling and supporting its products. As a form of cultural expression, it holds a central place in the Argentine imaginary.

As the festival negotiated those cinematic shifts, it was also confronted with a changing sociocultural domestic landscape. Some of these changes I discuss in what follows.

Neoliberalism, Indigenous Peoples, and Migration

As mentioned earlier, the festival emerged in the period before the 2001 financial crisis with a strong anti-neoliberalism platform. Neoliberalism as an ideology that favored privatization and private institutions as opposed to collective social and economic formations was already being undermined with the Law of the Cinema by providing state-sanctioned funding arrangements. That law lent strength to the possibility of FICDH, but it also gave the festival a purpose. The anti-neoliberalism platform at the festival must be read as opposing an external set of beliefs that was undermining local industries and collective values by permitting external interests to take over. That ideology was seen as directly responsible for the crisis of 2001, which in turn led to an exodus of the professional middle classes, and a resultant influx of non-Western European immigration. Argentina was facing a new set of challenges, and the festival needed to adjust accordingly. Two sets of films represent a recognition of "others" and their struggles, although each is associated with different historical periods: one set is those films focusing on Indigenous peoples' claims to land, which are directly related to anti-neoliberalism, and the other set is those films focusing on immigrants, which related to the country's changing social composition as a result of shifting migration patterns. With the former, the fight between Indigenous peoples and the global fashion corporation Benetton is illustrative, and there were a few films about this at the festival. With the latter, the social significance of the new immigration patterns can only be gauged by an understanding of the extent to which Argentina had forged its national identity on an intimate identification with Western Europe. In each case the festival's focus on the particular group is plainly an attempt to provide a space for voices that would otherwise not be heard, but it is also part of a wider set of national sociopolitical trends.

Benetton, Neoliberalism, and Land: Indigenous Issues

Although the selling off of large areas of rural land was not confined to Benetton, this purchase was the largest and most contentious of all foreign land ownerships in Argentina. The controversy lies in the fact that this was the largest tract of land bought by foreign interests, in the Patagonian region, one of the most pristine areas in the south of Argentina, which had an impact on traditional owners. At the heart of the

conflict is what the United Nations Human Rights Commission (UNHRC) has said "highlights the challenges of reconciling traditional indigenous concepts of land ownership and use with private property laws that are constitutionally enshrined in all the countries of the region" (Minority Rights Group 2010). Land has become a central issue for the Mapuche, a nation of Indigenous peoples, most of whom reside in Chile, although a small number live in southern Argentina. It is a point of conflict for all Indigenous groups in Argentina, however, especially as neoliberal policies of private land ownership came into conflict with the rights to ancestral lands of Indigenous peoples. There are 16 to 20 Indigenous groups in Argentina; most dwell in the north, in areas bordering Bolivia and Paraguay (Minority Rights Group 2003). Although they have constitutional recognition of their ethnic and cultural identities, and laws that protect communal ownership of ancestral lands, this means little since their implementation lies with the provincial governments, and many do not recognize indigenous rights. A UNHRC report makes this point:

> During 2009, Argentina's indigenous peoples continued to have little say in the use of their lands or the management of their natural resources. As a result, protests continued in many provinces over attempts to dispossess or evict indigenous communities from their ancestral lands to make way for tourism or large-scale petroleum, mining and agro-industry projects. Indigenous organizations such as 11 de Octubre Mapuche-Tehuelche Organization continued in 2009 to claim that their constitutionally guaranteed rights to land ownership and their title deeds were not being respected, and that the sale of land with people living on it was still occurring. (Minority Rights Group 2010)

As late as 2010, the UN recognized that these groups' rights to land continue to be subjugated to the rights of other forms of land ownership. The case of the conflict with Benetton illustrates this well.

The background to the conflict began in 1989, when then-President Carlos Menem began privatizing state-owned companies to pay foreign debt (Taylor 2009; Labaké 2003). As the debt not only remained unpaid, but grew (Argentine Central Bank 2002 report, in Labaké 2003), a program was established, which, in effect, was to sell large parts of Patagonia, one of "the most sensitive and guarded area[s]" (Labaké, online) in Argentina, as part of its "debt for territory." Juan Gabriel Labaké states,

> Since mid-2002, the U.S. Treasury Department and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) have suggested that Argentina could secure an

> important reduction (up to 40 per cent) on the principal of its private debt. (102)

In 1991, Benetton became the largest purchaser of land this way, buying from Compañía Tierras del Sud Argentino SA, to graze sheep for wool. With minimal environmental or other encumbrances on the purchase, Benetton now owns 900,000 hectares of Patagonian land (Labaké 2003; Hacher and Bartolone 2003; Mirodan 2004; Smink 2011). The current disputes over this land emerged in 2002 when a Mapuche family named the Curiñancos, who were living on the land, were forcibly evicted, their house pulled down, and their oxen and plough confiscated (Helft and Raszewski 2005). In 2003, the Curiñancos unsuccessfully took their case to court. In 2004, human rights activist and 1980 Nobel Peace Prize winner Adolfo Pérez Esquivel became involved, and wrote a letter to Benetton, which was published by the Italian press, accusing Benetton of having "the same mentality as the conquistadors" (Helft and Raszewski ibid.) and of being a "feudal lord" (MercoPress 2005). This brought the topic substantial international attention, and in that same year Benetton offered to hand over 2,500 hectares of land to the Mapuches (by then a number of Mapuche families had joined forces with the Curañancos), and subsequently increased the offer to 7,500 hectares. However, the offer was rejected by the Mapuches.

Land sovereignty has been a long-standing problem for the Indigenous peoples of Argentina, as it has for many other Indigenous peoples in the region and beyond. For this reason there remains a substantial focus on this issue at the festival. As a newspaper article mentions,

> Since Europeans arrived in Patagonia the Mapuches have been persecuted and their land forcibly disputed when not confiscated even as recent as during the Pinochet dictatorship. The Benetton episode on the Argentine side partly compensates losses but not legitimate rights as Mapuches demand. (MercoPress 2005)

Although the current president of Argentina, Cristina Kirchner, has passed laws to significantly limit the future sale of Argentine land to foreign owners, she has said that "the measure will not affect the rights already acquired because it would mean changing the rules of the game and affect those who acquired land legitimately"[5] (Smink 2011). The language of rights is deployed here to uphold the interests of those who, like Benetton, benefitted from the neoliberal period, while the rights of Indigenous people whose claims to lands are much older (and legally

recognized in Argentina law), are not considered as invalidating the former's claims.

The films at the festival not only deal with the Benetton dispute but also address Indigenous land issues generally, from within the region as well as beyond. The situation of Indigenous peoples in Argentina is not dissimilar to other regions of the world where these groups suffered large-scale dispossession as a result of European colonialism. Within Argentina and Latin America in general, Indigenous peoples, however, have suffered not only from dispossession but also from invisibility and the resultant discrimination, which film festivals such as this attempt to rectify. European colonization occurred over 500 years ago, but Argentineans have strongly identified with Europe, more so than most other nations in Latin America (Halpern[6] 2009).

Migrants and Identity

Immigration policies are usually a subset of decisions made that are directly related to national identity. That is, they are intended to permit entry to people on the basis of perceived characteristics that are deemed to be of benefit to national ideals. In the past some of these characteristics were formulated through raciobiological features, and in recent times through cultural and economic factors (Stratton 1998). Emigration, however, follows different processes, involving "push factors," often for economic or political reasons. Argentina, after Spanish colonization, became a nation populated largely by immigrants, but most of these were from southern Europe. Between the years 1870 and 1929, Argentina received the bulk of its immigrants from Italy and Spain (Esteban 2003), becoming in that period one of the six main migration destinations (Lattes 1986).

The turn toward Europe had been a purposeful policy, articulated and ratified institutionally in the 1853 Constitution. The Constitution, in turn, had been drafted from ideas developed by Juan Bautista Alberdi, found in his book *Foundations and Points of Departure for the Political Organization of the Republic of Argentina* (1852/1915). In this book, Alberdi announces that "to govern is to populate," and this means by the people of Europe because, as he states, "America has been discovered, conquered, and populated by the civilized races of Europe" (33). The emphasis was on notions of civilization (Devoto 2003), which the Indigenous peoples of Latin America did not possess, according to Alberdi:

> Today, as an independent nation, the indigenous does not figure nor create worlds in our political and civil society.

> Those of us who call ourselves American are nothing but Europeans born in America. Cranium, blood, colour, all from outside. . . .
>
> Who knows a gentleman among us who claims proudly to be fully Indian? Who would marry their sister or their daughter to a child of the Araucanía (Indigenous nation of much of Latin America), and not a million times over to an English shoemaker.[7] (Alberdi 1815, 82–83)

Although Argentina was little different from other Latin American countries at the time, the institutionalization of its approach to immigration in such a foundational document expressed and established an entrenched gaze toward Europe that persisted. As noted above, in contrast with the rest of Latin America, with the exception of Brazil, most of Argentina's immigrants have not been from Spain but Italy (Faiola 2002 online). Many of these immigrants were able to keep dual citizenship, or apply for a passport based on family ancestry. After the 2001 crisis, many such applications occurred, as many of the middle classes, educated and with the financial means to do so, left. The festival screened a number of films on this subject, and this exodus was also widely noted elsewhere. A 2002 *New York Times* article documented the torment of those leaving in the words of one individual: "To have to leave one's own country causes great anguish, but it is better to start over somewhere else than to remain here . . . Argentina has become like quicksand: the more you move, the deeper you sink" (Rohter 2002). A similar suffering had been felt by those forced into exile by the dictatorship, Solanas' film *Tangos, The Exile of Gardel* (1985), one of the few on that topic at the festival. Julio Santucho had, similarly, been forced into exile, returning to Argentina in 1994.

In order to stabilize the outflow of people, but also as a result of other events, such as the signing of the Mercosur Treaty of 1991, which opened up migration borders for the member states, the government of Nestor Kirchner loosened immigration policies (The Economist 2007). An influx of people seeking work, mostly from Bolivia, Paraguay, and Peru, was the result. Immigration from other places has also been increasing, particularly from the Middle East, South Korea, and China (Jachimowica 2006), and this has been a huge adjustment for many Argentineans. The recent film *Un Cuento Chino/Chinese Take Away* (Borenzstein 2011) confronts some of these issues, albeit humorously, and although this film did not screen at the festival, it illustrates what the festival has been tackling in this area. The film centers on a young man from China arriving in Buenos Aires to look for his uncle, and he is "adopted" by an Argentine loner as he becomes disoriented and cannot find his way in the city. As they

share a house for a few days, they come to know each other and appreciate their differences. For a nation whose identity had been formulated around "civilizing" features emanating from Europe, this new racial/ethnic diversification is as far from the cultural template established by Alberdi in 1852, as is possible. The racial attitudes toward "others" such as Indigenous people and those from Asia had been formed by the ideals expressed by Alberdi. I remember growing up in Chile in the 1970s, when to be called a "Chinese" or an "Indian" (meaning Indigenous person) was to cast some of the most extreme offense, mostly because it was attributed to the worst classification of human being. I cannot imagine that Argentineans were so different in these attitudes at that time, or that things had changed so drastically by the time the festival began. This was only a generation ago, and, unlike in Chile, their European orientation was institutionally cemented in their Constitution. Indeed, my informants in Argentina assured me that these recent migration patterns are posing very real challenges, and not only in economic terms. Many of the uneducated and unskilled migrants work in the informal economy and face serious discrimination, as these are cross-cultural encounters most Argentineans have not had to deal with before.

Closing Thoughts

The festival has been negotiating a number of cinematic and social shifts that have taken place over the life of the festival. Cinematically, "the subjective turn" has called into question some of the traditional tenets of what constitutes the political, and what may be included within it. Films produced since the early 2000s in Argentina have taken this turn, prompting film scholars there to redefine what "the political" in film means. The festival was caught in this shift as, in its early iterations at least, it attempted to regain features of a political struggle that had begun prior to the 1976 dictatorship. Much of that struggle had centered on opposing neoliberalism as a hangover legacy from the dictatorship. At the festival this was manifest particularly through the films on Indigenous peoples' land claims, of which the Benetton case was a good illustration. That the festival chose this topic to make that point has to be read as an attempt by the festival to upset a Eurocentric and homogeneous national identity that had made "others," including Indigenous people, invisible. As Argentine society has been confronted more recently by the entry of non-Europeans immigrants, including low-skilled workers from elsewhere in Latin America, this has become a topic of significance for the festival. The festival has responded to these

challenges by expanding its visual repertoire to include films from as far away as the Middle East, Eastern Europe, and Australia, yet it has never lost the commanding presence of Argentine and Latin American films. These two issues, of Indigenous people and immigrants, gradually take the festival toward more expansive visions of nation, while attempting to retain a sense of Argentineans as distinct. Increasing migratory intakes from a diversity of sources are gradually shifting Argentineans' connections to those beyond the region. I call this an impulse toward forms of cosmopolitanism, which has been driven by events of recent historical origin, but must also be seen as, in part, formulated by the internationalizing influence of human rights. Although I did not explicitly consider the context of the development of human rights discourse in Argentina more widely post-2004, the comments made in earlier chapters still prevail. That is, human rights in the Argentine public imagination continue to be fairly exclusively associated with the events and effects of the 1976 dictatorship.[8] What this suggests is that the festival is standing outside its own national discursive developments in relation to human rights, and also moving away from some of the prevailing originating political and cinematic discourses centering on dictatorships. This may be seen particularly in a stream of films and foci on the environment recently noted for the festival, although not explored here. Indeed, in 2013 the organization that oversees the running of FICDH, DerHumALC (Human Rights in Latin America and Caribbean), inaugurated another film festival named Festival Internacional de Cine Ambiental/International Film Festival for the Environment (FINCA). As an issue that crosses national borders, environmentalism is making that cosmopolitan impulse more fully manifest.

6 The Festival 2004–14: The “Other” and Cosmopolitan Visions

Broad Survey of Films 2004–14

The sixth edition of the festival, in 2004, sees a significant shift in its gaze. For the first time a sizable number of films was not only produced outside Latin America but their topics were also about other regions of the world. In this edition, films about Palestine, Cambodia, Russia, Australia, and Vietnam are included alongside those from/about South America. Also for the first time, the festival is divided into thematic sections consistently, a trend that continued in future editions. The themes that year were *Women* (10 films); *Violence against Children* (9 films); *Sexual Diversity* (3 films); *Land* (Indigenous and Peasant) (9 films); *Dictatorship and Tyranny* (3 films); *Memory and Identity* (6 films); *Political/Militant Cinema* (9 films); *Palestine* (2); *Social Exclusion* (3 all from Argentina); *Labor* (6); and *Panorama* (15 films). The last category included films on various topics, but mostly related to art and activism. The themes change each subsequent year, but a number remained to become regulars such as Gender, Children, Indigenous, Memory, and Land. These categories closely mirror those of the UN's Declarations and Conventions, as these are largely organized according to recognizable social groups to whom some form of recognition has been granted through Conventions or Declarations. For example: the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1990), and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (1979), although some rights are organized more generically, such as the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (1976).

Each of the festival categories that remains fairly constant is significant in its own right, and in what follows I focus largely, although not exclusively, on Indigenous issues, Land, and topics related to migrants and migration. I have done this mostly because in a nation largely built on national narratives of racial homogeneity (see previous chapter),

the festival has set about unsettling these histories. The decision not to include the topic of Women or Gender in the analysis is because this raises considerations that require more expansive analyses than can be provided here. Some of this has already been noted in the discussion on the Madres and the phenomenon of *cacerolazos* (instigated by women protesting and banging pots in the streets (Borland 2006; Falicov 2012), which focused on women's activist role. Women have played a significant part in Argentina's public life in contemporary history, but how that intersects with the development of human rights and the festival could only be undertaken here in relation to the Madres. My primary focus has been on the pattern of "looking in/looking out," as this demonstrates a growing global outlook by the festival. That pattern seemed to be more closely related to the way in which the festival has negotiated racial difference, as this points to some of the tensions in this regard within Argentina, and hence how possible the "looking out" becomes.

In what follows I have organized the discussion around "the other" for that reason, to gauge the extent to which the festival has engaged with a celebration of what may be considered racial "others," and their difference. In this way, therefore form an opinion in relation to how the festival is using human rights to predispose their audiences to difference of a broader nature. This may signal an attempt to expand visions of nation that can encompass difference from within, but then is predisposed to difference from outside the nation also. The following descriptions/analyses have been divided into four sections, as these in turn manifest a widening scope in that direction: Indigenous peoples and land; migrants, migration and discrimination; environment and identity; and films named "human rights."

Indigenous Peoples and Land

Since the first festival in 1997, this topic has received a considerable amount of attention, possibly more than it receives outside the festival in other forums. Many films in this category have been concerned with Indigenous people of the northern parts of Argentina. This is where many such groups are concentrated, but also where a significant Indigenous movement, the Movimiento Campesino Santiago del Estero/Rural Movement SdE (MOCASE) is located. As the description for one of the films about this group, screened in the 2003 edition (*MOCASE, la tierra para quien la trabaje/MOCASE: Land for Those Who Work It* [Muñoz 2002]) states, it "is one of the most well-organized land movements" in that country. Two films about that movement were screened at the 2003 festival—the one just mentioned and *MOCASE, la lucha por la tierra en*

Santiago del Estero/MOCASE: The Struggle for Land in Santiago del Estero (Menutti, Mascaró, Otero 2004). The second of these was a work in progress, and in the 2005 festival was screened as a complete film: *MOCASE, la lucha por la tierra/MOCASE: A Struggle for the Land* (Menutti et al. 2005). Although there are other Indigenous movements in Argentina, Santiago del Estero is personally significant for the Santucho family, as Julio Santucho, founder of the festival, was born there. But this issue is also of interest to the festival for the connections it has to globalization, neoliberalism, and large corporate power. This is evident in the description given for the 2005 film, *MOCASE: A Struggle for the Land*:

> In the province of Santiago del Estero, the confrontation between those who live in the land and others who claim to own it assumes similar forms. For many years the Indigenous farmers viewed the other side as a powerful and formidable enemy with wealth and the support of the judiciary and the police. MOCASE's work in conscientisation of the Indigenous farmers has been decisive and everyday there are fewer who submit to the pressures to accept individual negotiation.[1] (IMDh)

The importance of collective mobilization is stressed here, but equally the active agency of the farmers. Films about Indigenous issues and peoples from other parts of the region are also present, in particular from Mexico, where the Zapatista movement has been very successful as an Indigenous movement in making land claims, and from Brazil, where the problematic issue of the deforestation of the Amazon also brings together similar discussions about Indigenous people's rights, corporate power, and environmental degradation.

Issues related to Indigenous peoples in Latin America, as in many other parts of the globe, center on claims and conflicts over land/resource access. In 2004, when the thematic sections begin, one called *Land* was created to house these films. Films from Mexico, Brazil, and Chile were included in this section, as well as films from Argentina, all countries with a substantial number of Indigenous peoples making land claims. In fact, the section for Indigenous issues, named *Pueblos Originarios,* meaning literally "Originary Peoples" (translated by the festival as *Native Peoples* in their English language programming brochures), was retained in its own right throughout the life of the festival after 2004, although in the year 2010 it was named *Territory*, and in 2011 *Mother Earth*. This makes explicit the connection between Indigenous issues and land, but also the term "originary" highlights their longer claim to that

land. The 2010 section *Territory* housed Indigenous, homelessness, and environmental issues, and the 2011 section *Mother Earth* contained a mix of Indigenous and environmental topics. In 2012, the category *Native Peoples* returned, and another was added specifically for environmental topics; this was replicated in the 2013 edition. Thus the importance of each has led to its own section, but has also marked the burgeoning importance of films dealing with environmental issues, which will be discussed below. As mentioned, the films in these sections were mostly from Latin America, although at least two from Europe have made an appearance (*Herdswomen*, Boman 2007, from Switzerland, of which the title is self-explanatory; *Pretty Dyana*, Mitic 2003, about Romany gypsies). Both of these films refer to conflicts with the wider social groups: in the latter case, over the Romany people's right to move freely across borders, and in the former over the right of farmers to continue to use their traditional land.

The issue of land is at the center of most of the films on Indigenous subjects. The most iconic of these is the conflict between the Mapuche of Patagonia, a rural region in Argentina, and Benetton. This is the subject of the film *Los Colores Sean Unidos/The Colours Are United* (Doudchitzky 2006), which is described in the festival website as a "confrontation . . . [that] has transcended our borders and exposes once more the submission of Indigenous peoples and the advance of the transnationals . . . the Mapuche are determined to resist them" (IMDi). In this way the confrontation is represented as taking place as part of a wider struggle, at the national level and from external ideological incursions. The topic received worldwide attention, and was the subject of a further documentary, *Colours at the End of the World* (Corte 2009), not screened at the festival, in which the struggle of the Mapuche against Benetton's ownership of this land is brought into question. The film has also been the focus of much other activism against Benetton worldwide (Schertow 2011). At the 2011 festival, another film on this issue appeared, this time from France, *Patagonia: The Colours of a Conflict* (Maldavsky 2010). This film follows the Mapuche family who were at the center of the conflict, the Curiñanco of the Argentine Patagonia, after they rejected the offer of 535 hectares by Luciano Benetton, from the "one million hectares bought by the Italian textile magnate" (IMDn). The festival describes this film's theme as a conflict between "two conceptions of property" (IMDn). The confrontation is couched as competing interpretations of, and relationship to, land, while the quoting of the number of hectares gives away the festival's sympathies—the offer in comparison to what is owned by Benetton, placing it as a David and Goliath story.

The conflict with Benetton, and other films about Indigenous rights, are largely about these groups' mobilizing against more powerful forces. The festival represents these struggles as taking place as part of something larger, as well as emphasizing the agency of Indigenous peoples. They are not descriptions that portray victims of circumstances, people overwhelmed and despondent, but rather people who are joined in a common fight. This can be seen particularly in the description of the film *MOCASE*, mentioned above, as Indigenous farmers are organized to mobilize collectively, and also in *The Colours are United* description, underlining the Mapuche's determination to oppose Benetton. If there was one group that might have been the target of "the humanitarian gaze" (see chapter 2), the Mapuche were a good candidate, as they are relatively powerless within Argentina, and are outside Argentina's largely Eurocentric national identification, but that does not appear to be the case. Their plight was not described by the festival as overwhelming both for the watched and the watcher, due to its immensity and urgency. Instead, the issues were explained as "troubles," the solutions to which are already taking shape in the action and direction by those affected. At most, the viewer may join in a predetermined struggle, as the solution has already begun to be implemented by the Mapuche themselves. As the problem is couched as part of something larger—in the descriptions above a clash of interpretations over land ownership, and a cross-border intrusion by large corporate power—it is an appeal to a particular viewer. It draws upon an implied audience, an activist audience already predisposed to questioning prevalent norms of land use and for whom global forces of capital are seen as interfering with local industries. Indigenous issues are, therefore, not filtered through notions of distance and suffering, which are the primary features of the humanitarian gaze. Instead, Indigenous people become a privileged people at the festival, because their relative powerlessness represents something bigger for the nation itself, which needs changing. Part of that is the need to include them in national visions, as the "originary peoples" of that nation.

Migrants, Migration, and Discrimination

Films about migrants and migration were found at the festival from its beginning, although this did not become a category in its own right until 2005, one year after the festival was organized according to sections. In that year, the section was named *Migrations (Citizens of the World)*, and thereafter simply *Migration*, and in 2008 it changed to *Migrants*. The shift in emphasis from a generic or structural term to a human quality or a social group is similar to that which occurred for the category of

Dictatorship that I discussed in an earlier chapter. It is another example of the festival's organization reflecting more closely the knowledge-organization of the UN.

The number of films about migrants/migration increased in 2008, and these encompassed areas of the world outside Latin America. For example, in that year only one film from Argentina was found in this category, the remaining nine being from Israel, Spain, Italy, Mexico/the United States/Switzerland, Germany, and Kosovo. Four of these films, however, are about Argentineans, either in exile or as economic migrants. Until 2008, many of the films in this area were from and about Latin America, but primarily Argentina. Those about Argentina dealt with a) those coming from other Latin American nations to settle in Buenos Aires primarily, or b) Argentineans who have settled elsewhere because of the deteriorating economic conditions in Argentina. The movement of people within Latin America has been opened by the creation of regional treaties such as Mercosur, which permit the free flow of goods and people within the continent (Mercosur 2013). The entry into Buenos Aires of large numbers of people from poorer nations, many of them of Indigenous descent, has presented Argentineans in that city with challenges they have not previously faced. Immigration by people from Bolivia, Peru, and Paraguay has produced increased racial and social strains, usually displayed as discrimination (Halpern 2009). Films such as *La Combinación Perfecta, Músicos Peruanos en Buenos Aires/The Perfect Combination: Peruvian Musicians in Buenos Aires* (Muñoz 2002), screened at the 2003 festival, deals, in part, with the difficulties faced by such immigrants.

The fictional film *Estudio Para Una Siesta Paraguaya/Study of a Paraguayan Siesta* (Dansker et al. 2003), screened at the 2003 festival, deals with immigrants from Paraguay, and is the story of Zuñilda. Newly arrived in Buenos Aires from Paraguay, her cousin, already living in that city, sets out to "instruct and re-educate Zuñilda for her new life in Buenos Aires, seeking to erase her Paraguayan peasant ways, which only remind her of her own identity, so often discriminated against by the society in which she lives" (IMDj). The film *Pachamama, Bajo el Asfalto* (Bel 2003), screened also at the 2003 festival, is concerned with the Bolivians, and takes up individual stories of a number of these immigrants living in Buenos Aires, traveling through the places they left and the lives they lead in their new city. These films attempt to represent the daily realities of those who are known to a wider population mostly as peddlers in the streets and who perform the menial tasks of cleaning and cooking. Many *mucamas*—maids—are migrants from these regions,

and the film *Bajo un mismo techo/Under the Same Roof* (Mosenson 1996) screened at the first festival, in 1997, is about women immigrants from Paraguay who work as maids and face abusive working conditions, and social/racial discrimination from the wider community.

One film that was included in the 2005 festival is important to mention as it deals with an almost unknown chapter in the history of Argentina. This is the presence of African slaves who were brought to Argentina by early colonial traders, and their offspring who still remain there. The phenomenon of African slaves is mostly associated with the United States and the Caribbean nations, but the film *Afroargentinos* (Fortes and Ceballos 2002) is described as confronting the racism that those of African ancestry face in Argentina, as it is not a history that is well known or disseminated in the public space.

This set of films, along with those on Indigenous peoples, represent stories of a corrective kind. That is, alongside activist elements in the films, they are also intended to correct exclusions. Without the necessary presence given to these groups' stories, they remain encased in stereotypes that lead to prejudiced and discriminatory reactions. By using the interpretive frame of human rights, these are films that are attempting to integrate those left out of traditional national narratives, especially given Argentina's history with race, as discussed in the previous chapter. The films also represent a broadening vision by the festival, a "looking out" that in the context of Argentina is beginning to accommodate itself to the changing sociocultural parameters within, but is also confronting some of the internationalizing demand for human rights. The latter can be seen in a growing number of films on other migratory travels after 2004. For example, *Juva y Washiná* (Vaccaro and Vellacott 2005), the title a parody of two English words, "hoover" and "washing up" and which was screened at the 2006 festival, is about a young Colombian migrant in London who does menial cleaning work to help support his wife and children back home. Since 2008, the migrations of other groups of people around the globe have been screened more extensively, such as *Jekh Kam Jehk Sel* (Mustafa 2007), screened at the 2008 festival, about the Romany gypsies in Kosovo since the eleventh century.

Toward a Cosmopolitan Vision: Environment and Identity

As already discussed, the festival began progressively to turn its attention to regions outside Latin America more strongly after 2004. This was a significant shift that was reflected in the programming, as socially and

culturally Argentina had sustained a nation-building process throughout most of its history that focused on Europe and European immigration. As was discussed in the previous chapter, this had been so fundamental for its national identity that it had been enshrined in its 1851 Constitution. The alignment of the festival's program with the project of Third Cinema had sat comfortably with this, as the anti-imperialist and protective orientation of Third Cinema—protective of its national cinema in the face of foreign incursions—produced an inward-gazing directionality in the earlier years of the festival. The arrival of peoples from outside Europe after 2001, and a growing engagement with the region, has produced a social landscape riven with inequalities of new and racially diverse kinds. This level of diversity has fragmented previously held senses of national unity, some of which had previously been expressed in political cinema through a focus on class and workers' issues (Mestman 2013) rather than on race. The number of "celebratory" films on the civic reactions to the 2001 crisis, such as factory takeovers, attest to this issue as an historically important one to which nation-building by the political Left could readily rally.

This sense of fragmentation was also felt in political cinema as questions were being raised about the validity of the militancy of the older style of revolutionary politics represented by Third Cinema. In social life, Argentina has similarly been faced with fragmentation, as migratory influxes from beyond Europe—and the European ideal—have created a more multicultural nation. At the festival, all of this has been demonstrated as a "looking out," not only in the sense of looking out toward nations beyond Argentina and the region but also a predisposition to difference.

The construction of a cosmopolitanizing orientation turns on this growing acceptance and familiarity with difference, and is a development in the later life of the festival, as films are included from beyond Argentina and the Latin American region. This is seen more explicitly in two thematic sections that recur at the festival after 2004: *Identity* and *Environment*. *Environment* remains wedded mostly to human claims to land, generally in association with Indigenous peoples. A posthuman orientation (i.e., not exclusively focusing on human life) is not yet apparent at this festival, not even in this section. Here films from/about geographically distant places become more dominant with time. *Identity*, similarly, transforms from housing films primarily about a domestic issue, of the stolen children from the 1976 dictatorship, to discussions about diversity, and this illustrates well the cosmopolitan trend.

Identity

Although *Identity* was accorded a separate section at the festival in 2004—in that year as *Memory and Identity*—it has not appeared every year and is an ambiguous topic. In that first year of thematic sections, the use of *Identity* in conjunction with *Memory* suggests the term has a preexisting association with the dictatorship and its effects on people's sense of self. This is apparent from one of the films screened that year within this section *Reconstrucción* (Rada and Medina 2004), which traces the work of a forensic anthropological group excavating a demolished house that had been a detention center during the dictatorship. The film is "seeking to reconstruct the memory and identity of the house and its suburb" (IMDk). Identity is clearly associated with a rebuilding process within Argentina, a reclaiming, a reinstallment, and a reintegration of memories so that identity can be made "whole."

Two years later, in the 2006 festival, the section named *Construction of Identity* contained films from Argentina that were about the loss of traditional spaces and the personal daily lives of a group suffering from leprosy, while the films from outside Argentina that year—Bolivia and Iran/Iraq—dealt with the preservation of traditions. Identity became something a little different in this edition, while still related to the effects of the dictatorship, and this category housed films about individuals and communities confronted by change (globalization, modernization) or by an affront to their personal circumstances (health), which affects their daily routines or daily decisions (to preserve tradition, or adapt to the changes). Identity, broadly, from these films, appears to be related to the construction of a unitary sense of being that is confronted by change.

The unified sense of nation that is being called into question appears again in 2012 when the entire festival is organized around the theme of *Identity,* after that category was absent altogether in 2010 and 2011. In 2012, the website describes how *Identity* is being used to ask a set of questions about "Who, or what, are we? Who, and what, do I want to be? How do we represent ourselves, and how much do others represent us?" (IMDl). The questions and the preamble that follows them in the website express some of the anxiety experienced as the social landscape and the political are fragmenting. The final sentence, written by Florencia Santucho as director of the festival in her own right since 2011, suggests that *Identity* by this edition is intended to define a cosmopolitan humanity, a sort of personhood "defined . . . by the necessary interrelations of mutual respect that permit us to be balanced within diversity" (IMDl). Ethnic diversity and multiculturalism have not been

a recognized defining national motif for Argentina, as they have been for other nations with more diversified immigration (such as Australia, Canada and the United States). It is a social reality that has to pose challenges for a festival ascribing to and furthering a national cinema premised on some form of unified distinctiveness, and yet confronted with a form of ethnic diversity that requires a rethinking of unified notions of nation. Further to this is the need to negotiate the internationalizing demands of human rights discourse. As ethnic diversification is occurring through the bodies of people who are some of the most vulnerable in Argentina, all of this creates tensions at the festival. My contention is that the festival reaches a resolution to them *through* the questions that were pos(t)ed on their website for 2012. By the festival's pos(t)ing them, they are articulated as points worthy of discussion, an issue that needs further development. That identity should require discussion, however, illustrates the degree to which *difference* is unsettling older norms and traditions, while also seeking new ones. Questions of identity, nevertheless, are questions about what will constitute normality within an established group, affecting internal rules and norms, even if there is expansion toward a greater field of difference. This questioning of identity does not transgress beyond established borders, but rather seeks to retain a sense of order within, even if differently defined. The issue of the environment, on the other hand, reaches beyond internal cohesion, as it is possibly one of the few cross-border issues that can solidify a cosmopolitan orientation.

Environment

The orientation toward environmental issues can be seen as an extension of the growing cosmopolitanization that the festival has undergone, but also the growing adoption, seen in the New York festival, of issues that transcend strictly human-centered habitation. Although in this festival the incorporation of the nonhuman world—animals, climate, and the natural world in general—has been minimal, there are the beginnings of indications of this trend. This has to be related to the inclusion in the festival of an increasing number of films from beyond Latin America, and to the expanded number of films worldwide being produced on environmental issues. This last point can be readily noted from the creation of a separate environmental film festival in 2012 by the same organization that runs FICDH. FINCA was created due to a surge in film submissions on this topic (IMD personal communication). Most films in this section refer to the environment as social effects on the human

world; indeed, at times almost the entire corpus of films focuses on the human dimensions of environmental issues. Film content within the festival category *Environment* has mostly centered on issues of water and food sovereignty; the ideological and material clashes between Indigenous people and development organizations; or environmental degradation through the actions of the state or large multinationals and their effect on human habitation, particularly on Indigenous peoples. Few films have been included that deal with climate change and global warming per se, and these tend to be smaller, more whimsical films such as an 11-minute animation film from Germany entitled *Global WARming* (Gnorski 2007), screened at the 2009 festival, and the 4-minute montage film from Canada called *Warming* (MacIsaac 2007), screened at the 2008 festival. Two other films that also deal with climate change do so in relation to drought and its effects on farmers (*Sequía, castigo de la naturaleza/Drought: Nature's Punishment* Canal 7 n.d.), screened at the 2009 festival, and *Meat the Truth* (Soeters and Zwanikken 2008), screened at the 2010 festival, which although appearing to deal with animal cruelty, is the story of the cattle industry and its environmental impacts. This last film could be said to be one of the few that do not directly include social effects on human beings, although it is related to human consumption of meat. Animals are only included within the scope of the food industries, in relation to excessive fishing, mechanization of agriculture and/or fishing, or technological interventions (e.g., genetic engineering) in the natural world, all of which have had or are seen as having ill effects on human jobs or health. There is no explicit extension of the idea of rights to include animal rights, or the "rights of Mother Earth," as formally recognized in Ecuador and Bolivia (Vidal 2011).

Environment is clearly, therefore, a category that is intended to discuss issues related to nature as used by humans, as resources, and their misappropriation, misuse, or maldistribution. This is distinct from, although associated with, a recent environmental movement that originated in Bolivia and Ecuador, called *Pachamama,* or "mother earth." Bolivia submitted a proposed Universal Declaration of the Rights of Mother Earth to the UN in 2010 (UNESC 2010; Fundación Pachamama et al. 2010; The Council of Canadians et al. 2011), and April 22 has been declared as Mother Earth Day by that organization. *Environment* is a category at the festival that has included many films from outside Argentina, and outside Latin America, something that is not common in other categories. There are a few whose subject is Latin America, although they are produced outside the region. One example is *Raising Resistance* (Bernet 2011), screened at the 2012 festival and produced in the Netherlands,

about rural peasants in Paraguay protesting against the planting of genetically engineered soy crops in their area. Since the inception of this category, however, films have consistently and substantially focused on areas of the world beyond Latin America. A film from India (*Miles to Go* [Subramani 2003]) was screened at the 2005 festival, and included a section named *Territories in Emergencies*, a precursor to the explicitly labeled *Environment* section that appeared the following year. Since then, a greater proportion of films in the section *Environment* has been produced outside Latin America.

The category *Environment* has existed since 2006 when it was called *Medio Ambiente* (literally translated as "surrounding environment"). That term was retained for the 2007 edition, but in 2008, 2009, and 2012, it becomes simply *Ambiente/Environment*. In 2010, it was called *Territories*, and in 2011 *Mother Earth*, but these name changes actually indicate that most films in this category are about Indigenous issues of land claims and conflicts over land use, rather than environmental issues alone. Indeed, environmental and Indigenous land claim topics are often brought together, by placing them within the same festival category. In 2004, when the festival sections are initiated, this category (then called *Tierra/Land*) was a blend of films on Indigenous issues and "environment" films. Although the two themes are mostly separated from 2006 onward, they began together and were brought back together over 2010–11. Interestingly, in 2011 when the organizing theme of the festival was *Mother Earth*, all films in this section, except one, were about Indigenous issues. The film *Newen Mapuche* (Varela 2010), about the Indigenous peoples of Chile and their land claims, as well as the repression of freedom of speech of the filmmaker, won first prize that year. That film, blending many issues—state repression, arts and filmmaking, Indigenous rights, Latin America, and the burgeoning significance of environmental concerns—could be said to represent many of the themes significant to the festival.

In most cases, environment films at the festival are related to human actions in the natural world, and particularly deleterious, mechanizing, or technological interventions by large multinationals without connection to the local area, and the social effects on local groups. Indigenous groups, but also other local groups such as farmers, are therefore those who are archetypally symbols of "the land" and used to represent the most valid claims to sustaining its purity and nonintervention by commercial ventures. Land, as the term also summons notions of earth, globe, and a place of belonging in the Spanish term *tierra*, is of particular importance at the festival, and this can be seen in the sustained focus

on Indigenous peoples and on environment, as well as the creation of a separate film festival on the environment by the host organization. It is a centerpiece ideal that connects viewers to place and also takes the gaze toward other places. Land, therefore, becomes that which brings together the older traditional notions of national belonging (although already broken down through the festival's insistence on including Indigenous peoples' views), and the new ones of cross-border encounters with difference, or cosmopolitanization. Human rights, as an internationalizing frame, also produce an orientation toward cross-border encounters, and receive a special section at the festival.

Films Called "Human Rights"

I turn finally to the films that have been explicitly named "human rights." All films in a HRFF enter into a significant discursive relationship with human rights by being employed as their representative. Human rights are premised on a human subject and a collective concept of *humanity*, which is deemed to be universal, transcending any one locality and its experiences, needs, and circumstances. From this position human rights become an abstraction, a vision of what it means to be human, but which, ultimately, must be made sense of by people living in particular conditions, with social and material limitations, in localized relationships with each other and in networks of local and geopolitical power.

Films used in a HRFF—largely documentary and usually of a "social issue" nature (Nichols 2001)—are "grounded" and living texts, however. That is, they are produced to illustrate a particular social condition in (a) particular place(s) and within a time frame. They highlight issues and concerns of a time, and from a place. Those selected for inclusion in a HRFF are required to negotiate this "localness," that is, local understandings of human rights and issues of significance to audiences (and particular kinds of audiences) in the place in which they are exhibited. But films in HRFFs are also asked to transgress the local by attempting to gain access to, or create, an international identification, indeed, an abstracted identity that is not achievable other than in reified institutional statements. All that films, or film festivals, can achieve in this attempt is to portray issues from "other places," knowing that their reading will rely solely on the present and local meanings as filters and that part of this will be the relationship of local audiences to geopolitical power.

In Argentina, this has meant taking on the discourse of human rights at a strategic point in time when the gaze of the outside world was sought, and became associated almost entirely with that time and its continued memorialization. This formulated the use of human rights

in very localized and limited ways, and explains why at this festival the majority of films used have been Argentine. Looking at a section such as this one is particularly important, to gauge how this local-universal network of meanings is being negotiated. The relationship is most direct with films that are produced, or screened, as explicitly "human rights," because they are seen by their creators and/or by festival organizers as having an extra layer of significance associated with the meanings of human rights discourses and their local applications.

In this section I focus on a number of specially named human rights films in this festival. The naming occurs in two ways: the film is described as a human rights film in the title or in its summary description, or it has been included in a section named this way. The festival produced a section called *A Retrospective of Human Rights Cinema* for the first time at the 2005 festival. The category appears in two more years: 2007 and then 2011, when it is called *A Retrospective of Argentine Human Rights Cinema*. This is because in 2011 it was used to house classic Argentine films from the past, as well as more recent cinematic productions. In 2005, this section included films like the 1962 Fernando Birri classic fictional feature *Los Inundados/The Submerged* and Luis Puenzo's 1985 fictional feature *La Historia Oficial/The Official Story*, in addition to other more recent films. The films deal with topics from the dictatorship and the disappeared, state oppression, the post-2001 crisis and changing social and economic conditions, the labor movement, and the poor. In 2007, this section included two of Pino Solanas' films, his 2005 film about average Argentineans and their struggles, *La Dignidad de Los Nadie/Dignity of the Nobodies*, and his 2006 film about the post-2001 crisis, *Argentina Latente*. It also includes two other classic Argentine films, *Los Rubios/The Blondes* (Carri 2003), about children of the disappeared, and *Papá Iván* (Roqué 2000), about the death of a revolutionary leader at the hands of the military of 1976. In 2012, very recent films are included, two of which deal with the history of military repression, and another on the little-known massacre of a large group of Indigenous people in the northern part of Argentina by the military in 1947.

The placing of films from within the corpus of Argentine cinema in a section called *Human Rights* is of significance as the festival negotiates this local-universal interface. These films are not elsewhere known as "human rights films," but are here inserted under this special category, and are to be seen as an attempt by the organizers to position them within the scope of the discourse, for their audiences to read as such. The existence of a significant cinematic industry in Argentina, and one, furthermore, that has contained many films considered "political"

and "social" (Lusnich and Piedra 2009, 2010; Amado 2007), introduces the tensions faced by a human rights film festival in the local-universal negotiations, but also in film festival culture. Festivals were historically established to promote and showcase national cinemas (Czach 2004; Elsaesser 2005; De Valck 2007). Inserting older, nationally produced films into an internationalizing category like "human rights" suggests an attempt to merge the national and the international, and thus transform the corpus of older national films as already being of the international discourse. This, in effect, attempts to insert human rights within domestic filmic discourses by imagining past and present Argentine films as having always-already contained messages related to human rights. A merging of the two discourses—film and human rights—is being constructed not only into the future but by searching the festival's film archival past and imagining earlier films as already firmly grounded in this new discourse of the festival.

One last film to mention in this section was one that was not placed within the *Human Rights* category, but was explicitly called *D-Humanos/H-Rights* (Arruti et al. 2011). Released in 2011 in Argentina and screened that year at the festival, it is a collection of nine separate short films by as many filmmakers, dealing with a variety of issues, from social determinants of health, to forms of civil organization. It was placed in the *Panorama* section, a kind of remnant category. This film is of particular interest as most of the stories draw on class issues or highlight community initiatives, and only a small percentage (two of nine) focus on the dictatorship. These issues fall well outside the civil and political traditional frames of human rights, and well within ideas of economic, social, and cultural rights.

The section called "human rights films" was of some importance for my analysis, as this demonstrates more than any other the frames of meaning being applied to films to construct them as "human rights films." In a nation that has largely associated human rights with the dictatorship of 1976 and its after effects, including the activism surrounding the desaparecidos, the diversity of subject matter of the films included, as well as the inclusion of "classics" in such a category, is surprising. This suggests that the festival is not only widening its own scope in what can be considered a human rights film, and thereby its audiences' definitions of what constitutes human rights but also drawing on those issues/events not otherwise associated with this discursive frame and renaming them. In that renaming a transformation is taking place, by both reaching into its cinematic past to rename some films as human rights films but also opening out to new filmmakers such as those involved in *D-Humanos*.

Conclusion: Part II

This section has covered the history of the festival from its inception to the present. I have tried to cover the changing trends in the festival, particularly as it has gone from the directorship of the founder, Julio Santucho, to his daughter, Florencia. Her programming influence begins to be noted in 2004, when she enters as Creative Director, and then as full Festival Director in 2011, the year I visited. This influence is manifest largely as a "looking out" vision that began to expand into topics/nations beyond Argentina and the Latin American region. Since human rights and cinema in Argentina were brought together in 1997 for the first time in a film festival, these two directors have merged films and human rights differently. This has as much to do with the histories of political cinema and human rights in Argentina, as the personal leanings of each director. The history of human rights in this nation has led to their almost exclusive association in the public imaginary with the dictatorship of 1976–83, and with the fate of the desaparecidos of that time. That focus was most apparent in the early versions of the festival, when that dictatorship and others dominated almost the entire programming. But there have been other strands in the festival, and one of the most significant from its inception was the critique of neoliberalism. This came through the films on Indigenous land issues to begin with, and then moved to encompass the auto-organization that took place as a result of the 2001 financial crisis in the shape of the factory takeovers. While the critique of neoliberalism is common both to the films on Indigenous issues and to those on auto-organizations, each set also performs slightly different functions in other ways.

Films representing Indigenous land issues portray those whose relationship to the wider Argentine community is as an Other. For that reason they, and those films on immigrants that appear in the later festivals, were important to consider separately as they provided an indication of the ways in which the humanitarian gaze functioned here, and also how the engagement with difference may be predisposing Argentineans toward the "looking out" that Florencia brought to the festival. The humanitarian gaze is performed according to an unequal power relationship, in which three sets of characters are sought: the overwhelmed,

passive victim of powerful forces such as modernization; the active "freedom fighter" who is working to become more "like us"; and a third who is a version of the second, but who emerges when we are watching "our own." The films used to represent Indigenous peoples' struggles fit into none of these categories: they were not passive victims of modernization, nor freedom fighters seeking to be more like us because their claims to land were not intended to have access to it as a "resource" in modern terms. Nor could they be considered Argentina's "own" as they were not of European heritage. What appeared at the festival were films that tended to display Indigenous peoples' struggles as ongoing and as caught in an unjust privatization model of economics, which has positioned them in a David and Goliath battle. The fight with Benetton was the best example of this, and the inclusion of the Naomi Klein film in particular illustrated it. That film gave the issue an international edge and displayed the Indigenous families at the heart of the struggle not as impoverished in motivation and agency, but rather as impoverished in their access to ancestral lands. That struggle was uniquely theirs, for something those Indigenous groups considered their own, and they were not portrayed as setting out to achieve what others in Argentine society wished for.

The films on auto-organization, on the other hand, displayed a different relationship to Argentine society. These films fell more clearly within traditional subjects for political activity in Argentina, where that political activity has been informed by radical and revolutionary politics centered on work and class issues. And therefore these films also followed a strong tradition of political cinema in Argentina, one that has had a strong presence at the festival. This cinema, represented best by Third Cinema and the films of Pino Solanas, has, however, a much longer tradition, going back to at least the turn of the twentieth century (Lusnich and Piedras 2009). Revolutionary politics, and its cinema, were strands of political activity that had been most seriously affected by the dictatorship, and so the festival in its origins can be seen to have been positioned to reclaim some of that which had been interrupted: both the type of politics and the national cinema of which it had formed an integral part. As the festival emerged only three years after the *Law of the Cinema* made possible the resurgence of a national cinema that had been moribund since the dictatorship, the festival must be seen as being part of that resurgence, which came to be called New Argentine Cinema. The festival was thus a space in which to proclaim Argentina's political cinema back onto the public stage. As "the political" was beginning to be constructed through more personalized dimensions and a shift

to the subjective was taking place postdictatorship, this has inevitably impacted filmmaking and in turn on festival programming. Revolutionary politics of the 1960s and '70s, with its emphasis on structural and social inequality, was being modified as personal and emotional dimensions were injected into the political frame for activism.

The activism of the Madres Plaza de Mayo was key in this regard, as it was central to the introduction of human rights as a significant discourse in the Argentine public space. The Madres' work has held sway for almost 40 years, and has assisted in keeping the topics of the dictatorship and the desaparecidos in the public space for that time. These women have been central figures at the festival, their importance foregrounded in the official festival literature, but also at certain key screenings that relate to the dictatorship, where their invited presence continues to this day. The public significance of the Madres should not be underestimated, although to what degree this will continue remains to be seen, as many of the founding members are aging and dying. The Madres' use of personal attachments to originate and draw strength for a political struggle showed the possibility and the power of including these dimensions in demands for change in the public domain. The film *Mon Colonel* by Costa-Gavras makes reference to the Madres at the point where one of the protagonists seeks answers to his son's death and holds a photo of him against his chest, a signature action of the Madres. The answers he asks for have wider social significance, but they are sought "for Guy and me" (Guy is his son), and this signals the importance of including personal stories in the overall visions for the change being sought.

These changes in the political realm, resulting in Argentine film scholars' redefining political cinema, and exemplified by Ana Amado's widening the definition to a *politicization* of films rather than a strictly "political cinema," saw parallels at the festival. This could be seen particularly through the "personalizing" of the name of thematic sections, which signals a new direction in the festival's filter for programming. The changes in the naming of sections from *Dictatorship* to *Memory*, and from *Immigration* to *Migrants* show this clearly. The inclusion of films such as Albertina Carri's *Los Rubios,* with its self-reflexive and deeply personal questioning of the director's parents' revolutionary politics that left her without their presence in her life, also does this.

Human rights in Argentina were embraced from within an entirely domestic issue, and hence came to be used for the furthering of a national cinema that had almost disappeared. Argentina's national cinema had, since its inception, formed an integral part of the country's

cultural identity, and thus the festival may have recruited human rights strategically (as did the Madres) for another issue of domestic significance. There are two possible explanations for this. One has to do with the way in which human rights have furnished some [nations] with a peripheral role, to be monitored rather than of monitoring, and this has been accepted by the festival. The other explanation is that human rights were embraced by the festival, at least initially, as an instrument for achieving things that could no longer be done under the mantle of other visions. I suspect that a little of each was there, but primarily the second. Human rights had, after all, already been shown to be successfully employed by the Madres in the very midst of another political struggle. That is, human rights were simply a new way to speak an older language, one that had lost some legitimacy, in order to continue doing some of the things the older political visions had done. And so human rights were added on rather than seen in their entirety. Nevertheless, the human rights discourse is a powerful one, that Florencia Santucho must have encountered and explored more fully having grandparents who live(d) in Geneva (IMDo).

Human rights demand an orientation toward universality, or a transnational humanity, which, in practice, results in something closer to an internationalization, as I discussed in Chapter 1. In this festival, and under the aegis of Florencia, the festival moved from an almost complete focus on Argentina and Latin America, to what I have called a cosmopolitan vision. This has extended the meaning of human rights beyond most meanings given within the public domain in Argentina. I have not called it an internationalizing vision because the "looking out," which has only ever been partial, is motivated largely by internal events. The number of films about/from regions of the world outside Latin America is still quite small, and thus limits the exposure to other cultures. The cosmopolitanness is, instead, being driven by events within Argentina, and by the influence of human rights discourse. The changing ethnic composition in Argentina has increased the number of films in the programming on immigrants and discrimination, especially those of non-European descent. This has led Argentineans to confront living with difference, unlike anytime in the recent past, which may be a prelude and predisposition toward greater acceptance of diversity beyond "their own." It is, therefore, more a coming to terms with difference, a diversity that has in actual fact always been there, but that has been kept out through various cultural and official mechanisms. The other illustration that a cosmopolitan vision is occurring, influenced by human rights discourse, is the introduction of thematic strands that

reflect UN categories: these focus on various groups and the conventions/declarations drafted for their specific needs, such as Children, Women, Indigenous Peoples, and so on. But the clearest illustration of the festival's cosmopolitan visions occurs through the environmental films. These films have increased in such number in recent times that an entire new festival has been organized to show them: FINCA. I was told that the films included are required to have a social focus, nevertheless. These films, more than any others, are producing a cross-border gaze that edges closer to that solidarity of a transnational humanity for which human rights discourse strives. Environmentalism, more so than human rights, may end up being the issue that will achieve a cross-border orientation and cooperation in the future.

The FICDH continued on its sixteenth year in 2014, but to what degree human rights will be taken up more widely within Argentine society to enable the transnational humanity of human rights, or to what degree FINCA will achieve this—indeed, how they will complement each other—remains to be seen. In the New York festival case study that follows, quite distinct patterns between internationalism and locatedness have developed. Environmental films, however, are also forging new solidarities there that the histories and meanings of human rights alone may not have allowed. This may all signal a turn toward posthumanism as the means by which humanity may join together more effectively: a focus on the natural world rather than on ourselves may ultimately produce what human rights set out to achieve.

Part III

Human Rights Watch International Film Festival, New York

Introduction

The New York Human Rights Watch International Film Festival (HRWIFF) in 1988 was the first human rights film festival anywhere in the world. The bringing of cinema and human rights together in the context of a film festival for the first time heralded a new discursive landscape, that is, a new way of encountering and speaking about films related to activism. Cinema and human rights may well have been linked in various ways and places prior to this time, but this was the first instance in which a film festival was used for this purpose. The inclusion of films within a film festival, to represent human rights issues, brought together two discourses, or languages, routines, and practices that had developed separately until then. Their coming together heralded an area of activism that had not occurred previously, one that would grow considerably over the next 26 years.

As Helsinki Watch, newly renamed Human Rights Watch in 1988, set out to host the first human rights film festival in the world, the histories of the respective discourses collided and began to shape a new language and ways of engaging with films for activism. The location of the first festival, New York, cannot escape notice. This city hosts the headquarters of the UN, the most significant human rights institution. The United States is also where human rights have had one of the longest institutional histories (see chapter 1), and where the most globally influential cinema is located. This festival is, therefore, positioned within a unique and highly significant set of relationships to both human rights and to cinema, but also to film festival history as these were originally established to stall the rapid spread of Hollywood. This then places HRWIFF in New York[1] at the crossroads of an interesting set of discursive dimensions. Its origins in 1988 also cannot avoid notice, as they are directly connected to this festival in more ways than simply an era when major global events took place. I give presence to some of that history in the following chapters, but especially the history of HRW as the organization at whose behest and under whose aegis the festival originated. As the "cultural" arm of HRW, it certainly supported that organization in its fight on a new battleground, which was heralded as being waged in the cultural landscape. It is the longest-running film festival of its kind,[2] with its origins in New York, although

subsidiary film festivals now also take place in over 15 cities throughout the United States and Canada, London and Amsterdam, Nairobi and Beirut. Although it is a festival with a quite small number of permanent staff, three at the time of writing, and with insignificant volunteer staff assistance, it is backed by a large human rights organization, HRW, which was established in the mid-1970s. Its lengthy history and significant professional and institutional support have produced a highly organized festival that, since 1995, is held each year in the prestigious Lincoln Center in Manhattan, New York, which hosts major international music and other cultural events.

I have used the concepts of absence/presence for this particular festival, as opposed to the thematic breakdown into sections used for Buenos Aires. This is primarily because there was little evidence in the available archival material that the festival had been divided thematically (except in a remnant website from 1997, when the festival had been divided into "chapters"), and so in order to capture some patterning I decided on this alternative framework. But also due to the festival's expected alignment with its parent organization, I wanted to capture to what degree it did. That is, HRW follows a very clear pattern of "looking out," and it only began to have a North America focus from 1992. I wanted to understand what the festival made present or absent in that expected orientation. What I found was almost a direct reversal of the HRW pattern and that while the larger proportion of films is about/from outside North America, there is a significant presence given to the United States. This was surprising, given the history within which the festival was enmeshed, and so I then turned to the types of films used to portray the presences, and only one absence: Latin America.

The extent to which the festival focuses on, or uses, its own national film industry was also a point of interest, as this aligns more closely to film festival discourse. In each festival, the mix between films from/about elsewhere and from/about its place of exhibition is different. In the New York festival, the internationalization impulse is significant during the time period I have been able to cover, because many of the films portray issues outside of North America. This may not have always been the case, as archival material from the remnant website of 1995–97 mentioned above showed a significant number of films from/about the United States, most of them quite critical of its own government, as well as celebratory of its activists. If this has been a pattern from 1988, then it suggests a similar pattern to the Buenos Aires festival, where the focus on internal issues and the use of domestic independent political cinemas led to a more outwardly focusing gaze with time. It may also

point to the significance of festival discourse in its emphasis on national cinemas.

In this section, I would have liked to outline the festival as it has developed since its inception, but archival programming information could only be found since 2001, aside from the one instance in which films were screened in 1995–97, as mentioned. At the time I began searching, in 2011, I managed to find programming information online from 2001, which has now disappeared. The official HRWIFF website now only has programming since 2009. Some information on the festival appears in HRW's Annual Reports, regularly included in the reports since 1994, but this is general and quite scant. I have used what little is given in the reports to supplement the more substantial film programming material provided by the festival website, although I have done so in order to provide historical information that is not available elsewhere.

Given that the festival does not appear to have been subdivided thematically for the period on which I have had to focus primarily—or at least as evidenced in the archival material available[3]—for analytical purposes, I will separate the programming according to the content of the films as they refer to a geographical region, that is, not necessarily according to where the films were produced, but the country/region that the film is about. I have taken this approach for two reasons: it mirrors the way that HRW, the festival's parent organization, organizes its own work, and it enables me to consider the direction in which the festival is "looking," at least since 2001. As mentioned, I have done this through a process of analysis through the concept of absence/presence, looking at the relative number of films at the festival from/about a particular region. I classified the regions in the same way as HRW, that is, mostly by continent, but sometimes as a particular section of a continent, such as the Middle East or Eastern Europe. Some of these regions have a greater presence in the festival's programming than others, and I will take into account all of the major presences as I found them, namely, Eastern Europe, the Middle East, and the United States.

I will only analyze one of the festival's absences—Latin America—although there were others I noted, namely, Africa, Asia, and Western Europe. These are all relative absences, as all of these regions, except Western Europe, have received increasing attention more recently. For example, in one year, 2001, there were no films about/from Africa, Asia, and Latin America (the festival took place before September 11, so this cannot be the reason for the gap), and in 2002, there is one film about Indonesia, two from/about Latin America, and none from/about Africa. I decided to focus only on Latin America for a number of reasons. The first

had to do with the fact that the other film festival I studied was from that region, thus enabling a form of comparison, even if this book has not set out to be a comparative study. Another concerns the proximity of the region, and how logical it seemed that audiences would show interest in a region so close to them; hence, the lack seemed oddly out of place. Another has to do with the number of Latinos in the United States in general, which is growing exponentially, and their uncertain position in the United States because a great number of them are "illegals." As a seriously affected population and with diminished power politically in the United States, it also became important to find out what might have led to this (relative) lack of interest in the immigrants' region of origin. This was also a curiosity for me, given that my explanation for the ongoing focus on the Middle East has been the large Jewish population in New York; many of the films have centered on the Palestine-Israel conflict. Furthermore, what little Latin American content there is tends to focus on the continuing legal work of bringing dictatorships of the past to account. This approach, however, reduces the complexity of the region to a past that, while significant, does not take into consideration the full range of issues being faced there or their productive treatment domestically. Mexico is the only Latin American country that receives the more complex attention. Latin America has substantial and recently re-flourishing national cinemas, some of which have been acknowledged by the HRWIFF, for example, in a retrospective of Fernando (Pino) Solanas' work in 1993, as reported in HRW's Annual Report (HRW 2014a). Many of the films from those cinemas have represented the region in more complex and diverse ways. Therefore, it is puzzling that not more films from those cinemas were included in the festival. The 1997 "remnant" website, as I now call it, however, sheds important light on this (relative) lack. The story may not be as simple as the neglect of the region, but perhaps has more to do with the fact that films in a HRFF tend to be about *violations* of human rights (see more in chapter 10).

HRW is the host organization for the festival, and the screenings claim to reflect that work, although this does not strictly occur in practice. HRW's mandate is to "watch" human rights violations throughout the globe, and to this end they have divided their work into monitoring various parts of the world, primarily Africa, Latin America, Eastern Europe, Asia, and the Middle East. HRWIFF follows different patterns. This suggests that the festival itself trails HRW's work to some degree, but may also be influenced by other factors outside the parent organization's work, including local audiences' interests, film availability, or festival staff's own leanings. The latter can be seen in action

in the inclusion of the films of Costa-Gavras. In an interview with past festival organizer and programmer Marina Kaufman, I was given to understand that she and others had considered Costa-Gavras' films as representing something significant for the festival. His film *Missing* (1982) opened the first festival in 1988, and many of his films have been screened at the festival over the years. In 2007, furthermore, he was made a member of the Paris Committee, a subsidiary branch of HRW, when it opened there. Because of his apparent (founding) status at the festival, I include a short analysis of some of his films screened at the festival, particularly *Missing* and *Mon Colonel,* as they both refer to Latin America in different ways. In the chapter in which I cover the history of U.S. foreign policy in Latin America, I will also include a discussion of two filmmakers, Costa-Gavras and Pamela Yates. As their films have been used to represent Latin America to some degree, their presence relates to the question about the relative lack of films from Latin American filmmakers.

The absence/presence interplay may be a manifestation of the humanitarian gaze discussed in chapter 2, which permits some to look and some to be looked at in particular ways, what Jane Gaines calls "looking relations" (1986). But it is more complex than that as well, as an absence may not point to a disinterest, or a presence to a surveillance of that place. While Eastern Europe, the Middle East, Latin America, Africa, and Asia appear *and* disappear from view at the festival, Western Europe and the United States' absence/presence occurs for quite different reasons. The difference will become apparent when I begin to discuss the sorts of films that are screened for the regions I cover, and the relationship to geopolitical power that this represents. What is important to note in the absence/presence patterns is not so much whether, and how many, films about these regions are present—the numbers simply point to an interest in that area—but also the type of films the festival uses to characterize that region's relationship to human rights. The direction of the gaze is, after all, not only permission to look at someone/something (without necessarily the commensurate right to return the gaze), but a way of organizing what and how that looking can take place. Human rights discourse requests an internationalizing gaze, outwardly seeking, while film festival discourse, in part at least, pursues the conservation of local structures—of production and/or exhibition. That is, as discussed in chapters 1 and 2, human rights discourse positions those working within its purview toward an internationalizing focus, while film festival discourse, in part, demands attention to national cinemas. These two impulses act in different measure within each place, and this rests

on a number of factors, mostly having to do with each place's particular relationship to and history of each of the discourses.

In the United States, home to HRW and its predecessor, Helsinki Watch, human rights have had the longest institutionalized history. The American Revolution predates the French Revolution, both of which produced substantial documents outlining citizens' rights. The Bill of Rights, ratified in December 1789, included fundamental additions and modifications to the U.S. Constitution, with legal ramifications beyond the more aspirational tone of the French Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizens, also produced in 1789. In this sense, the United States has "owned" human rights for a considerable time; human rights enabled the forging of a new nation independent of its colonial past. This (essentially Lockean) construction of human rights must, to a large degree, be equated with freedom, as it provided the moral and legal justification for the colonies' breaking away from Britain, and both freedom and human rights have become significant, intertwined, founding national narratives. Human rights, therefore, may in themselves be a statement of national pride and a significant discourse in the United States, which reduces the nationalizing requirement of festival discourse to use national cinemas. Film festivals, therefore, in this context, become merely the conduit for expanding on a nationalist agenda through the internationalizing impulse of human rights. The pro-national cinema agenda of film festival discourse is, in this way, unnecessary here because it is already subsumed within a discursive regime that is intrinsically "theirs." This produces a gaze that turns outward because human rights are already marked as natural to them, while others' activities prove that they do not yet "own" human rights.

In what follows, I have divided the chapters into "Context" and "Festival," the same as for Part II, although here, as mentioned, I have organized them through the concepts of "Absence" and "Presence." The programming has been my primary means for identifying these patterns, and this is then located within a much broader ideological field and geopolitical relations, in which human rights have been deeply imbricated. For this reason, much of the first Context chapter will be taken up with describing the politics of an earlier time, when HRW was Helsinki Watch, as this helps explain the insistent focus on Eastern Europe that has been maintained by the festival. It is a focus that cannot be explained otherwise and that also reconnects the festival to an ideological war that has never disappeared, although it has changed: that between East and West, and socialism versus liberalism. That history is significant, as the festival emerged at the apex of what Francis Fukuyama

called the “end of history,” and that time has had as much of an influence on the festival as it had on the origins of HRW as Helsinki Watch in 1975. This took place at the festival not as a way of reinforcing the triumphalism of Western liberalism that is apparent in Fukuyama’s claim, but in some ways of acting as a corrective for that pronouncement. The Human Rights Watch International Festival is, indeed, a complex festival event that has straddled some significant histories and discourses, and what I am about to discuss is but a small element of its story.

7
Context: From the Cold War to *The Yes Men*

The history of HRWIFF is the history of Human Rights Watch, previously known as Helsinki Watch. That organization established itself in the heart of the Cold War and took a very specific position, both geographically and ideologically. As the festival emerged at the tail end of that ideological conflict, and there is an ongoing thread of interest in Eastern Europe at this event that is not there for Western Europe, I could not help but make the connections with that time. In some of what follows, I trace some of that history, both of Helsinki Watch and of the festival, and also attempt to locate some of the trends in the festival that are distinct from its parent organization.

Helsinki Watch to Human Rights Watch (and) the International Film Festival: 1975–88

The date of the first human rights film festival worldwide, 1988, coincides closely with significant global events. In 1989, the Berlin Wall was dismantled, the Cold War ended, and Francis Fukuyama declared “the end of history” (1989). In 1993, Samuel P. Huntington announced the beginning of the “clash of civilizations” (1993). Fukuyama was referring to the apparent triumph of Western liberalism and free market economics that these events presaged, and Huntington to the ground upon which conflicts would occur after this. The first suggested that the ideological wars had been decided on the side of the triumphant West, with its accompanying systems of liberal democracy and free market economics, and the latter declared that all conflicts from thereon were to be a clash of cultures, or civilizations, rather than conventional military encounters.[1] The grounds on which this new war was to be waged, one that supplanted political conflicts with cultural supremacy, made the medium of film a most obvious choice in the new terrain.

Fukuyama's and Huntington's claims certainly became prophetic. The decades following 1989 were a period of consolidation and dominance of the politics and economics of (neo)liberalism, and of identity politics (Swartz 2011). Both of these heralded a cultural (and of course, political) shift from the achievement of social needs and objectives through collective solidarities and institutions, toward the individualized pursuit of such (Stratton 2011; Harvey 2005; Brown 2005) (see chapter 3). These changes can be glimpsed across two different descriptions of the festival, one posted for the 1997 festival, the other for the 2011 festival.

In 1997, nine years after its inception, the HRWIFF described itself this way:

> The HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL was created to advance public education on human rights issues and concerns using the unique medium of film. Each year, the Human Rights Watch International Film Festival exhibits the finest human rights films and videos in commercial and archival theaters and on public and cable television throughout the United States. The Festival includes feature length fiction and documentary films as well as works-in-progress and experimental and animated films. (HRWIFF 2014g)

By that year human rights film festivals had been on the scene less than a decade, and their function is described as primarily to provide *public* education.

In 2011, the festival characterized itself this way:

> Through our Human Rights Watch Film Festival we bear witness to human rights violations and create a forum for courageous individuals on both sides of the lens to empower audiences with the knowledge that personal commitment can make a difference. The film festival brings to life human rights abuses through storytelling in a way that challenges each individual to empathize and demand justice for all people. (HRWIFF 2014h)

The first, which constructs the festival as performing a public function, is substantially different from the second, in which the appeal to its audiences is imagined through individuals' stories, empathy, and justice. While the last description retains a sense of collectiveness, the shift is clearly toward individuals and the interpersonal (empathy), with justice being coupled with "commitment" as a personal response.

This shift also took place in relation to the documentary, as I discussed in the Buenos Aires section, as the genre took a "subjective turn." These changes were expressed in cultural life, but had emerged as the ideological tensions of the Cold War were decided against the practice of socialism. The date of the first human rights film festival is important because it more or less arises as that war is about to end, and as Helsinki Watch became HRW and changed its focus. In 1988, Helsinki Watch was both celebrating its first decade as a human rights organization, changing its name to Human Rights Watch, and seeking to broaden the popular appeal of its work, which until then had involved advocacy, primarily through legal mechanisms.

Helsinki Watch

HRW had begun in 1978 as Helsinki Watch, and had been located in Helsinki to monitor the Soviet Union's compliance with a set of accords with the same name. The Helsinki accords of 1975 were the Final Act of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe between the United States, Canada, the Soviet Union, and European countries. The agreement included civil rights, which HRW, as an NGO, undertook to scrutinize. HRW's website describes this early work as

> designed to support the citizens groups formed throughout the Soviet bloc to monitor government compliance with the 1975 Helsinki Accords. Helsinki Watch adopted a methodology of publicly "naming and shaming" abusive governments through media coverage and through direct exchanges with policymakers. By shining the international spotlight on human rights violations in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, Helsinki Watch contributed to the dramatic democratic transformations of the late 1980s. (HRW 2014d)

As a U.S.-based organization, which set out to "to support the citizen groups throughout the Soviet bloc," it did this in order to show "how it could be done" (Laber 2002, 100). Jeri Laber, one of the founders of Helsinki/Human Rights Watch, and author of the organization's history explains that as a result of the accords, a number of citizen-led groups had formed in Eastern Europe to monitor events. She further observes that while all other "Helsinki groups in Eastern Europe focused only on their own governments, not on others . . . [Helsinki Watch's] interest was mainly in what was happening over there, where citizens who spoke out were thrown into prison. In the United States, there was no such problem" (ibid. 100). The focus on political issues of repression

led to the organization's acquiring a filter to watch others that could not be used to scrutinize its place of origin, the United States. Through this restricted lens, Helsinki Watch could monitor Eastern Europe, while no corresponding surveillance of the United States was necessary. The assumption on which the monitoring took place was premised on a conceptualization of human rights as strictly civil and political, which left issues of a social and economic nature (and which would, of course, have also made the United States susceptible to "watching") invisible.

The emphasis on civil and political freedoms coincides with, or emerges from, the ideology of liberalism, in which the states' role is to provide the conditions whereby individual freedoms can be enhanced (Dewey 2000), rather than to actively provide social and economic benefits for its citizens. At the festival, this is noted in the high representation of films—particularly those from/about the United States—on prison conditions, the death penalty, and justice systems, as I will outline in the following chapter. On the other hand, communitarian ideologies place the focus on social and economic rights such as the right to health and education, the provision of which falls on the state. From this perspective, civil and political rights are meaningless without the social and economic conditions that ensure they may be practiced (Shiman 1999). Traditionally, human rights have been associated with civil and political rights, and in HRWIFF and the Buenos Aires festival this view certainly holds some dominance. In Argentina, as I discussed earlier, the civil and political slant permitted the issue of the desaparecidos to enter the public domain, but this has limited human rights to this issue alone. The mandate of watching others that HRW has set for itself is not a neutral activity. Human rights provided the framework for this NGO to monitor others, but through, at least for much of its life, the limited filter of civic and political issues.

Watching others shifted for HRW as the ideological divide was dissolved in the 1990s, and the ideologies of free market liberalism triumphed over those of communitarianism. In HRW's 1991 annual World Report, a section on the United States appears for the first time, although it is titled "Human Rights Watch." In 1992, it appears as a separate section called "United States" for the first time. The material in the 1991 report on the United States related to prison and police brutality, as well as freedom of speech, including the "right to monitor." Although HRW's watching within its own domestic sphere has retained in large part the focus on civil and political matters, such as the death penalty and counterterrorism, in more recent editions social issues also appear. For example, in 2013 the section that covers the United States

in the annual report includes issues on immigration, labor, disability, health policy, women, and sexual orientation (HRW 2014e). Although the bulk of the work of the "watching" that HRW does is still focused on "others," as Laber states, the organization has shifted some of its attention toward internal affairs, and not all of that is on issues of a civil and political nature. This shift may be due to the fact that the "war" on which HRW was founded was eventually won, and hence its original role diminished.

The act of "watching others" on film is, of course, of a different nature to the monitoring of nations that HRW does. The monitoring of political situations/structures is transformed into the viewing of people and issues assembled as narratives, and hence appears to transfer the meaning of watching from the strictly political realm to a purely cultural activity. Watching others is, however, always a political activity because of the relative power relation between watched and watcher (see introduction to this book). The watcher becomes an added player, an outsider who gains entry into the situation, and this is a privilege, which also carries responsibility. And part of that responsibility is not simply to watch these troubles as a spectacle, a form of perverse pleasure in affirming our fortunate position and our goodness. Rather, the access to those lives implicates us in that relative privilege. In effect, both forms of watching others' troubles—as images, and of civil and political structures of oppression—are an engagement in political activity. Watching others' troubles enlaces the viewer in a set of relationships in which certain knowledges (as images of troubles as much as oppressive policies and practices) are presented already imbued with the extant power of watching/being watched. When watching takes place as an entitlement to watch others, a naturalness in the privilege to impose our frames of meaning, the power/knowledge matrix of the humanitarian gaze has become seamless. And yet it may be undone. HRWIFF has unfolded watching others differently from its parent organization. HRW has traditionally placed little attention on the domestic by comparison to the emphasis placed on other parts of the world, and what attention there is has focused on civil and political issues. The festival has stepped outside of these parameters and included a substantial number of films about/from the United States as well (see chapter 8 particularly).

The internationalizing focus of both HRW and HRWIFF is significant in both, but the assumption voiced by Laber that in "the US there was no such problem," and therefore that the United States did not require watching, has been taken up differently by the festival. The politics of the late 1980s are clearly implicated in the establishment of HRWIFF, not

because it becomes the mouthpiece for the triumph of liberal democracy and free market values, but rather as it separates these two and becomes the champion of one and attacks the other. As free market values can be readily associated with the philosophy of neoliberalism, as discussed in chapter 3, the festival appears to have taken up an anti-neoliberalism stance similar to that of the Buenos Aires festival. This is mostly seen in the films from/about the United States and North America. Films such as *The Corporation* (Achbar and Abbott 2003) at the 2004 festival and the two *Yes Men* films at the 2004 and 2009 festivals, as well as the creation of a 2003 festival section titled "American Dissent," to showcase the films of Third World Newsreel on their thirty-fifth anniversary. In order to do this the festival has relied on independently made films, and I look at two in more detail below.

The reasons for the critique of neoliberalism may simply be that as free market values triumphed, human rights were repositioned to ameliorate the excesses produced by that system (as they were to minimize the extremes of modernity), rather than as a champion of revolutionary change. Another reason may be that as Julio Santucho—founder of the Buenos Aires festival—said, "in the nineties, human rights occupy the place of the socialism of the seventies: they call forth the subversives" (2007, 59). Within film festivals, this may have translated into individuals with these political tendencies enlisting as festival coordinators, programmers, and/or festival volunteers, as human rights became one of the few valid visions from within which to make claims for social change. Film festivals with a human rights theme may have become one of the few sites left for the continuation of a type of revolutionary cinema that had preexisted in the shape particularly of the French New Wave, and Third Cinema. The second gave rise to a filmmaker who appeared at the Buenos Aires festival, Pino Solanas, and whose presence was made known at this one also in 1993, while the first gave rise to a significant filmmaker at this festival, Costa-Gavras, whom I will discuss in chapter 10. For many activists of a progressive hue, human rights became their new political forum of expression. As an aside, this brings me back to the work of Wendy Brown, discussed in chapter 1, who stated that "in the last fifty years, human rights have become the international moral currency by which some human suffering can be stemmed" (2004, 451). In the same work she also deplores the increasing political role of human rights as the dominant locus for making social change claims. This, she mentions, drives out other political visions, ones that may be less invested in liberalism. What is apparent in this festival is that political liberalism remains a strong principle in the political realm (in keeping

with the traditional emphasis on civil and political issues that HRW has taken), while neoliberalism's effects on economic life are critiqued. Two films in particular, *The Yes Men* and *The Yes Men Fix the World,* illustrate that critique. They each received prominent screening slots in the years they were shown, suggesting they were regarded as significant by the festival, and so I turn to a deeper analysis of them.

The Yes Men

A number of films have been screened at the festival that critique U.S. foreign policy, some of which are covered in the following chapter, such as *Devils Don't Dream!* (Hoessli 1995) and *The Trials of Henry Kissinger* (Jarecki 2002). It is to the films that explicitly question the excesses of free market economics that I turn here. Not all are about the United States per se, but they are all films that interrogate an economic system that in the late 1980s was being hailed as triumphant, but which in subsequent years has been shown to have produced as many injustices as it promised to solve. These films include *The Corporation,* premiering in New York in 2004, which focuses on the ways in which global corporations have grown into superstructures that in many instances have more political power than national governments, and the film *Mardi Gras: Made in China* (Redmon 2005), screened in 2005, which examines forms of production that benefit one part of the globe (U.S. consumers) at the expense of another (Chinese factory workers). I focus on *The Yes Men* because their antics center on interrogating free market economics.

The Yes Men (2003), screened on the closing night of the festival in 2004, was a film that introduced two culture jamming hacktivists, Andy and Mike. In the film, these two activists produce a fake website fashioned closely on that of the World Trade Organization (WTO). They are then invited by unsuspecting organizations to speak at various conferences/seminars, to represent the views of the WTO. At each event they present various audiences with a number of outrageous scenarios, which they characterize as "solutions" to economic problems—"solutions" such as the creation of hamburger patties made from recycled feces (carefully and hygienically treated, of course!), to be fed to Third World peoples. This is an effort to curb starvation, an "inconvenient" consequence of trade liberalization, so that liberalization may continue unhindered. Another prank involves presenting textile industrialists with a specially designed suit that would permit factory owners to monitor their employees electronically at all times, after workers were "humanely" implanted with microchips for that purpose. Although the first prank

is presented to a university audience who voice strong objections, the second audience shows no reaction. A third prank, in Australia, involves the announcement to Certified Practicing Accountants (CPA) members that the WTO is to cease operations in its present form because their initial motivation to wipe out poverty has produced the opposite. They will set about reinventing themselves, using the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as the basis to shift their focus from business interests to "people." Audience members are asked to give their opinion on the WTO's decision at the end of the seminar, and many call it a "brave" and "positive" step.

The second film, a sequel that appeared six years later, *The Yes Men Fix the World* (Bichlbaum et al. 2009) continues in a similar vein, and was screened on the closing night for the 2009 festival. It was described on the *Yes Men* website in this way:

> On their journey, the Yes Men act as gonzo journalists, delving deep into the question of why we have given the market more power than any other institution to determine our direction as a society. They visit the twisted (and accidentally hilarious) underworld of the free-market think tanks, where they figure out a way to defeat the logic that's destroying our planet. (The Yes Men 2013)

This time, they represent the theories of Milton Friedman as free market "Kool-Aid,"[2] which is directly responsible for economic inequalities, and propose that stronger state regulation is needed. In this film they perpetrate one of their most expensive hoaxes, on Dow Chemical (after they have bought out another company, Union Carbide). Once again, they create a fake "Dow Chemical" website, and from that they are invited by the BBC to be interviewed on television and radio on the twentieth anniversary of the gas spill at the Union Carbide plant in Bhopal, India, that led to over 5,000 people losing their lives and left many others with physical impairments and dysfunctions. As the film discusses, Union Carbide has to date paid minimal compensation to the victims. During the interview, and as "representatives" of Dow Chemical, Andy and Mike admit that Dow is responsible for the accident and will put aside $12 billion for compensation to the victims. The company lost 3 percent in the value of its shares immediately after the hoax. During another hoax, they are invited to a conference on risk management, at which they announce the creation of the ARC Index—Acceptable Risk Calculator. This index, they declare, indicates to corporations the risk/loss factor that allows some loss of life as acceptable. They start with a

joke: "how many Americans does it take to screw in a light bulb? A: 12; one to climb the ladder, and 11 to file a lawsuit. What about Indians? A: oh, just one." Some in the audience do not look fazed, while others display slight discomfort. Andy is heard saying, as the graphics are showing, "we would, of course, not wish to imply that an Indian's life is worth more or less than another; I myself believe in the sanctity of all life. But the market has its own logic, and if we're willing to live with it we must make the most of the choices it makes."

The punch line in both films is created by the unbelievable and creative things they propose, but also through their audiences' acceptance, as shown by their reaction (or nonreaction). At the end of the presentation on risk management, audience members approach them, congratulating them on their ideas, one of them declaring that "whichever way you do this, you're going to cost some lives. But if you're going to make some money in the process, then it's acceptable." In the first *Yes Men* film, we are shown the dispassionate acceptance of the outrageous surveillance suit with a protrusion in the front of the body suit intended to appear as a large penis. During the risk management stunt, Andy and Mike draw the conference audience's attention to IBM's role in the technology developed and used to identify Jews for the Nazi regime, calling it a "skeleton in the cupboard" yet in reality a very profitable company and venture. The audience winces slightly at the reference to the Holocaust, but never sufficiently to either discontinue listening or ask questions that would discredit the presentations. These films have a sequel called *The Yes Men Are Revolting*, which has now been released, screened at the 2014 Sundance Film Festival, and focuses on climate change. This last film was funded entirely through crowd funding (Kickstarter 2014), a phenomenon that entrenches the film trilogy as independent productions, in the context of a national film industry in the United States that is dominated by large Hollywood film production companies.

Films, Truth, and Human Rights Ethics

The Yes Men films represent documentaries that attempt to be entertaining as well as to have a specific agenda or position. This new terrain for the documentary, as it attempts to straddle the traditional dramatic fiction genre and the "discourses of sobriety" (Nichols 1991), is probably best illustrated by documentary filmmaker Michael Moore. He has been said to aim to "entertain people while they are munching their popcorn" (Briley 2005, 11), while at the same time taking a particular perspective. These are "rhetorical documentaries" (Bordwell and Thompson

2013) that seek to propose an alternative position to a perceived dominance, and thus to convince their audience of that option, rather than attempting objectivity or neutrality. Whether any documentary can be objective, neutral, or nonpolitical is a question of some significance that documentary film theorists particularly have been grappling with for some time (Nichols 2001; Winston 1995; Chanan 2007). As creative, constructed texts (as, indeed, it could be argued are all texts, including legal documents), they cannot avoid positionality, and are in that sense interpretive and persuasive. The notion that films, but more precisely the documentary, can, and should, be "true" has been questioned from its inception, when John Grierson in 1926 proclaimed it to be "the creative treatment of actuality" (Grierson, in Nichols 2001, 24). That the documentary cannot be anything but a filtration of events, and that we can (should) expect no more than a positionality, has led some scholars to pose that audiences are aware of this and that "[d]ocumentary audiences have become accustomed to the fantasy of perspective in documentary being composed through the terms of the intersubjective" (Smaill 2010, 18), that is, through the eye of the maker of the documentary. It is a testimony that is a truth. In a HRFF, this is often *a* truth that has gone untold.

These are deeply complex epistemological questions that plague any constructed text, whether it be a novel or a film, but particularly the documentary as it is thought to have a more direct relation with and impact on the social world of the spectator (see chapter 2). Taking a side is in the very nature of the sorts of films screened at a HRFF; it would make no sense to screen a film that took into account all sides equally, say, when depicting child abuse, genocide, or rape. Where the line lies between propaganda, didacticism, being educational, and "taking a side" has a great deal to do with the rules the social group has for what can be deemed as truth. In the human rights world, where films are being used to further that vision, perhaps not enough has been asked in this regard, as I discussed at the beginning of chapter 2 in relation to the film *Day after Peace*. Most likely this has to do with the dominance of the legal language in human rights, which then formulates truth statements differently from the questions that need to be asked of films. Some scholars have begun to direct questions of this nature, however.

Kenneth Betsalel and Mark Gibney have reviewed a number of HRWIFF festivals. In their evaluation of the 2008 festival, they set up a three-part schema to analyze the films, which consists of "illumination," "truthfulness," and "teachability" (2009, 205). Under the truthfulness criterion, they ask, "Did the film allow for the complexity of human rights to

emerge—or was the film didactic or even propagandistic?" (205). This begins to pose some useful questions about what constitutes truth for a human rights film. Another scholar who has written about human rights films, Safia Swimelar, also raises some important questions about the use of images for human rights and the relationship that these have to dominant notions of "truth" and evidence. She frames this in terms of the critiques directed at the use of images for human rights, some of which center on the belief that "seeing is believing." She notes that this ocularcentrism (Jay 1993) has been demolished by "the post-modern critique and the myth of the image: the belief that pictures can tell the whole story, while in fact they may conceal a great deal" (Swimelar 2009). Along with the implicit acceptance of the documentary's "objectivity" and direct relation to reality, notions of truth need to be negotiated differently with images, and established ideas of what constitutes evidence and truthfulness redefined. As the legal system of knowledge, which is imagined as bound to modern notions of rationality (Douzinas and Nead 1999) devises particular routines for truth-telling, this can "other," or marginalize, more evocative ways of knowing. Two things can then happen as films are used for human rights purposes: the wrong questions are asked of films about evidence and truth-telling, while other more significant questions are not. These include questions such as the relations of power in representation; what it means to "witness" in a human rights film; what is the ethical relationship between filmmaker, film subjects, and spectators; and so on. As constructed texts (and, as I said, even legal and policy documents are constructed, but under a different logic), films are bound to a different regime of telling, of knowing, and of truth. That truth, of a testimony in a film included in a HRFF, can possibly only ever be a "pledge to tell the truth" (Derrida and Stiegler 2002, 94), but nevertheless, as all truths, it remains partial. The questions as to what that partialness means have not been seriously asked from the perspective of films and the worlds they produce.

As a point from which to take the above discussions begun by Betsalel and Gibney, and Swimelar, I would argue that didacticism, which is to take a distinct side and not to permit equal space to all views, is not necessarily a flawed position to take in these sorts of films. While reducing an issue to one, or a few, of many perspectives does not allow the viewer to consider the situation from a necessary complexity, often human rights claims necessarily "take a side." The activism of the Madres de Plaza de Mayo, discussed in chapter 3, is an illustration. Without their taking a side, their children's fate might not have been acknowledged by the Argentine nation. Another is the view represented by *The Yes Men*,

a view that unsettles dominant economic practices. Didacticism does not, of itself, neutralize complexity; instead, it may entail negotiating the gamut of "sides" in order to provide more presence to those whose absences have been eradicated or reduced. It is to explore the nature of power, and how it can become banal, and therefore unquestioned (Arendt 2006). The power of film for these purposes lies not in a sequential telling and documenting of events. Films are texts that can connect across space because they "transport the viewer to a life, a place, or a particular experience in an intimate and immediate manner" (HRWIFF 2014i), and in that there is great power: the power to help by telling and connecting with others' troubles, but also the power to be powerful.

Film is seen as powerful by human rights advocates because of its role in creating the political and ethical climate whereby a redistributive effect may be produced "beyond the film" (Iordanova 2012) and into the world of social actors (Tascón forthcoming b). It is a redistributive effect of voice and presence, *from* those whose decisions affect others, *to* those who are affected by those decisions. The redistributive effect is not simply to recognize, observe, and retreat from the pain of others, as Wendy Hesford (2011) has suggested has become the power of the modern spectator (Boltanski 1999). It is also to "take a side," to connect with those on the screen at a human-to-human level that can animate a response. It is an ethics that begins in the face, often the most prominent feature in films, which in the ethics philosopher Emmanuel Lévinas' terms is the beginning of being and ethics (1979), as "[t]he face is meaning all by itself . . . it leads you beyond" (1985, 86). Lévinas' ethics of the face is far more complex than that to which I can give credit here, founded on a phenomenological experience of another rather than strictly a physical face, and I do not want to dwell on these philosophical dimensions of the face and Lévinasian ethics, as important as they may be to the type of cosmopolitan ethics to which much human rights practice aims. In cinematic terms, nevertheless, the face remains one of the most important features, expressing both something about the medium, and the social relations to which it inevitably points (Davis 2003). Human rights film screenings have an ethics that center on the medium of film, which gives entry into another's world, "beyond the film" and for the explicit aim of social change (Iordanova 2012) for that other. Whether the aim is assured of a result is not the point. It is an ethics of care for fellow beings, and a politics of the redistribution of discursive power that is transformed into embodied, social practices. The ethics of proximity (Lévinas 1985) that this proposes is a position that requires didacticism *because* of the "power of the modern

spectator" (Boltanski 1999) to "withdraw" (Hesford 2011). It is not an ethics that is necessarily achieved, as Lilie Chouliaraki has pointed out, but a humanitarianism that often centers on a powerful self writing their own goodness on another's body (2006; 2012).

This is perhaps the reason why documentary films have been predominant in HRFFs, not necessarily because they are more "truthful," but because they produce a different effect on the spectator. Although in the case of a fictional film the spectator can remain at a distance, the immediacy of a documentary (Sobchack 1999) that does not use seasoned actors and constructed sets (Chanan 2007), can direct the spectator differently: toward a relationship that seeks closeness, as if between embodied human presences, and to act with them to achieve a redistribution of resources, opportunities, and forms of justice (see chapter 2 for a fuller exploration).

HRWIFF and Independent Political Cinemas of the United States

The presence of *The Yes Men* films at the festival performs an interesting role. They represent an arm of the national cinema of the United States that is independent and therefore financially vulnerable (hence the filmmakers' need to seek crowd funding). Politically speaking, the films represented by the two *Yes Men* films at the festival perform a critique of an economic system, dominant since the end of the Cold War, which has produced distinct inequalities. Although this is clearly a critique of the economics of neoliberal (or free market) ideology, I wonder how far one can make the distinction between political liberalism and economic neoliberalism, as the festival has done, in order to sustain an allegiance to liberal democracy and its associations with "freedom." These films that are part of the festival critique large corporations as institutions of capitalism, which is the practice of the ideology of the free market; they propose the need for state regulation to diminish the level of authority wielded by those institutions, their ideology and their practices. They indicate that the free market cannot function without the political will to regulate those institutions. This therefore suggests that the regulatory functions of the state need to be broadened beyond those minimalist dimensions suggested by liberalism (which are traditionally restricted to law and order, the justice system, and armed forces) and enter into economic and social arenas. The inequalities to which the free market economic system has led are a clear signal that the political and economic systems are inextricably entwined. To speak only of "civil and

political" freedoms is to avoid the fact that they impact on other aspects of life and that this notion of liberal ideology on which "freedom" rests produces excesses in other areas, namely the social and economic.

The inclusion of this sort of film in the festival pushes the boundaries within which HRW has traditionally operated. Although HRW has moved into monitoring issues in the United States beyond simply prisons and the justice system in recent years, it appears that its festival has done so more expansively. I suggest that the use of films *and* the situating of them within film festivals are producing the opportunity to extend beyond the traditional civil and political issues as films are submitted and selected from within a strand of its cinema that is largely independent. If film festival discourse, as I explored in chapter 2, in part emphasizes national cinemas, this festival has chosen that arm of it that is primarily an expression of political subversiveness, or films that function to unsettle and subvert what is dominant. The production of the kinds of films represented by *The Yes Men* within U.S. independent cinema makes it possible for human rights issues to be represented quite differently. These are films that steer away from "suffering" and portray active agents, as well as being analyses of ideological systems and troubles that affect whole nations and have an impact across nations. But they are also aiming at systemic troubles within the United States, and their implicatedness, a topic eschewed by Helsinki Watch and Laber in their original mandate. These films, together with those from/about the Middle East (mostly about Palestine) suggest the festival is acting as an unsettler of its own audiences, as they are interrogating some of the most dominant forces in the nation in which the festival is located. If part of film festival discourses centers on cinephilia as a contemporary discursive element, then that demands that the films selected are not mainstream, popular, easy to digest, or generic, and therefore they explore dimensions from different and uneasy perspectives. Although these are films that "take sides," they are clearly providing a vision of things to which many of their audiences are not exposed everyday. These films interrogate the everyday dominances, and are, therefore, expanding the view of human rights, even as posed by the parent organization. Indeed, I would go so far as to maintain that it is *because* human rights are being communicated through texts produced outside dominant human rights discursive mechanisms, and situated in a film festival, that this extension has been made possible. Film festivals' cinephilic gaze demands films that unsettle dominant perspectives, that they expand the boundaries of what has been established, mostly aesthetically, but in this case ideologically. If HRW has been sustained through a focus on civil and

political issues, in order to retain its hold on watching the world, these films unsettle that perspective and their selection is repositioning some of the traditional frames of human rights.

In the following chapter, I show that the festival has placed a significant emphasis on the United States, while HRW's attention remains largely on the rest of the world. Although both the festival and its parent show a tendency to direct attention to civil and political matters—for example, political unrest, prisons, and justice systems—the festival also has a growing number of films on other topics, of a social and economic nature. The latter are seen most clearly in the contemporary focus on environmental films, some of which I discuss in chapter 9. The divergences are most likely as films are used to represent human rights, films that are not necessarily produced for human rights purposes but as these intersect with HRW's mandates and are utilized for that purpose. As creative narrative visual texts, films emerge from and produce different effects from those of a law-based human rights organization and its reports. This is recognized through such statements as "the power of film," a phrase used in many human rights activist websites to describe the reason films are used for activism. This formulates new ground, an expansion of human rights discourse, a landscape filled with new possibilities and changes that complement the already-existing emphasis on law and legal mechanisms. Films, in representing, creating, and narrativizing the world, produce ambivalences and uncertainties to which legal documents and the legal process attempt to close themselves.

The festival, like all other HRFFs, in using films to "illustrate" human rights, does so through a medium that cannot produce certainty and "truth" in the same understanding of these as found in the legal world, even though documentary films are often seen as closer to that model of evidentiary certainty. Because of this, films permit a level of engagement and accessibility by nonlegal experts that can enhance that work, but that are also irrevocably changing it. One of the ways this is achieved is by introducing human rights discourse, a traditionally legal one focusing on civil and political issues, to a distinctly visual culture that, in this area, also amounts to a negotiation of the humanitarian gaze. That gaze can be used, acquiesced to, or subverted. In Argentina, it was used strategically, to draw international attention to a particular issue. In this festival that gaze, which relies on a powerful watcher watching others' troubles, in order to engender a "helping" relationship, has usually entailed the portrayal of "suffering" victims, powerless and passively waiting to be helped. The festival has also used this gaze strategically, at times acquiescing to it and other times subverting it. The screenings of

The Price of Sex (Chakarova 2011) and *Love Crimes of Kabul* at the 2011 festival (see chapter 8) are examples of both impulses: the latter unsettling the audience with its portrayals of Muslim women, and the former, a film much more closely aligned to that gaze, winning the main award that year. *The Yes Men* films also establish a subversive gaze in their anti-neoliberal stance. As this gaze permits some to look at others in particular ways (Gaines 1986), and human rights seeks a "looking out" through its internationalizing impulse, the festival is also situated in a nation used to gazing at others' troubles, and not its own. This was best illustrated through Laber's comments on the motivations for establishing Helsinki Watch. The festival upset those tenets, and in this regard has relied on a national cinema that is not the dominant Hollywood-based studio system, but rather one that has been more financially vulnerable and insecure, not unlike the national cinemas of Argentina and other less powerful nations.

8

The Festival: Presences: Eastern Europe, the Middle East, and the United States

As this festival articulates the watching of films to be guided by its parent organization, and HRW has defined its role as *monitoring* human rights, there is an implicit expectation of seeing violations rather than the celebration of the achievement of human rights. Watching others *not* doing well with human rights is the expected vista, or, at the very least, watching their struggles to make human rights happen. This is not what necessarily takes place at the festival, however. The three regions or nations on which I have chosen to focus were the most obvious presence at the festival, due either to the number of films they screened or the ongoing attention to that region, or both. I discuss each region separately as different themes emerge for each.

Films about human rights in the United States have a consistent numerical presence in the years under discussion here, most of the time between 30 percent and 40 percent of the films screened, except for 2005 and 2006 when only 1 out of 18 films, and 3 of 24 films respectively, concerned the United States. Most of these films centered on prison conditions or the justice system, but quite a few were concerned with activism/activists. The other two regions received different types of attention, as films about the Middle East were concerned with Israel-Palestine in the early years, portraying a sympathetic perspective toward Palestine. The focus on Eastern Europe sees film selections that are suggestive of HRW's historical and ideological position from its origins as Helsinki Watch. I will begin with this latter region as the preceding Context chapter dealt with some of that history.

Eastern Europe

The focus on Eastern Europe can be readily explained through the work of the parent organization, first called Helsinki Watch, and later Human

Rights Watch. As I discussed in the previous chapter, this established a standpoint of "watchfulness" over this region that continues until today. The films included in the festival as representing this region have been on three themes: i) the conflicts as a result of the break-up of the former Yugoslavia—Kosovo, Bosnia-Serbia-Croatia—and of the former USSR, specifically Chechnya; ii) social conditions in Russia and Eastern Europe in general; and iii) "freedom"[1] activism. Those films that deal with Russia do so fairly uniformly to critique either its policies or specifically Vladimir Putin and also to celebrate some of the prodemocracy activism. Most of the films show the political and social volatility of the region. These films more or less mirror Helsinki Watch as described by Jeri Laber in the previous chapter, which supported anticommunist activists and openly criticized the USSR's repressive policies.

The conflicts that resulted as the USSR and Yugoslavia were breaking up have received the greatest attention, with at least 11 films[2] on this subject screening in the 13-year period in question, in particular films about the Bosnian war and its aftermath. This includes films such as

- *That the Women Live* (Becue-Renard 2001) at the 2001 festival, a documentary about Bosnian women talking of their trauma during therapy;
- *Good Husband, Dear Son* (Honigmann 2002) at the 2002 festival, about widows from this war;
- *A Conversation with Haris* (Sofian 2002) at the same festival, a short animated film about a young Bosnian boy's experience of seeing his grandmother killed by Serbs;
- *VIVISECT* (M. Gajicki 2003), a short documentary film screened at the 2003 festival that shows audience reactions to a photo exhibition in Serbia on the war;
- *Snow* (Begić 2008), a drama shown at the 2009 festival about a village without men in Bosnia; and
- *Honeymoons* (Paskaljevic 2009), shown at the 2010 festival, a drama about two couples from this region who migrate to Western Europe.

The most recognizable film, because it was released in mainstream cinemas prior to appearing on HRWIFF, was *The Whistleblower* (TW) (Kondracki 2011), which deals with Bosnia and the after effects of conflict, and which was screened at the 2011 festival, as a Benefit and Reception film screening. This feature fictional film focuses on a Nebraska woman police officer who enlists as a peacekeeper in postwar Bosnia, and her uncovering of corruption in the UN that has been aided by interests in the United States. Although many other films about this region show a tendency toward instruction, or a clear line of argumentation, such as

another film screened the same year, *The Price of Sex* (2011), about sex trafficking in Eastern Europe,[3] TW navigates a more complex narrative position.

While there are many things to be said about the films from this region,[4] I will concentrate on those films that explicitly or loosely deal with activism. Three films were described as portraying activists for "freedom": *A Lesson of Belarusian* at the 2007 festival; *Putin's Kiss*, screened in 2012, and *Pussy Riot: A Punk Prayer* at the 2013 festival. I have chosen to explore the topic of activism as it mirrors the discussion on the United States below, and because this can also be read as an attempt to portray human agency to counterbalance the stories of deficit and deficiency. *A Lesson of Belarusian* (Dembiński 2006), a documentary that was screened at the 2007 festival, dealt with the Belarusian presidential elections of 2006, when several young prodemocracy individuals attempted to oust long-standing incumbent Alexander Lukashenko, and the resultant backlash by police. *Putin's Kiss* (Pedersen 2011) is a documentary drama about the transformation of a young idealistic woman in Russia from government spokesperson to dissident as she experiences abuse by the authorities against dissenters. *Pussy Riot: A Punk Prayer* (Lerner and Pozdorovkin 2012) was a documentary shown at the 2013 festival about the recent protest in a church by a women's group that was intended as a statement against Putin and his policies. These three films clearly represent political dissent behind what was previously called the Iron Curtain, and two are specifically focused on Russia. Their content, which points to the use of propaganda by the Russian state and the political repression of dissent, appears to support the need for HRW to resume an earlier role—indeed, its founding role—when it was Helsinki Watch. All three films also portray failed acts of activism, and this may reinforce this view. The importance of this region to the festival is, however, clear as for all the years observed except two (2003 and 2004), the number of films that represented the region was between two and five each year. In a festival that, on average, screens 25 films, a large percentage of which (usually about 20 percent to 25 percent) are from/about the United States, which constitutes a significant proportion.

The Middle East

Although it might easily be presumed that the festival's emphasis on the Middle East occurred as a result of the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center in September 2001, this is difficult to substantiate even

though the archival material only dates back to that year. The festival took place in May 2001, and while the number of films from the Middle East increases substantially in 2002, they were already a significant number in 2001 (5 of 16 films, or 31 percent). Given that the majority of films from this region actually deal with the Palestine-Israel conflict before and after 2001, this suggests that there are other reasons for this emphasis, notwithstanding the spike in 2002–03. The reason for this is more likely to be related to the type of audiences to which the festival appears to be appealing, as a significant number of Jews live in New York. This does not explain the sympathetic stance toward Palestine that the screened films portray, but it does suggest a reason for the large number of such films at the festival. The films from/about this region have, however, shifted focus throughout the years observed here, shifting to Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, and Lebanon after 2009, following a disproportionate concentration on Israel-Palestine before this. Prior to 2009, from 50 percent to 75 percent of the films from/about the Middle East concerned Israel and/or Palestine, but by 2012 this was only a third, and in 2013 no films on Palestine were screened. As mentioned, these tend to be films that are sympathetic to Palestine, or that attempt to construct a "reconciliation" mode. Rather than provide a list of the many films on this theme, I will focus on two. The first, *Ford Transit* (Abu-Assad 2003), was first screened in 2003 and was then repeated at the 2009 festival, suggesting it has some ongoing relevance. The film follows, as the name suggests, a Ford Transit driver (the most popular transport in Palestinian occupied territories). Rajai, the driver, takes the filmmaker through the complicated set of roadblocks with which Palestinians have to contend, and on the way listens to various analyses of the situation as diverse individuals are encountered and interviewed.

Another film in a similar vein and that was screened at the 2012 festival, was *5 Broken Cameras* (Burnat and Davidi 2011). One of the directors described it this way:

> When his fourth son, Gibreel, is born, Emad, a Palestinian villager, gets his first camera. In his village, Bil'in, a separation barrier is being built and the villagers start to resist this decision. For more than five years, Emad films the struggle, which is lead [sic] by two of his best friends, alongside filming how Gibreel grows. Very soon it affects his family and his own life. Daily arrests and night raids scare his family; his friends, brothers and him as well are either shot or arrested. One Camera after another is shot at or smashed, each camera tells a part of his story. (Davidi 2013)

This film, which is also a chronicle of the activism of one of the filmmakers and the village of which he is a part, like *Ford Transit* above, portrays the strength and resilience of Palestinians in the face of the Israeli occupation. Both films do not put on display shrunken, dispossessed people, but rather those who are either adapting to difficult situations or struggling to change them. In the second film we are given an insider's view of the troubles faced by Palestinians through self-representational filmmaking. In this way we are permitted entry into that world in the most intimate of ways, and, indeed, only through the filmmaker's eyes/lens can we be welcomed in.

Self-representation has often been used by human rights video activist organizations such as Witness as a means of attesting to "human rights abuses occurring in [individuals'] communities" (Witness 2013). Self-representation avoids many of the pitfalls of the politics of representation (Hall et al. 2013), images of others mediated by power and cultural meaning-making (Chouliaraki 2006), and represents the world of those who live them as producers and consumers simultaneously (Thumim 2012). On a much wider scale, self-representation was the philosophical platform upon which Third Cinema (Solanas and Getino 1969) was founded, as a way of encouraging local filmmakers to represent their worlds from "inside," as discussed in Part II.

The films from 2009 that begin to supersede those from Israel-Palestine are mostly from or about Afghanistan, and to a lesser degree Iran and Iraq. Indeed, in that year there was an equal number of films about Israel-Palestine as about Afghanistan, such as

- *Afghan Star* (Marking 2009), a documentary about contestants in a pop idol contest, two of them women who confront traditional views by appearing in the contest;
- *Kabuli Kid* (Akram 2008), a drama from France about a taxi driver in Kabul "left holding the baby" literally; and
- *Jung: In the Land of the Mujaheddin* (F. Lazzaretti and A. Vendemiatti (2001), an Italian documentary that follows an Italian team who aim to build a hospital in Afghanistan, a country torn apart by civil war since the Soviet withdrawal in 1989, and the difficulties faced by that nation since.

This last film is of some significance as it was first screened in 2001, before the September 11 terrorist attacks, and was made available for distribution freely after the strikes by the festival. This was done in order that the region in which Al Qaeda had grown could be understood more widely. The film was then screened again at the 2009 festival. The sympathetic portrayal of the difficulties of the Palestinian people in the face

of the Israeli occupation, as well as the use of a film that clearly places an emphasis on the complex and difficult situation in Afghanistan in order to diffuse some of the hysteria of the September 11 events, highlights the stance the festival has taken in this area. As a festival that is held in a city dominated by the very peoples who are doing the occupying in Palestine, and where the September 11 attack occurred, this was indeed a courageous position to take.

Love Crimes of Kabul

Before turning from the discussion of this region, I want to take a look at one final film. This one struck me as important because of the effects it had on the audience at the 2011 festival. *Love Crimes of Kabul* (2010) was described by the festival in this way:

> Jailed for running away from home to escape abuse, for allegations of adultery, and other "moral crimes," the women of Afghanistan's Badum Bagh prison band together to fight for their freedom. The film follows three young prisoners as they go to trial, revealing the pressures and paradoxes that women in Afghanistan face today, and the dangerous consequences of refusing to fit into society's norms. Their defiant actions come to be seen as threats to the very fabric of society, and their acts of self-determination as illegal. (HRWIFF 2014b)

This description of the film is structured by a concept of morality that is posed as oppressive of women in Afghanistan, and which they oppose by displaying defiance and self-determination, which is why they are in prison. What constitutes "morality" and how these acts are treated, to what point they remain private acts and when they are to be given public notice and actions, policy, legal mandate, or punishment, changes from society to society. In societies organized by "modernity," morality is formulated as acts of a private nature, inaccessible to collective forces other than through social coercion or enticements, which may be considerable but not justiciable in the public realm. Through their being described as victims of "moral crimes," and their actions being characterized as "self-determination" in their "defiance" of established mores, the women of the film are already being filtered for Western audiences as women who will not permit "tradition" to guide them, as "tradition" is read as "not modern." Although the private and individual construction of decisions about marriage and sexuality is a (Western) "tradition" of its own, this is made invisible discursively in order that the actions of the women may be palatable to Western audiences, their palatability reliant on fulfilling

the requirements of the humanitarian gaze. Their actions can then be organized through the gaze of the humanitarian spectator that permits one of two figures: the emasculated, passive victim of powerful forces such as "modernization" or the active "freedom fighter" whose actions will bring them closer to being "modern" (or away from "tradition"). As these were Muslim women, a further discursive feature must be added to the frame, an Orientalist (Said 1978) mechanism, which constructs "the Muslim Woman" as steeped and frozen (Yeğenoğlu 1998; Youssef Zayzafoon 2005) in oppressive traditions.

The notion of morality as a communal framework that has been established to contain and sustain its order is not described here, however, in the terms of the women whose faces are on the screen but rather of those whom the film's audience will recognize. This becomes apparent in watching the film, as the women neither "band together" nor fight for a generalized cause, although they are shown as having high levels of self-determination and cunning. The reaction of audiences when this film was screened at the 2011 festival was bewilderment. One of the audience members asked the filmmaker in a Q&A after the film whether she had intended to portray the women as devious in love; the implication was that the nobility and selflessness, a porousness to humility and others' interventions with which victims must shroud themselves, was not present on the screen. The expected emasculated victim of oppression is replaced with figures whose presence in a prison might be questioned, but whose levels of agency could not. Their words and actions as flawed, self-seeking, cunning, and devious individuals show them neither as powerless victims nor as noble fighters for national emancipation. Eshaghian, the filmmaker, replied that it was naïve to expect love to be pure and selfless.

The question by the audience member emerged from a feeling of perplexity when neither of these figures emerged on the screen. Most of the women returned to their families and their previous lives, with few apparent negative consequences from their stay in prison. One character in particular, married during her prison stay, was assertively giving directions her new husband's family prior to her release. If these were women victims of personal "moral" choices, none displayed traditional features of victimhood, as their levels of agency prior to, while in prison, and upon release were considerable. Their crimes had mostly been committed in full awareness of the consequences, and in one instance to deviously gain what the woman wanted. If they were fighting for freedom, as the description suggested, none did so other than for herself. If they were steeped in tradition, these were women who knew how to navigate

that terrain and gain what they wanted. The description given by the festival attempted to appeal to a gaze that conformed to a preconceived expectation of "the Muslim woman" as oppressed by tradition, but in the film this was overturned, raising confusion as a consequence. The audience reaction suggests that Western human rights audiences are already formulated, through the humanitarian gaze discussed in chapter 2, to perceive powerlessness or struggles for practices hedging closer to cultural and political familiarity. This film overturned such a view.

The humanitarian gaze—to which the festival must appeal—has predetermined the position of viewers and those whom they view differently, although they are interconnected through a need for each other. The relationship between them may be held together through reference to a common moral frame to which claims are being made. For a HRFF, the framework is human rights. For this festival, the relationship of the city in which it exhibits, and the nation, to both the humanitarian gaze and to human rights, positions it within a unique set of tensions. Those tensions are manifest in *Love Crimes of Kabul*, its description by the festival, and the audience response. As audiences were invited to enter the screening under the assumption that their preconceptions would be met, the screening of something else unsettled them. The expectations fell directly within the purview of the humanitarian gaze; human rights were to feed the entitlement to see suffering Muslim women. The entitlement must be part of the sense of ownership of human rights by this nation, as the UN headquarters is located in New York, and human rights are an integral part of their constitution. The profound investment in such a discourse historically (a discourse that has produced the idea of the "universal" subject) has resulted in the "ownership" of human rights, unlike other nations. But it has also produced a stance of "watchfulness" over others, which monitors their conformity and compliance (the internationalizing discursive command) with this universal subject, in whose creation they played an integral part. However, *Love Crimes of Kabul*, as important as it was in subverting that gaze, was not granted the festival's Nestor Almendros prize that year, but rather the prize was given to another film, *The Price of Sex,* which did not stray too far from the humanitarian gaze.[5]

The United States

For the years that the archival material has been available, five distinct thematic strands appear regularly for films abut the United States: the justice system; racism and immigration; activists and activism, foreign

interventions; and gay/sex rights. While other issues appeared such as homelessness, education, antiglobalization, youth, the environment, and the Vietnam War, the first five were the most consistent across the years for which information is available. In 2013, the festival was subdivided into "focus areas," apparently for the first time,[6] although a remnant website suggests this may have taken place earlier. This website, from 1997, states that the festival was then subdivided into five "chapters" "focusing on humankind's fundamental search for identity, a sense of self that can never be 'disappeared'" (HRWIFF 2014k). This last term appears to make direct reference to the disappearances in Latin America. The chapters are diverse, but there are two sections that explicitly target the United States—*Big Brother in America and Abroad* (three of the five films in that section are critical of U.S. domestic and foreign policy) and *Reading, Writing and Politics* (the two films in this section critique religious conservatism in schools and the lack of access to education for illegal immigrants). What this website also makes apparent is that the films from/about the United States were substantial in 1995–97, encompassing more than half the films in that period. However it must be noted that many of the films from the United States are not necessarily about the United States, that is, they are U.S. productions that deal with other places. For example, *Calling the Ghosts* (Jacobson and Jelincic 1996) deals with rape in Bosnia-Herzegovina, while *Bye Bye Babushka* (Feig 1996) deals with the passing away of the generation that grew up under the communist regime in Russia. Nevertheless, the 1997 festival had 5 of the total 19 films dealing with topics specific to the United States (or 26 percent). The only other region that received as much attention that year was Asia, with 4 films; only one film represented Palestine that year, a different pattern from later years (see below).

The archival material for the 2013 festival shows it was organized by thematic divisions. One of the focus areas, called "Human Rights in the US," centered specifically on the United States. As I explored in the Buenos Aires HRFF chapters,[7] the act of naming a thematic section in a film festival is an important discursive moment, when difference is attenuated and divergent works are imagined as if held by a common thread. It is also a point at which discursive surveillance can take place as the films are imagined as performing something in common. The creation of this particular strand is noteworthy, although films about the United States appear to have had a significant presence during the life of the festival. As I discussed in the preceding chapter, the significance of this is that the parent organization did not always have a section for its human rights work that explicitly focused on the

United States. For example, in its 1990 annual World Report, HRW's work occurs across Africa, Asia, Latin America, Middle East, and Eastern Europe, but not Western Europe, Australia, or North America. In 1992, there was a section named *Human Rights Watch*, under which another, named *United States*, occurs, and in 1993, a fully fledged section named *United States* appears, although it was never placed as part of *The Americas*, one of the sections in the reports, but as a stand-alone category.

The festival cannot be divorced from HRW, as much of the festival's work has been in direct reference to the parent organization. This is apparent from the issues given attention by HRW, which match many of the themes of the festival. In particular, attention has consistently been given to civil and political issues, mostly related to prisons and prisoners, and the death penalty. Examples include

- in the 2001 festival, the film *Tough on Crime, Tough on our Kind* (Educational Video Center 2000), dealing with inequities in the juvenile justice system;
- in 2002, the film *Justifiable Homicide* (Osman 2002) about a 1995 homicide of two Puerto Rican youth by New York Police Department officers;
- in 2004, *Deadline* (Ebert 2004), about the inaccuracies that led to a large percentage of people being sentenced to death; *Juvies* (Neale 2004) about 12 juvenile offenders who were tried as adults; and the short film *Three Poems by Spoon Jackson* (M. Wenzer 2004), in which Jackson reads three of his poems via a fuzzy telephone line in a U.S. prison.

Until 2012, most of the films related to civil and political issues offered a critique of increased surveillance and the loss of civil liberties as a result of the application of counterterrorism laws. These include

- in 2004, a short three-minute film, *Pizza Surveillance* (Gutis 2004), produced by the American Civil Liberties Union, and presenting an imagined scenario of an extreme loss of privacy;
- also in 2004, *Persons of Interest* (McLean and Perse 2004), about the increase in the numbers of arrests of Muslim-Americans in the wake of September 11;
- in 2008, *U.S.A. vs. Al-Arian* (Halvorsen 2007), about a pro-Palestinian activist professor who is arrested and held for two and a half years on terrorism charges;
- in 2010, *In the Land of the Free* (Jean 2010), a more traditional prison film about three black men in solitary confinement for prolonged periods of time, without any on the effects of counterterrorism;

- in 2011, *You Don't Like the Truth: 4 Days inside Guantánamo* (Côté and Henriquez 2010), a Canadian production that was possible because the Supreme Court of Canada declassified the video recording of a Canadian 16-year-old's interrogation at Guantánamo Bay prison;
- also in 2011, *If a Tree Falls: A Story of the Earth Liberation Front* (Curry and Cullman 2011), which, although about the imprisonment of a member of the ELF, implicates the antiterrorism laws in what takes place;
- in 2012, *Into the Abyss: A Tale of Death, A Tale of Life* (Herzog 2011), about the death penalty and life on death row;
- and in 2013, *An Unreal Dream: The Michael Morton Story* (A. Reinert 2013), about the wrongful conviction of a man for murdering his wife, who is released after 25 years when DNA evidence is permitted to be used.

The focus on civil and political issues follows a traditional conception of human rights, and one that is generated by an ideological division between liberal and communitarian politics, manifest in what have been called first- and second-generation rights. The difference between the two types has to do with the sorts of claims that can be made about the state, with the first generation focusing on freedoms and liberties, and the state's role being a "negative" one to merely protect individuals so that they are free to exercise their rights. Second-generation rights, which emerged from a critique of that framework, suggest that freedoms make no sense without the state's provision of some foundational features (such as education, health, social welfare) that enable basic needs to be met (Ife 2012). The festival has placed some emphasis on issues of a social nature in relation to the United States, and more so in recent times, as seen in a growing number of films on gay rights, yet the dominance of civil and political issues is still apparent. Two films at the festival in particular, both by a filmmaker who calls herself a human rights filmmaker,[8] Pamela Yates, draw the explicit connection between human rights and the legal/justice systems: *The Reckoning: The Battle for the International Criminal Court* (2009), about the difficulties faced by the ICC in bringing perpetrators of genocide to justice given the limited resources and enforcement ability of the court, and *Granito: How to Nail a Dictator* (2011), which deals with the legal battle to indict the Guatemalan dictatorship of Efraín Ríos Montt for the genocide perpetrated against the Indigenous Mayan peoples in the 1980s.

Although there are interesting features about all of the films dealing with the themes mentioned above, mirroring the analysis of the films from Eastern Europe I want to place more attention on the films related

to activists and activism. These films are significant as they point to the theme of human agency and how individuals and groups mobilize to solve them. Although some of the films used to represent these activities appear to be an extension of those on civil and political life, others are related to social/cultural/economic issues. Examples are the following:

- In 1997, *An Act of Resistance* (Leppzer 1997), was screened, which is about the devastating effects on themselves and their community of a couple's acts of civil disobedience, which involved not paying taxes in order not to help fund war.
- At the 2001 festival, two films were shown, *Scout's Honor* (Shepard 2001), about activism for gay rights in the Boy Scouts in the United States, and *Ralph Bunche: An American Odyssey* (Greaves 2001), about the first African American person of color to receive the Peace Nobel Prize in 1950 for his work in mediating the Arab-Israeli conflict.
- In 2002, a special section showcased a decade of the work of Yo-TV, youth-produced documentaries from the Educational Video Center. In 2003, another section of the festival was created, titled "American Dissent," to feature the films of Third World Newsreel on their thirty-fifth anniversary.
- In 2004, the film *The Yes Men* (2003), together with its sequel, *The Yes Men Fix the World* (2009), screened at the 2009 festival. Both films, which are about a couple of political hacktivists, are of special interest because they clearly reveal the politics of the festival. Each of these films, about antiglobalization and anti-neoliberalism, was given special screening times when it appeared: the 2003 film was used to open the 2004 festival, and the 2009 film closed the festival that year.
- In 2006, all three films on the United States were in effect about political struggles for social/political change: *The Camden 28* (Giacchiano 2006), about civil disobedience at the time of the Vietnam War; *The Forest for the Trees* (Mellis 2005), about a left-wing environmental activist; and *My American Dream: How Democracy Works* (Robertson and Camerini 2006), about the struggle for immigration reform.
- In 2007, the film *The Devil Came on Horseback* (Stern and Sundberg 2007) was shown, about a U.S. soldier who becomes an activist after visiting the Sudan and seeing evidence of the Darfur genocide.
- In 2008, *The Camden 28* was repeated.
- In 2009, *The Reckoning: The Battle for the International Criminal Court* (Yates 2009), about prosecutor Luis Moreno-Ocampo's attempts to enforce international laws against war crimes and genocide, was screened.

Between 2010 and 2013, several films appeared that portrayed various activists:

- In 2010, there were two films on the emerging debate over immigration reform: *Last Best Chance* (Robertson and Camerini 2010a), focusing on Edward Kennedy's efforts in this area, and *Mountains and Clouds* (Robertson and Camerini 2010b), on the activism related to this reform more broadly (both screened again in 2011).
- In 2011, four films focusing on some form of activism were screened, from the civil rights movement in *Sing your Song* (Rostock 2011), about Harry Belafonte's activism; *Better This World* (Galloway and Duane de la Vega 2011), on the entrapment of two activists who are currently in jail; *If a Tree Falls* and *No Boundaries: Tim Hetherington* (Hetherington 2010), about "a photographer, filmmaker, journalist, human rights activist, and artist" (HRWIFF 2014c).
- In 2012, *Bidder 70* (Gage and Gage 2012) represented this type of film, about a single activist who subverts the actions of an auction in 2008 that was to lease large tracts of land in the United States for oil and gas ventures.
- In 2013, the film *99%—The Occupy Wall St. Collaborative Film* (Ewell et al. 2012) was screened, of which the content is self-evident.

Films such as these have had a consistent presence, which suggests that they are playing an important role. As at the Buenos Aires festival, these films display something intrinsically local: a reliance on domestic cinemas to tell stories about themselves, in particular those who might become inspirational models for audiences to emulate. Their content not only shows that this is an activist film festival but also directs audiences toward what is possible and what has been made possible by other activists. These are films that, on the whole, celebrate individuals' tenacity and commitment to social change, with some of the activism dating back to the civil rights movement and the Vietnam War, but many are also of more recent importance, such as the films about immigration reform and environmental issues. These films, I suggest, fulfill more than simply the reinforcement of the festival as an activist space or as models for audiences. They also provide a counterpoint for films that critique social/political/economic conditions in the United States. For example, *Devils Don't Dream!* (1995), which condemns U.S. foreign policy in Guatemala, was shown at the 1997 festival. At the 2011 festival, the films *You Don't Like the Truth: 4 Days Inside Guantánamo*, and *Lost Angels* (T. Napper 2010), about homelessness in Los Angeles, were both condemnatory of political and social conditions in the United States. Standing against these are films such as *Better This World*; *If a Tree Falls*;

No Boundaries: Tim Hetherington, and *Sing Your Song*, which display the resolve of individuals to change these conditions. Similar to the Buenos Aires festival, where the adverse conditions from the 2001 financial crisis produced a set of films pejorative of neoliberalism yet also celebratory of civil society's reactions to it through cooperatives, this festival directs its domestic audiences' gaze toward some of its troubles, but primarily celebrates its activists' achievements.

Gender: A Short Aside

In the films that focus on the United States, I was struck by how few films about/from the United States focused on gender. Two that could be found were: one on domestic violence in the United States, in the 1997 festival, *It Ain't Love* (Todd & Young 1997), and *The Invisible War* (Dick 2011), in the 2012 festival, about rape in the military. This is particularly striking, as one of the "focus areas" in the 2013 festival is *Women's Rights*. This category was, however, a subcategory of *Traditional Values and Human Rights* that year. This suggests that gender issues (or, in essence, the violation of the rights of women) primarily occur in societies with "traditional values." The tacit implication of this is, then, that women's rights are not to be understood as the violation of the rights of women in "non-traditional" societies. And, indeed, the films within this category are all films about the Middle East:

- *Camera/Woman* (Zoubir 2012), about a divorcee working as a photographer against her family's wishes in Morocco;
- *Going up the Stairs* (Maghami 2011), about an illiterate woman who becomes an artist in Tehran; and
- *Rafea: Solar Mama* (Noujaim and Eldaief 2012), about a Bedouin woman who is given the opportunity to become a solar engineer, but whose husband is ambivalent about it.

One film is from/about Asia—*Salma* (Longinotto 2013), about a young woman in traditional India who becomes a famous poet without her family's consent or knowledge, and another from Africa—*Tall as the Boab Tree* (Teicher 2012), about two young women in Senegal who receive an education, but when their family's fortunes fail, their education is curtailed and arrangements are made to marry them.

Gender is a topic of some significance at the festival, as can be seen through the two films discussed already, *Love Crimes* and *The Price of Sex*. However, it is not a subject to which I can do full justice in this book as has, for example, Wendy Hesford. Given my interest in discursive parameters, I can only point to some of the obvious absences, even in what has been included. In 2013, the year in which the section

Traditional Values and Human Rights occurs, the only film that was included on gender issues in the United States was *Anita* (Mock 2013) about a sexual harassment case in 1991 in that country, although this was not catalogued as a gender issue, but appeared as part of *Human Rights in the United States* instead. Although the gender inequality named in this film arises from traditional attitudes toward women by men in positions of significant power (members of the Supreme Court) that manifests as sexual harassment, this was not classified as such by the festival. The commentary about the film in the festival program states that “for many women in the United States, sexual harassment continues to be a factor in the workplace and is a difficult subject for them to raise. This is especially true for immigrant women who lack authorization to work in the US and fear deportation if they complain” (HRWIFF 2014d). The commentary goes on to describe the injustices suffered by immigrant women and the work of HRW in bringing this to light. All of this, the film about a black woman as a victim of sexual harassment, and the description of the film by the festival that redirects one’s attention to immigrant women, points to serious issues of representation, ones that must be faced by HRFFs everywhere. All of these women, of color, in the United States, in effect, have become marked by the injustices committed against them. While it is vital for the HRFF to bring this to light, without a countervailing set of narratives that displays how both of these groups may mobilize to regain their rights, or an analysis that shows why they are more disadvantaged than noncolored women, the issue ends up isolating them individually because of their color. Indeed, this is apparent in the film description posted on the website, where it begins by describing sexual harassment in the United States generically and diverts to that suffered by immigrant women. If this is to implicate the greater group for the situation, the description does not make the connection with broader discriminatory structures and instead ends up isolating harassment as suffered by one (or two, in this case) group(s). And these groups, furthermore, become identified as leading problem-saturated lives. While not wishing to diminish the fact that universalizing the issue to all women who suffer harassment can often lead to the failure to acknowledge how discrimination can occur differently for various groups, it is a point that needs continuous surveillance, as it can make privilege invisible by making the problematic lives of “others” visible.

Part of the difficulty in the way in which gender was classified at the 2013 festival goes to the very heart of the “violations” problem of human rights practice. The focus by HRW on violations implicates the

humanitarian gaze because the organization has sought to find them primarily "out there." The privilege on which this is premised and sustained is then left unattended and intact, as the focus continues on those who suffer, and not on those whose lives are enriched by that suffering. Other films that are part of the festival, those which have tackled broader structures, such as neoliberal ideologies in the marketplace, have performed an "implicatory" role. But these particular (gender) films do not, as these gendered troubles appear to signify an annihilation of those subjects' enabling mechanisms, enhancing the possibility for the spectator to write over those lives.

9

Context: From Latin America to Political Documentary in the United States

Although films about/from the Middle East (largely Palestine) and Eastern Europe have received ongoing and sustained focus during the period covered by this book, Latin America, Africa, and Asia have received less. This has been surprising in relation to Latin America at least, given a number of factors: Latin America is close geographically to the United States; there is a large Latino population in that nation; and the nations from Latin America have significant cinemas. If the ongoing attention to Palestine can be explained by the large Jewish population in New York, then the growing number of Latinos in the United States has not received the same level of attention. In this chapter I attempt to understand that "lack" through an historical lens, as I did for earlier chapters.

Human Rights in the Time of Dictators

As I discussed in the last section, human rights language in Argentina brought the issue of the desaparecidos ("the disappeared") into the public domain, primarily through the Madres' activism. Human rights as a framework for activism in general, but more specifically for drawing a set of films together in a film festival, may not be one that is well recognized in Latin America. Human rights film festivals are screened in only 4 cities in Latin America, as opposed to at least 14 in North America and even more in Europe. These numbers suggest that an engagement with human rights by Latin American nations is either nascent or has not been seen as relevant for activism until recently. I suspect that it is both if we take the Argentine case to be representative of what has occurred in the rest of the southern Americas. Recall that Argentina's use of human rights occurred only as a result of the 1976 dictatorship, and the limited but strategic use of human rights made by the activist group

Madres de Plaza de Mayo to draw international attention to their cause. I know of human rights organizations in Chile, my country of birth, which have emerged for a similar reason, although Chile does not have an ongoing HRFF as yet (in 2012, a traveling human rights film festival was inaugurated in Santiago to deal with "Audiovisual Memory," or to recall their own dictatorship [Museo 2014], but no others have exhibited since then). It does not appear to be a flourishing discourse for activism, except around the issue of the 1970s–1980s dictatorships. The connection to those dictatorships is mirrored in HRWIFF's programming for this region, as will be discussed in the following chapter.

In chapter 7, I examined the origins of HRW as a monitor of socialist regimes in Eastern Europe. In Latin America, by contrast, notions about human rights were used to denounce and bring to legal account right-wing military regimes. At the time of the Cold War, when Helsinki Watch came into being, Latin America was key strategically in the ideological and territorial war with the USSR. It is now well documented that the United States was at the very least complicit in condoning and assisting military regimes in Latin America (see below). The best example of this occurred through the support-in-kind of the transnational network of terror between Chile, Argentina, Uruguay, Bolivia, Paraguay, and Brazil, known as Operación Condor/Operation Condor.

Operation Condor was a parastatal agreement and body that allowed the above-named countries' military regimes to share intelligence and hunt, capture, and execute political opponents in combined operations across their borders. To what extent the United States was embroiled in the maintenance of this network has been analyzed in various ways by different scholars. One scholar, primarily focusing on Paraguay, commented that "the overall picture regarding possible U.S. involvement in Condor that emerges from the documentation found in the archive is at best ambiguous" (Slack 1996, 505). Another overrides this evaluation as "rather narrow and legalistic . . . [and] very cautiously assessed," and goes on to refer to information about an inter-American meeting in Santiago in June 1976, in which Henry Kissinger "had assured the Chilean and Argentine juntas of the Ford administration's support and cooperation for counterinsurgency operations and for Operation Condor" (McSherry 1999, 146). Whatever the situation regarding the extent of U.S. involvement in propping up said dictatorships, there is a broad consensus that the United States provided some support (McSherry 1999; Slack 1996; Dinges 2004). This was a time when the United States and the USSR were in deep conflict both ideologically and territorially. As McSherry points out,

> Condor must be understood within the context of the global anti-communist alliance led by the United States. We now know that top U.S. officials and agencies, including the State Department, the Central Intelligence Agency, and the Defense Department, were fully aware of Condor's formation and its operations from the time it was organized in 1975 (if not earlier). The US government considered Latin American militaries to be allies in the Cold War and worked closely with their intelligence organisations. US executive agencies at least condoned, and sometimes actively assisted, Condor "counter-subversive" operations. (1999, 145)

Although this is well-known history, it is important to reiterate some of it as "the other side" of the ideological conflict in which Helsinki Watch was engaged. Of further importance, moreover, are the ways in which the subject of human rights became included in discussions about the dictatorships, and foreign policy in general. In 1977, Jimmy Carter was sworn in as president of the United States, and he made human rights the centerpiece of his foreign policy. In his opening speech he referred to the connection between "freedom" and human rights, the latter providing a moral vision for their nation, and such moral authority that "[n]o other country is as well-qualified as we to set an example" (Carter 1977a). His term of office began in January 1977, and ended in January 1981. During his administration, human rights were to become a moral backbone for the United States, a framework that was morally correct because it enhanced freedoms and denounced "totalitarian" regimes. Eight months after being sworn into office, Carter had a meeting with Argentine President Jorge Videla, at which the issue of human rights was raised. Carter, when asked about this meeting said,

> The other item that we discussed at length was the question of human rights—the number of people who are incarcerated or imprisoned in Argentina, the need for rapid trial of these cases, and the need for Argentina to let the world know the status of the prisoners. (1977 b)

Human rights were thus being used as a reference point to question the actions of the military regimes, as they "disappeared" people without trial or legal process. The promotion of human rights had already taken place before Carter came into office, however, to raise similar questions of the Argentine military regime. For example, in October 1976, U.S. Secretary of State Kissinger held a meeting with Argentina's foreign minister, Admiral Cesar Augusto Guzzetti. (As declassified documents became

available, George Washington University obtained various memoranda of conversations [memcons] through the Freedom of Information Act and published these in their website "The National Security Archive.") A most telling exchange occurred between them, one that led the foreign minister to return to Argentina "euphoric" (National Security Archive 2003), convinced that the U.S. government had no real problem with human rights in his country. In this conversation, as the U.S. Congress prepared to approve sanctions against the Argentine regime for widespread reports of human rights abuses by the junta, Kissinger interrupted Guzzetti in his description of the situation in Argentina, and said,

> Look, our basic attitude is that we would like you to succeed. I have an old-fashioned view that friends ought to be supported. What is not understood in the United States is that you have a civil war. We read about human rights problems but not the context. The quicker you succeed the better. . . . The human rights problem is a growing one. Your Ambassador can apprise you. We want a stable situation. We won't cause you unnecessary difficulties. If you can finish before Congress gets back, the better. Whatever freedoms you could restore would help. (National Security Archive 2003)

The memcons with Kissinger display clearly the Ford administration's approach to human rights abuses in Argentina—not simply as human rights violations, but as a necessary part of war. What is also clear is that the language of human rights is already firmly entrenched in the United States' political frame of analysis, even if only to be summarily dismissed as a function of incorrect perspective and an obfuscated view, and whose "growth" as a problem is not the administration's designation but that of others.

The day before this meeting, Gazzutti had met with Acting Secretary of State Charles W. Robinson, who told him

> it is possible to understand the requirement to be tough. . . . The problem is that the United States is an idealistic and moral country and its citizens have great difficulty in comprehending the kinds of problems faced by Argentina today. There is a tendency to apply our moral standards abroad and Argentina must understand the reaction of Congress with regard to loans and military assistance. The American people, right or wrong, have the perception that today there exists in Argentina a pattern of gross violations of human rights. (National Security Archive 2003)

This statement has a much more condescending overtone than the one by Kissinger, and works a greater duplicity by positing its "moral" argument through both a relativist *and* an essentialist position. This enables Robinson to "other" human rights from Argentina's military, as beyond their activities, and posed as "tough" "problems." On the other hand, the "moral" and "idealistic" realm within which the United States functions, positions it as continuing to practice the principles of human rights (even if in doing so it "others" their violations). It works its argument through a set of maneuvers that resemble Susan Sontag's comment in relation to the photographic exposure of dead bodies of "others" that "confirm that this is the sort of thing which happens in that place . . . [and] nourish the belief in the inevitability of tragedy in the benighted or backward—that is, poor—parts of the world" (2004, 65). However, here no such (visual) confirmation is needed, as it has already occurred and is embodied in Robinson's statement. The duplicitous use of human rights in announcing the United States to be compliant with them, but suggesting that Argentina needs a different key declares the latter nation to be deficient in its moral practice, by placing it outside the reach of human rights. In this way, human rights are used as the moral frame by which some countries ended up as honorable and others not quite so. Human rights, therefore, were articulated through global power formations that at the time included the ideologically based Cold War. Latin America was a major player in that war, mostly due to its proximity to one of the warring sides. The Cold War was largely expressed through territorial influence rather than outright invasion and annexation, and, in this case at least, human rights were taken as the framework by which the United States could claim moral superiority, while at the same time assisting in the very practices the frame rejected.

The memcoms emphasize the extent to which the language of human rights was being used in the United States, and at what levels of the government; hence, it was familiar to policy makers as a framework to which they referred, even if to dismiss their use for political accountability. The Madres de Plaza de Mayo knew this when they associated themselves with that language for their own purposes. But this also raises other questions about the ideological slant that Helsinki Watch took. If Jeri Laber could declare that in the "US there was no such problem" (2002, 100; see chapter 7), was this an invisibility the organization could create by focusing exclusively on communist authoritarianism? Her comment implies that, by what it did not notice or say, Helsinki Watch's lack of attention to military right-wing authoritarianism originated in its being closely invested in and politically aligned with the ideological war of the time.

At the festival, the relative abstention in programming for this region has possibly more to do with the fact that South America is not a current foreign policy focus for the United States (Felbab-Brown 2008), except in relation to drugs, and as such is not a topic of ongoing tension and public conversation. And yet a number of films suggest there are other forces at play at the festival. Some of the films either take a stance against U.S. foreign policy on the drug issue (see discussion on the film *Cocalero* in the following chapter), or indict the policies of past administrations (see *Trials of Henry Kissinger* and *Death Squadrons: The French School* in following chapter, as well as *Devils Don't Dream!* mentioned in the previous chapter). Together with the number of films that celebrate activism in the region, in the face of the neoliberal incursion, all indicate a festival that is differently placed. I would suggest that the festival's relative lack of interest in Latin America has to do with a wider disinterest in the United States, but that it is also for other reasons. It has to be recalled that at the 1993 festival, an entire retrospective of Pino Solanas' films took place, a filmmaker whose ideas founded a radical cinema that rejected the neocolonialism of the United States and Europe and its cultural machineries. The same ideas had been the backbone of Tómas Gutiérrez Alea's filmmaking in Cuba, and 6 of his 20 films were screened at the festival in 1995.

This all suggests a tension within the festival. On the one hand, the politics inherent in much social activism are of a left-leaning hue that criticizes the excesses of capitalism and the inequalities they engender. On the other hand, the festival is situated in a nation where condemnatory narratives of communism continue. Opposition to authoritarianism in Eastern Europe and Cuba were manifestations of that, and were part of the censure. The fall of the Eastern European regimes permitted the United States to let its guard down, ideologically speaking, although HRW maintains an interest there, along with HRWIFF. Cuba, however, has remained a controversial topic within the United States, not least for anti-communist Cubans who fled there during the 1959 revolution, for whom the 1961 Bay of Pigs debacle was a sign that they would not regain what they had lost (Gibbs and Goodall 2009). During my stay in New York (state), living in a suburb dominated by South Americans, I was told that Cubans are resented by other Latino communities because they are able to gain citizenship status much faster, and thus have access to education and wield greater political power than other groups. Cuba, therefore, poses a set of controversies that are possibly being manifest as an a(void)ance at the festival.

The selection of films from/about the rest of Latin America, however, suggests to me a sympathetic alignment with the politics of the

left-leaning governments that have recently been established in much of South America, and this manifests as a celebration of the agency of its activists. As all of these governments have been democratically elected, many as a backlash against neoliberalism (Castaeda 2006; Grugel and Riggirozzi 2009; Madrid 2010), they align both with the aims of HRW to monitor civil and political topics—especially as they relate to "freedom" or democratic representation—and also with the other films at the festival that critique economic neoliberalism (see chapter 7). But I also wonder to what degree a remnant of "guilt" remains for the festival regarding the amount and type of prior involvement by the United States in seeking to shape the region politically and economically, and the subsequent political disappearances as well as the economic crises (see chapters 3 and 5) this facilitated. The film *Devils Don't Dream!* screened at the 1997 festival, although produced in the United Kingdom, in denouncing the complicity of U.S. interests in the toppling of the popular communist Guatemalan president Jacobo Arbenz Guzmán in 1954, makes such a point. Not watching the region may well reflect elements of all of the above.

The Question of Audiences and the Humanitarian Gaze

What all of this suggests is that the festival's programming is selected with quite a specific audience in mind. As a HRFF, the internationalizing impulse of human rights discourse indicates that the direction of attention is to be as much beyond its national borders as within. This festival has maintained attention beyond the borders of its own home base much more than the Buenos Aires festival did, at least in the earlier years under consideration. Yet even though this is the case, upon closer examination of the films about "others" that are included in the program, their appeal is founded on how they relate to something about their place of exhibition. So, regarding the emphasis on Eastern Europe, it is easy to see the connections to an ideological friction with Russia that continues today. The focus on the Middle East, and the Palestine question, can be tied back to the high number of Jews living in New York and an appeal to the liberal elements of that audience. The relative nonattention to Latin America, in spite of the large Latino population in the United States, can be referred to a comparative lack of interest in the region by non-Latinos in the United States, given the current emphasis on the "war on terror" and terrorism. The closer attention given to Mexico relates specifically to immigration and to illegal border-crossings. The position of illegal immigrants is an issue that has been

reflected in a number of films from/about the US. This is obviously a topic of great interest to U.S. audiences, Latino or otherwise, about a country not only in geographical proximity but also one from which the most "illegals" come. These illegals are also the backbone of an alternative economy that provides cheap labor for the official economy, such as cleaners, nannies for middle-class families, and unregistered laborers.

This translates into an appeal to a type of audience that does not necessarily include Latinos, but certainly would include a middle class for whom illegal immigration has been a source of ongoing tension but also usefulness (The Economist 2005, 2007a). If the implied audience for this festival is white middle-class professionals, some of whom are of Jewish descent, with a "conscience" or a social justice orientation, then the sort of programming I discuss in the following chapter makes sense. The appeal to such audiences has ramifications, nevertheless. One of those is the possibility that aspects of the humanitarian gaze, which I discussed in chapter 2, may be strongest among these groups, as they seek to "find" victims. This approach may place undue pressure on film selection. This gaze has been configured through communication channels and geopolitical dimensions that translate into visual appeals to an affluent spectator (Chouliaraki 2006, 2012; Tascón forthcoming b). This constructs powerful spectators as ever more powerful by attempts to appeal to something about themselves (Chouliaraki 2012) that "grabs" them. The appeal must then work through what some scholars have called the "politics of pity" (Arendt 1963; Boltanski 1999; Chouliaraki 2004, 2006), rather than the "politics of justice" (Arendt 1963; Boltanski 1999). The former seeks "victims" who may be "saved," rather than a complex human *being* in whose difference we do not need to inscribe our sameness (Lévinas 2000) (see chapter 2 for fuller discussion). The discussion of the HRWIFF audience reaction to *Love Crimes of Kabul* in the previous chapter illustrates this clearly. I would suggest, in spite of this, that the usefulness of the analyses of spectatorial power in these contexts should be simply to reduce privilege. By exposing this power and those features that enable the spectator-self to inscribe themselves onto another, it should not disable the possibility of acting for another. Appeals to any set of spectators cannot but begin other than where they are, in the realm of sameness, *and* extend them toward the difference that an(other) embodies. This is a dilemma faced by all programmers at film festivals of this type face, an ethical dilemma (McLagan 2003) about how to engage with a set of spectating traditions that have already prefigured power in a particular relationship between viewers and viewed, and then to help change it. In selecting *Love Crimes,* the festival inveigled

the humanitarian gaze—that which is mostly about the self, seeking to believe in its own goodness by writing one's own story on another as if upon an empty vessel (Chouliaraki 2012; Tascón forthcoming b)—only to interrupt it.

The audiences to whom the festival appeals, will have been influenced in their viewing habits by some of the dimensions of the humanitarian gaze. These same audiences have, since the early 2000s, become more accustomed to watching documentaries, as this film genre came to be seen as having greater fidelity to reality at a time when truth telling appeared to be in crisis (see below). Two films that I will discuss more fully in the following chapter, both centering on Latin America, show the transition that audiences had undergone in their viewing traditions. *Missing* (1982) by Costa-Gavras, which opened the first festival in 1988, was a fictional film about the Chilean dictatorship of 1973–89. *Granito: How to Nail a Dictator* (2011), screened in 2011, about the Guatemalan genocide of the 1980s, was a documentary settled properly within a new documentary filmmaking tradition that contained strong personal elements, and was produced at a time when documentaries had become more popular. I want to expand a little on the latter cinematic trend in the United States, in order to position my analysis of both aforementioned films in the following chapter.

"The Place of Documentary in the Current American Political Climate"

Much of the scholarly material on the documentary generically, and especially in the English language, is implicitly about the production of documentary films in the United States, but not necessarily named as such. I want to focus on that specific production context because, as Michael Chanan says, "[the documentary] is always strongly influenced, in certain ways structured in advance, by the conditions which govern the public sphere in each country" (2007, v). His comment specifically addresses questions of the *production* of the documentary, and I want to go on to explain *exhibition* decisions made by the festivals based on a speculated implied audience. Production and exhibition decisions are never altogether divorced from each other, as they take place in, are mediated by, and are worked through the public sphere that Chanan mentions. And in order to explain programming decisions by the festival, located in the United States, in what follows I want to focus explicitly on the that country as a production context. For that reason, I rely heavily on a 2007 edition of the film journal *The Velvet Light Trap,* in

which a number of scholars were explicitly asked for their responses about "the place of documentary in the current American [sic.] political climate" (Resha et al., 79), and to

> sound off on the politics of documentary filmmaking in the context of contemporary American production and consumption . . . yielding insights into contemporary distribution trends, media conglomeration, the waning interest in aesthetics, and the limits of documentary as a political tool. (Resha et al. 2007, 3)

The section of the journal in which these comments appear has been called a "dossier," and so from here on, I shall use that term to refer to the comments and that come from the scholars who are included there.

The surge in interest in the documentary was marked by the commercial successes of Michael Moore in the early 2000s (Hall 2007; Levin 2007; Lewis 2007). Chanan begins his 2007 book *The Politics of Documentary* with the following comment: "[u]nexpectedly and without anyone predicting it, as the centenary of cinema came and went, documentary returned to the screen" (p. v.). Other scholars have mentioned a "renaissance in documentary filmmaking" (Hall 2007, 80) and an "increased visibility of documentary" (Lewis 2007, 83) in the first years of the twenty-first century, while another described it as "the recent surge in documentary's visibility" (White 2007, 88). This led BBC editor Nick Fraser in a recent large reader-style compendium on documentary film, to declare that "a documentary had saved Al Gore from political oblivion, winning him an Oscar" (2013, x), and how struck he was, on attending the Sundance Film Festival in 2011, by the level of familiarity audiences had to watching lengthy documentaries (xii). The two references he made were based on a festival and a film from/about the United States, although this context was not made explicit. To attend to the level of contextualization I intend to here is not to discount that the documentary is a globally circulating genre, but rather to recognize that different "socio-political imperatives" (Chanan 2007, v) will produce different viewing traditions, one of which, in the United States, has, in the last decade, included a renewed interest in watching more of the genre.

The reasons for the rise in interest in the documentary in the United States has been laid at the feet of political events emanating from the September 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center (September 11) in New York, the war on terror, and the second Iraq war (Hall 2007; Levin 2007; Lewis 2007; Waldman 2007). One film scholar suggests the

increased attention to the documentary signaled a "culture in crisis, where the genre's 'apparent solidity' and 'sobriety' were welcome antidotes to the discursive delirium around us . . . [and] seems to promise a solid place to stand in a mediascape filled with ephemera, illusion, and 'spin control'" (Lewis 2007, 83). This, he states, occurred as a direct result of September 11 and the war on terror, when inaccurate claims about weapons of mass destruction led to the second Iraq war. This view is shared by another scholar in the same journal (Waldman 2007). The political climate in the United States at the time documentaries began to make a comeback is important to note as it may point to a spectator's searching in the public space for something that was missing and that fictional films or news coverage had not provided.

As an aside, because it is a side issue to what I am discussing here, but is also a perennial question for those merging the arts and the social disciplines, one of the scholars in the journal decries the inattention paid to aesthetic elements amid the current interest in political documentaries (White 2007). White's concern is that the emphasis on simple messages rather than nuanced and complexly constructed accounts, expressed either the films' simplified narrative and other aesthetic structures, or in the analyses that accompany their exhibition, have political effects by reducing the documentary's *political* complexity. This is an ongoing tension that harks back to questions about the politics of aesthetics and the aesthetics of politics (cf. particularly Ranciére 2004). Much of the tension emanates from questions about the relationship that can be assumed between social reality and abstractions from that reality such as art forms, as well as the instrumental role that the art form is forced to adopt as it is imbued with an active role in "the social" (Dolan 2001; Bishop 2006, 2012). These are deeply philosophical questions, and also something that performance studies scholars have considered closely due to the explicitly participatory nature of theater art forms. I will not pursue these debates further here, as they are only indirectly relevant. No matter which side one identifies with in the art-with-"the social" debates, the indubitable rise in interest in documentary films in the United States in the early 2000s must relate directly to the perception that this film form has a closer claim than others to a "pledge to tell the truth" (Derrida and Stiegler 2002). Political events in the United States at the time must be seen as influential in facilitating the view that documentaries were a means of disseminating the myriad pieces of information in the public space that were competing for the "truth," some of which were subsequently found to be noncontenders for that claim.

The perception of documentary films' (more) intimate association with reality and truth, although interrogated by documentary film scholars themselves (Nichols 1991; Winston 1995), provides a heightened sense of assurance that reality is not completely "up for grabs," to be "spun" in a mediated frenzy, as Lewis (2007) above suggests. It is the documentary film's promise to its audiences that is at heart its appeal in times of uncertainty, but also its limit. As McLane says in the film journal, "because audiences often ascribe validity to real-life images, documentaries can carry great weight . . . [d]ocumentary engages people as does no other form . . ." (2007, 85). This promise is implied in scholarly discussions of documentary's address. Chanan comments that the documentary speaks to a spectator "primarily as a citizen, member of civil society, putative participant in the public sphere" (2007, vi.), and McLane proposes that new "home movie" technologies breed familiarity with the aesthetics of the documentary, "an intimacy between subject and audience . . . [and] a public discourse in a way that before was possible only in print or in person" (2007, 85). Spectators' familiarity with the techniques of the documentary has also led another film scholar to declare that "[d]ocumentary audiences have become accustomed to the fantasy of perspective in documentary being composed through the terms of the intersubjective" (Smaill 2010, 18), that is, through the eye of the maker of the documentary. This all implies that documentary films had "come of age," both for their audiences and as sophisticated texts that could be used to negotiate a terrain in which audiences wished to be informed about a world they traversed, not as mere spectators but as active participants who desired to understand that world and be involved in some way. One of those ways has been by attending HRFFs.

These are political objectives that in a HRFF are reworked differently according to the locale and the personnel who organize the festival. In this HRFF, one significant political documentary movement that arose in the revolutionary days of the 1960s and '70s has had a strong presence. McLane (2007), in this journal, when discussing the role that documentaries in the past played in making a social and political difference, mentions the Newsreel Collective, a documentary movement that contained "highly politicized filmmakers . . . [that] helped to spread the politics of student revolt, black power, and especially the antiwar movement" (84). This documentary movement received a special section at the 2003 HRWIFF, entitled "American Dissent" to showcase the films of Third World Newsreel on its thirty-fifth anniversary. Third World Newsreel (TWN) was formed and named Newsreel Collective in New York in 1967, and changed its name in the mid-1970s to reflect a developing

emphasis on helping to encourage filmmakers and audiences of color (TWN 2014a). This movement was in many ways an equivalent to Argentina's Third Cinema, discussed in Chapter 10. As film historian Jesse Drew describes, the Collective was established by a diverse group of visual artists and filmmakers to "confront the hegemony of conservative film and television" (2013, 42). Its organizational ethos was not just to make and distribute films but also to exhibit them and encourage active discussion and participation that would lead to action. In a similar manner to Third Cinema, through what its founders termed "the film act," film productions and screenings were to be structured so that active discussion was maximized. Drew notes that "Newsreel screenings typically involved a Collective person showing up . . . in order to stimulate a conversation about the films and to promote an active audience. Newsreel films were created to urge people to action" (44). As I have written elsewhere, "the film act" was an attempt to position films and their audiences in a relational network to refer to and relate back to "the protagonists of life" (Tascón forthcoming b). Although Third Cinema's agenda and methodologies have lost their "home," TWN continues its work as an organized body. According to its website, TWN's focus today entails the support of self-representations and negotiated representations for traditionally marginalized groups. TWN produces, disseminates, and exhibits the documentary, as well as supports other forms of filmmaking (TWNb). Its emphasis on the production and exhibition of films by and for people of color continues, although its main web page also describes its work as encompassing "social justice issues." As an organization that was established around the crucial revolutionary year of 1968, and whose work morphed into race identity issues, its recognition and celebration by the festival show some level of connection by the festival to its politics.

10
The Festival: Absence: Latin America

In this chapter, I focus on a region that, in the period I cover, has had less presence at the festival. This does not mean that it is fully excluded, but rather that it has received less attention than the others I discussed in previous chapters. The absence is, after all, relative, and varies through the years in question, with Latin America at times achieving as much as 25 percent of the total viewing schedules (2005 and 2011 festivals), but mostly staying within the range of 0 percent (2001 festival) to 10 percent of films screened. The 1994 HRW annual report also mentions a Pino Solanas—Argentine filmmaker and cofounder of Third Cinema—retrospective at the 1993 festival (HRW 2014a), which suggests that the region may have had greater importance for the festival prior to 2001. Also, the remnant website that covers programming from 1995–97 mentions quite a number of films from/about the region. This is not surprising given that the festival began in 1988 with a film about the Chilean dictatorship, a regime that ended that same year, and that the fallout of the various dictatorships in Latin America began to be felt after their demise, most by the beginning of the 1990s.

The Films from/about Latin America: 1995–97; 2001–13

Aside from the films on environmental topics, which I will cover separately, the films from the Latin American region—represented by Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Cuba, Ecuador, Guatemala, Haiti, Mexico, Nicaragua, Paraguay, and Peru—largely portray these nations through the lenses of their troubles: their poverty, their violent past and/or present, or recent disasters. Some films are also concerned with activism, and in some cases are associated with a militant past, and thus may more readily be dismissed as presently irrelevant. The emphasis on civil and political conflict reduces their ability to be understood as

complex societies. The films about/from Mexico also showed a similar proclivity toward the representation of conflict, but in the diversity of their subject matter displayed greater complexity, and one at least represented active subjects motivated to change their circumstances. In recent festival editions, films about environmental topics from this region have been screened, and these have tended to focus on citizens' agency and mobilization.

Some of the categorization of this region as an "absence" emerges from the knowledge that many of the countries named above have vibrant cinemas of their own, and many are produced in the political mold relevant to the festival. This makes the absence yet more questionable. Yet there are at least two instances from the archival material that suggest that attention had been given to that region, but of a different nature. One of these is the retrospective of Solanas' films in 1993. In the remnant website of 1995–97, a list of films shows that in 1995 a retrospective of renowned Cuban filmmaker Tomás Gutiérrez Alea also took place, with six of his better-known fictional feature films from 1964–83 included. With a total of 13 films about this region screened over the years 1995–97, along with Costa-Gavras' *Missing* that opened the festival in 1988, this suggests that Latin America has had different kinds of attention placed on it throughout the years.

I will largely confine my focus to four nations' representations in the festival: Argentina, Chile, Cuba, and Mexico. Including Argentina here allows for a comparison with the Buenos Aires festival. Chile is included because quite a large number of films appear from/about that country, and a film about its dictatorship was used to launch the festival. I have included Cuba as a significant absence from this region because the only instance of films from this nation that I could find was in 1995 with the Alea retrospective. Cuba's problematic relationship with the United States, and the origins of HRW in that ideological war, places the festival in a tense relationship with that nation. Finally, I included Mexico because it has received more attention in recent years.

Argentina

Three films about Argentina have found their way into the festival during the years in question:

- *Hunters of Utopia* (Baustrín 1995), covering the entire period of the 1970s "subversives," from their idealistic dreaming to their disappearances during the dictatorship of 1976, was screened at the 1995 festival.

- *Figli/Hijos* (Bechis 2001), screened in the 2002 festival, was an Italian feature drama about the trafficking of babies by the Argentine dictatorship of 1976–83.
- *Una de Dos* (Taube 2004), an Argentine film screened at the 2005 festival, was about the financial meltdown of 2001.

The most important absence about this country are the many films that were present as part of the Buenos Aires festival on the strong civil organizations that formed as a result of the 2001 financial crisis—the factory takeovers that became local democratic cooperatives. *Figli/Hijos* represents films about the activism that has occurred through organizations like HIJOS (Hijos por la Identidad y la Justicia contra el Olvido y el Silencio/Children for Identity and Justice against Forgetfulness and Silence) to find lost children/grandchildren from the time of the dictatorship of 1976. And yet it is an Italian feature on a subject on which Argentine cinema has produced a number of films. Indeed, only one year after *Figli* was released, an Argentine documentary titled *HIJOS: El Alma en Dos* (Guarini and Cespedes 2002) appeared, which discussed the activism of this group.

Chile

The films about Chile show a similar tendency to portray that country's violent history, although many also simultaneously represent the actors who were moving to change these conditions. All the films from/about this country have been related to the Augusto Pinochet dictatorship:

- *Amnesia* (Justiniano 1994), a fictional feature film described as a "Kafka-esque drama" (HRWIFF l) about the middle-class tendency in Chile to forget the events of the 1973–88 dictatorship once they were over was screened at the 1996 festival.
- *In a Time of Betrayal* (Castillo 1994), a documentary about a prominent woman member of the Revolutionary Left who switched sides twice: became an informant for the Pinochet government and then switched again to denounce it once the regime ended, was screened at the 1995 festival.
- *Pinochet's Children* (P. Rodríguez 2003), a German/Chilean documentary about the prodemocracy activism in the 1980s by adults who had been born/lived as children during the Pinochet years, was screened at the 2003 festival.
- *Death Squadrons: The French School* (Robin 2004), a documentary about France's involvement in the infamous "Operation Condor" in South America, training counterinsurgent fighters with the assistance of the United States, was screened at the 2004 festival.

- *Switch Off* (Mayol 2005), a documentary about the negative impact of Pinochet's antiterrorist laws on Indigenous activism, was screened at the 2006 festival.
- *The City of Photographers* (Moreno 2006), about the risk taken by photojournalists during the Pinochet era, was screened at the 2007 festival.
- *A Promise to the Dead: The Exile Journey of Ariel Dorfman* (Raymont 2007), a documentary about the exile of the cultural adviser to Salvador Allende, was given a Benefit Screening in 2008.
- *Calle Santa Fé* (C. Castillo 2007), also screened in 2008, was about the resistance movement during the Pinochet years.

This nation appears to have important meanings for the festival, as a film about the Pinochet era opened the first festival, and *A Promise to the Dead*, a film that was finished in the same year that Pinochet died, appeared as a Benefit Screening. Although no one film has been screened in the period in question that explicitly connects U.S. foreign policy to Pinochet, two other films have been screened that refer to Chile and U.S. foreign policy: *The Trials of Henry Kissinger* (2002), about Kissinger's period as secretary of state and U.S. human rights abuses in Cambodia, Chile, and Indonesia; and *Death Squadron: The French School*, about Operation Condor, in which the United States was deeply involved (see chapter 9). Although all the films listed above are unidimensionally about the Pinochet era, the festival has also included others that indict the United States' role, and also highlight the lives of those who resisted. To some degree, therefore, the films about Chile may not be simply pointing to an irrelevant past for that country, but one that has ongoing significance for the United States. That is, they need to be read as a whole, together with those denouncing U.S. foreign policy, and in this way understood as a stance taken by the festival to include them all as a warning of past violations so that they will not be repeated.

Cuba

Only six films relating to Cuba were found throughout the entire periods in question. All six were by Cuban filmmaker Alea, as a kind of retrospective: in 1995, when the festival paid him homage to him Alea was almost at the end of his life; he died the following year. Alea had been part of the Latin American cinematic movements of the 1960s and 1970s that spawned Imperfect Cinema. This cinema was very closely aligned with Third Cinema, and favored low-budget productions, so that a deeper connection between spectators and their social realities could be achieved and in which they could become actors. His oeuvre is

mostly as a postrevolutionary filmmaker whose interest was to "engage viewers to reflect on the challenges facing Cuban society after 1959, and to think about the way that the lived realities conform or contrast with revolutionary ideals" (Hedges 2013, 65). His films do not make for comfortable watching for those living within postrevolutionary Cuba, as he intended viewers of his films to be self-reflective and particularly to consider their attachment to bourgeois attitudes in a revolutionary society (Alea 1982). In this he retained "a sophisticated balance between his dedication to the revolution and his critical judgement of it when its ideals had been betrayed" (Levin 2003). Disdain for bourgeois values is a central theme in a number of his films (in some he references Luis Buñuel's similarly directed contempt), and the following were screened at the festival:

- *Death of a Bureaucrat* (1966), a black comedy that sends up bureaucrats with their love of rules over people whom they supposedly serve, it makes direct references to Luis Buñuel's *Un Chien Andalou* (1929) in its humor.
- *Memories of Underdevelopment* (1968) is about a young bourgeois intellectual in postrevolutionary Cuba who cannot leave because of his idealism, but equally becomes disaffected from the society in which he chooses to remain.
- *12 Chairs* (1962) is a comedy that plays with the tensions between bourgeois individual greed for accumulating wealth and the collectivism required in the new revolutionary society. A woman hides her wealth in 12 chairs prior to dying, and her nephew finds this out after her death, which sets in motion a comical set of events.
- *The Survivors* (1978) uses as a model Buñuel's *The Exterminating Angel* (1962), in which guests at an upper-class dinner party are unable to leave it as if by unnatural forces. A commentary on conformity, *The Survivors* follows suit as a family locks themselves in their wealthy estate after the revolution as if it had not taken place, and gradually dissolves into savagery, while maintaining a veneer of their previous privileged lives.

Two other films by Alea that screened that year were *Cumbite* (1964), about the Haitian community in Cuba, and *Up to a Certain Point* (1983), on sexual liberation and sexual politics.

The almost total absence of films from Cuba, other than in the year described, is significant. As a substantial number of Cubans live in the United States, and Miami has been called a mini-Havana (Guisepi 2014), it is of special interest that the only other film relating in any way to Cuba that could be found was *Balseros* (C. Bosch, J. M. Domènech),

a 2002 Spanish film about Cuban refugees in the United States. The avoidance of Cuban films, and it can only be seen as a void stemming from evasion, points to the crossroad of tensions at which the festival is located. Cuban-Americans gain U.S. citizenship status faster than other Latin American groups under special immigration provisions established in 1966 (Masud-Piloto 1988), which, although changing over time, have maintained some degree of special treatment for those leaving Cuba for the United States. They gain access to formal education faster than others deemed "illegal" and wield greater political power than many other Latino groups (Gibbs and Goodall 2009). As a group with some political and social power, therefore, part of the festival's avoidance of these films must stem from the highly problematic and complex position of Cuban émigrés in the United States, and their enhanced possibility of claiming their rights within U.S. society relative to other Latino groups.

Mexico

Like Cuba, there were only six films from/about Mexico at the festival during this period, but they show greater diversity. The issues in the films vary from those of drug cartels, to the contemporary phenomenon of young women disappearing in border towns, to peasant farmers. Most of the films are documentaries, but a feature drama is also included:

- At the 1995 festival, *Red Dawn* (Fons 1990) was screened, about a massacre of 400 students by the army in 1968.
- At the 2002 festival, *Missing Young Women* (Portillos 2001) dealt with the disappearances of young women from assembly plants in border towns.
- At the 2010 festival, *Backyard* (Carrera 2009) was shown on the same topic.
- *The Violin* (Vargas 2005), a feature drama screened at the 2007 festival, dealt with the struggles of peasant farmers.
- *Presumed Guilty* (Hernandez and Smith 2008), a documentary that was part of the 2010 festival, represented the injustices in the Mexican penal system.
- At the 2012 festival, *Reportero* (Ruíz 2011) was a documentary that was screened, on journalists at a weekly newspaper who take on the drug cartels.

Among these films, both the drama *Violin* and the 2011 documentary *Reportero* feature characters whose courage and ingenuity in the face of state repression or the state's failure to protect its citizens, set them up as heroic figures. *Violin* centers on attempts by the Mexican government to stamp out a rural insurgency by setting up checkpoints and

strangling the rebels' supply of arms. One of the rebels, an old man, ingeniously gets past the checkpoint each day, ostensibly to tend his corn crop, and ferries the ammunition in his violin. *Reportero* follows the life of an investigative journalist in Tijuana, and the danger in which he places himself by "tackling dangerous subjects that other publications avoid, such as cartels' infiltration of political circles and security forces" (HRWIFF 2014e). The courage of individuals in the face of a repressive state continues the attention that the festival places on civil and political issues of freedom: in *Reportero,* freedom of speech and, in *Violin,* freedom of political dissent. These films interrupt the humanitarian gaze that seeks victims, but acquiesce to it by formulating the agency through particular notions of freedom.

The films about/from Mexico displayed greater complexity than those of the other nations covered, reflecting not only civil and political issues (such as the activist journalists) but also social and economic topics, such as the disappearance of young women and peasant farming. This added complexity can be explained through that nation's proximity to the United States, and also the large number of immigrants from there, including border crossers. Mexico is a nation that has generated much debate, in terms of producing not only the largest number of "illegal immigrants" but also "border" scholars and artists such as Gloria Anzaldúa and others. Indeed, the same regions depicted in the films as violence-ridden places are being shown by many of these artists as productive of resistances (Border Artists 2014).

Environmental Films from/about Latin America

The films on environmental topics consistently portray active subjects in the face of adversity. These films are more recent, most produced in the last five to eight years, which may suggest that the portrayal of active subjects (as opposed to the portrayal of despair or simple suffering) in the face of hardship is a recent shift in either the production of films in these fields, or in the festival film selection criteria). For example, the 2007 festival contains only three films from/about Latin America (out of a total of 23), but all portray personal or collective political actions in the face of substantial opposition: *The City of Photographers* (see above), *The Violin* (see above), and *Cocalero* (Landes 2006).

Films on environmental issues begin to be noticed in 2009, when *Crude* (Berlinger 2009), the only film about/from Latin America that year, was screened. This is a documentary about the discovery of oil in the Amazon forest, and the various players/issues involved: the environmental

movement, celebrity activism, human rights advocacy, the media, multinational corporate power, and rapidly disappearing indigenous cultures. Another film, appearing in the 2010 festival, *Under Rich Earth* (Rogge 2008), is about Ecuador's family farmers who have organized and are resisting attempts to incorporate their lands into larger farming corporations. Two other films on the topic of corporate encroachment on Indigenous peoples' land appeared in 2012: *Even The Rain* (Bollaín 2010), a feature drama starring Gael García Bernal, on the Bolivian water wars of 2000, when the privatization of water supplies was successfully resisted by peasant farmers; and *Raising Resistance* (Borgfeld and Bernet 2011), about Paraguay's peasant farmers, which the festival described (in part) this way:

> As corporate farms seize farmland and rapidly expand production of genetically modified soy, Gerónimo and the campesinos (peasant farmers) find themselves in a life and death struggle. *Raising Resistance* illustrates the mechanisms of a global economy that relies on "monocrop" agriculture and corporate ownership of land. In telling the story of Paraguay, *Raising Resistance* poses the larger question of whether the global community wants to go on living with a system that allows one crop to prosper at the expense of all others. (HRWIFF 2014f)

These films tell stories of resilience and resistance in spite of large-scale pressures to conform. Through the representations of subjects whose livelihoods are threatened but who organize to oppose powerful forces, these films in particular signal a shift. Environmental topics, I was told in an interview with festival staff, diverged from the issues HRW focuses on in its work. The festival has, however, been permitted to follow its own dictates in this direction, and these environmental films from/about Latin America depict coal-face struggles that have far wider implications. They raise questions of a global nature about multinational corporate power, the environmental impact of genetically modified crops, and subsistence versus large-scale agriculture. The festival has clearly taken the stance of providing a voice for less powerful groups as they confront political and economic opposition. Through its description of the film, the festival aligns the film's narrative with a wider issue, one transcending national borders.

One film that drew my particular interest was *Cocalero*, from the 2007 festival. A film celebratory of Evo Morales and his ascendancy from union leader to first Indigenous president of Bolivia, his rise to power

is shown to occur on the back of a pro-coca platform, placing him in direct conflict with U.S. foreign policy and its "war on drugs." A film reviewer links Morales' story to "the political changes that are sweeping Latin America" (Buchanan 2014), which makes the inclusion of this film in the festival a subversive political act in relation both to HRW's geographical home as well as a sympathetic portrayal of a politics its parent organization historically stood against. This film, alongside *The Trials of Henry Kissinger* (see above), *Death Squadron: The French School* (see above), and *You Don't Like the Truth: 4 Days Inside Guantánamo* (see above), are films that are condemnatory of U.S. domestic and foreign policy as it impacts on civic freedoms.

Cocalero, however, celebrates the region's solutions to its own problems. This film, and the others on this topic, with their celebratory stance, together with all the others mentioned above, suggest that the region has some ambivalence toward the festival. Part of the reason for its lack of attention to Latin America may have something to do with the past actions of the United States in that region. And part of that has to be attributed to the lukewarm interest in the region as expressed in U.S. foreign policy, even though socialist governments are making a comeback. In the current war on terror, the area is seen as a minor threat in this regard (Felbab-Brown 2008), and the need for the festival to oppose its own government's actions is thus unnecessary or minimized. I also wonder to what degree there are distinct sympathies with the ideological shifts that have taken place in much of South America. As the discourse of watching is monitoring violations, the area is seen both as acting to solve its own problems and also needing to be validated in the direction in which it is doing this. Hence the festival's lack of "watching" may have more to do with a political alignment with much of what is taking place in Latin America and hence the assessment that Human Rights Watch(ing) is not needed.

As a final point of discussion for this region, I want to turn to two filmmakers who have been prominent for the festival. The discussion turns to them because three of their films have been used by the festival to represent Latin America, yet they do not form part of the national cinemas of the region. Costa-Gavras and Pamela Yates have each received centerpiece screening times for films about Latin America: Costa-Gavras' *Missing* opened the first festival, and Yates' *When the Mountains Tremble,* and *Granito: How to Nail a Dictator,* in 2009 and 2011 respectively.

I want to focus more closely on Costa-Gavras and Yates primarily because their films in general were given a distinct status at the festival, and also because these three films themselves are so prominent. I am

interested in exploring briefly whether the use of these filmmakers to represent Latin America, and their elevated status within the festival's hierarchy, suggests that their mediation makes those stories more palatable or acceptable to these particular audiences. And whether that palatability has something to do with an added credibility simply by reason that they appear to be more like their audiences.

Costa-Gavras and Pamela Yates at the HRWIFF: Representing Human Rights

Costa-Gavras and Yates have close links to the festival, for different reasons, and so part of the prestige given to their films lies in those relationships. I will, therefore, explore each filmmaker's background, and his or her relationships to the festival. I interviewed Yates in person while in New York, but only had access to Costa-Gavras through others' words at the festival and the documentation available online. This exploration may explain why their films are relevant to audiences in New York, and what authorizes them to tell Latin American stories better than perhaps filmmakers from that region.

Costa-Gavras

The significance of Costa-Gavras to the film festival can be noted readily by the fact that his 1982 film *Missing* opened the first festival in 1988. In 1995, he was awarded a lifetime achievement award by the festival, in which year his film *Le Petit Apocalypse/A Minor Apocalypse* (1992), on the fall of communism in Eastern Europe, screened on opening night. I was given to understand that Costa-Gavras' presence at the festival had occurred through a personal and ideological alignment between early staff and the filmmaker.[1] It is a relationship that the festival and the parent organization, HRW, have sustained to the present, so that he was appointed a member of HRW's Paris Committee (HRW 2014b) in 2007 (HRW 2014c), and in that same year his film *Mon Colonel* (2006) opened the festival. That same film was also used to open the 2010 festival. At least two of his other films have been screened at the festival, although because the online archival information or staff memory is not extensive, there may have been more.[2] These two films were *Section Spèciale* (Special Section, 1975) in the early 1990s, and *Eden is West* (2007) at the 2009 festival Benefit Gala Night.

Costa-Gavras is best known for "fictionalizing politics" in his films (Michalczyk 1984), an approach often avoided by those producing political films. He has been described as forming part of the French New Wave

(Zimmer 1974; Hennebelle 1974; Urbez 1979), which was renowned for the explicitly political films it produced. Costa-Gavras' early films were particularly of this type. A reviewer referred to him as "one of the most renowned of leftist European political filmmakers" (Kendrick 2012). The label owes much to the fact that most of his earlier films denounced military regimes, including his best-known film *Z* (1969), on the military regime in Greece; *State of Siege* (1973), on military rule in Paraguay; and *Missing* (1982), on the military dictatorship in Chile.

The importance of Costa-Gavras to the earlier editions of the festival is to be noted not only because of the politics that his films signal but also because he is not a director whose fame has been forged by a strong connection to Hollywood, although, of course, where one draws the line on this is never clear as *Missing* was produced with collaboration from mainstream American producers. Mainstream Hollywood actors Jack Lemon and Sissy Spacek also appeared in that film. One of the points of interest for me was the discovery that the Spanish title for the film is *Desaparecido*, which, literally translated is "disappeared." "Desaparecidos," as I have discussed in relation to the Buenos Aires HRFF, is a politically laden term in Latin America, referring to those who were detained, tortured, and "disappeared" by military dictatorships. The term "missing" is chosen to represent the same phenomenon in English, a term that is often used in posters to advertise their absence in order to recruit assistance in finding them. That same level of perplexity is part of the term "disappeared" in that it connotes an unexplained vanishing as if by conjuration (see Tascón forthcoming a), but it has an ironic twist, in that it has accumulated political meanings in the term desaparecidos*,* given that the cause of the disappearance is known. In other words, the title in Spanish, *Desaparecido,* includes a layer of political meaning that the English title does not: people go "missing" for many reasons, including running away, but are disappeared for political reasons.

Missing and another Costa-Gavras film screened in 2007 and 2010, *Mon Colonel*, have each made reference to the 1973 Chilean and the 1976 Argentina dictatorship respectively. Both take a clear stance against state tyranny and the impunity granted to members of the military. More importantly, however, their inclusion in the first human rights film festival worldwide, and especially the selection of *Missing* to inaugurate the festival, announced that the convergence of cinema and human rights was to include a form of storytelling that had not traditionally been associated with visual activism: fictionalized politics. It is probably this factor, more than any other, which made both Costa-Gavras *and* his politics appealing to the festival, and led to *Missing* being its foundation

film. For an audience for whom their national cinema is Hollywood-style blockbusters, and where political cinema is the purview of the serious "sobriety" of documentary (Nichols 1991), this style of telling political stories may have been deemed more attractive. The use of fictionalized politics produces a "political" message for an audience familiar with fictional narrative cinema. The "subjective turn" in documentary, which does not begin to be a significant trend until the early 2000s (Bruzzi 2006) is predated by the fictionalizing of politics that Costa-Gavras characterizes, a fact that is noticed by this reviewer of *Missing*:

> He evokes global pain through the stories of individual characters, an approach that always carries the risk of hiding the many behind the few. Yet, in *Missing* it works because Costa-Gavras never lets us forget the bigger picture and uses his small-scale mystery as a means of both evoking more horrifying truths that arguably evade representation (how else do you cinematically convey hundreds of senseless murders outside of simply showing them?) and suggesting that such events are always a possibility. The underlying theme of every Costa-Gavras film can be summarized as "Be ever vigilant." (Kendrick 2012)

The use of individual, fictionalized, stories to tell a larger political one appears again in his dramatized account of the Algerian war, *Mon Colonel*. An allegory for other conflicts where repression and torture have been the mechanisms of war (even "imaginary" wars such as the war on terror), the film centers on the impunity granted to military forces/state bodies to carry it out, and the pain caused to individuals. Styled as narrative fictional films, *Missing* and *Mon Colonel* may well have been included in the festival due to their greater appeal for U.S. audiences concerned about human rights. The films have had wider appeal as well. Film scholar Michael Chanan describes at least one instance when *Missing* had a powerful effect on its audiences in Bogotá, Colombia, in 1982:

> I saw it a few days after it opened in a first-run house in Bogotá, midweek in the late afternoon. The cinema was packed, the audience was gripped and attentive to the smallest detail, and at the end they gave it a standing ovation of several minutes. (Chanan 2010, 151)

The passage quoted above is from a longer reflection by Chanan on the different viewing positions people take in different settings, in which he continues his description of the lukewarm reception the same film had when screened in London, because it was seen as too "emotive." I have

no means of knowing how *Missing* was received on the opening night of the festival, six years after it was released for general exhibition. In the context of this chapter, however, that it was chosen to be the foundation stone, as it were, for the festival, suggests that Latin America is of some considerable, if problematic, significance.

A filmmaker for whom Latin America has been of ongoing significance is Yates. She is the only filmmaker I have come across so far who was identified by festival staff, and self-identified, as a "human rights" filmmaker.

Pamela Yates: Human Rights Filmmaker

In an interview with Yates conducted in July 2011 in New York during the festival, she described herself as an activist whose parents had likewise been political activists. She mentioned that her interest in human rights had originated in the mid-1970s during the time that Jimmy Carter held office, as this had been a central focus of his administration. Her interest in Latin America developed over a number of years, but began while she was a journalist, and after she learned Spanish to cover stories from that region (Gosselin 2013). In my interview, she defined herself as a human rights filmmaker, a label that HRWIFF mirrored. This is a unique self-definition. Filmmakers whose films find their way into HRFFs around the world do not produce their films exclusively for these festivals. Nor does Yates produce films that are exclusively for HRWIFF (her film *Granito*, for example, premiered at the Sundance Film Festival in January 2011 before being screened for opening night at HRWIFF in June), although all of her films have been showcased by the festival: *State of Fear* (2005), which opened the festival in the year of its release, and *The Reckoning: The Battle for the International Criminal Court* (2009), which screened the same year of its release, with a special reception held afterward. In 2011, *Granito: How to Nail a Dictator* and its prequel, *When the Mountains Tremble* (1982), opened the festival. I want to discuss *Granito* a little more below, not only because it was a film that screened at the 2013 Buenos Aires festival as well but also because the film raises some of the issues that I have been discussing in relation to representation and the humanitarian gaze.

Granito: Gazing Out or In?

Granito is about another film produced by Yates almost two decades earlier. The first words that appear on the screen tell us this, while the first scene with its turning film reel and makeshift clapperboard in the

filmmaker's hands reinforces it. Nothing in the early sequences, however, provides a clue as to the menacing story about to be retold, because it is, in fact, about a film that Yates made in 1982 about the Guatemalan military dictatorship. That regime "disappeared" up to 200,000 Indigenous peoples in its fight against communism, with the explicit backing of the United States. The 1982 film, *When the Mountains Tremble*, was directed by Yates and screened at the first Sundance Film Festival in 1984. In the film, Rigoberta Menchú, an Indigenous woman of articulate storytelling abilities, who was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize a decade later, is given the protagonist's role of providing testimony about her people. *Granito* came about after Yates was approached by a Spanish lawyer preparing a legal case against Ríos Montt, the Guatemalan military dictator under whose administration the genocide had occurred. The lawyer sought unused footage from *When the Mountains Tremble*, which might be useful as evidence in court. It is therefore a film about another film, but also about the filmmaker and her part in the present-day proceedings by a Spanish court to indict the Guatemalan generals. Mostly consisting of self-reflection and focusing on a personal journey by Yates as she traverses the two timelines in which she has been involved, but also including incisive commentary from others, it is overall an awkward film that leads Chuck Bowen, in reviewing it, to comment that "Granito is . . . overlong, needlessly convoluted . . . [and] pitted as a simple good-versus-evil story" (2011).

It is, nevertheless, an extremely important story that has much to commend it as a corrective to the general story of the Guatemalan massacres, which Yates brings to U.S. audiences accustomed to stories from Latin American dictatorships. In her failure to attend to technical (editing), conceptual, and aesthetic factors, however, it became a didactic film without richness. It also begins to highlight the limits of the politics of the personal that in *Mon Colonel* were used to such effect as a warning against ideological polarities to refocus attention on the humanity of individuals. In *Granito*, this form of politics takes on a confessional element that threatens to consume the visage of those Yates sets out to make present, by consistently filtering them through herself and her story.

Yates' presence floods the perspective with herself and her storytelling devices in the earlier parts of the film. In the early scenes of the first section, she includes numerous references to herself as the filmmaker from the earlier film: she is filmed holding the sound equipment, opening the boxes of archival footage, her hands thread the film reels, her face is shown as she is watching the old footage. That she was in imminent

danger is displayed many times: her equipment is stolen; she manages to be invited to fly in a helicopter with the military, and the helicopter is shot by guerrillas and forced to land. This last incident is then explained as "the closest I have come to my own death" in *Granito*'s voice-over, although the supposed ultimate aim of this and the previous film is the documentation of the injustice toward over 200,000 people in Guatemala. The sniper who had hit the helicopter is then found, and in *Granito* he describes his actions. His explanation is included to impress upon us fully the truth of the danger to the filmmaker, although the inanity of the sniper's comment underlines the absurdity of Yates' need to be given central stage in the context of a danger that had been faced by thousands of others: "If we had shot the pilot, the helicopter would have crashed, and you would be dead."

Such exposure of the filmmaker and her devices, and the danger to which she was exposed, brings her into the frame, and she becomes a central figure. When she visited a guerrilla camp and interviewed three young women, she says, "I identified with these three young fighters who felt that a different future was possible. They were standing up to a murderous military dictatorship." One of the three young women then speaks: "In the future when we win, we're going to achieve a new society very slowly," two of them holding a gun, while the third is hand-sewing a white garment. The contradictions—the contrasts between the ordinariness of the sewing action and the deadliness of the guns—are profound moments that capture innate tensions in the life of the guerrillas, but they are not given attention by Yates. These contradictions were being explored by new waves of filmmakers in Argentina many years after the military dictatorship had ended there, as children of the disappeared surveyed their parents' politics and the impact this had on them. In *Granito*, the young women laugh awkwardly, mouthing official platitudes for the filmmaker, and Yates associates them with herself and her idealism of the time. Her commentary in this section "flattens" the possibilities of seeing that footage anew. Rather, it is primarily a personal journey for the filmmaker. Unlike *Mon Colonel*, which also used events across two temporalities, this one fails to extend the themes beyond the filmmaker and those involved in the legal process of indicting the generals. *Mon Colonel* explores recurring themes of torture, violence, terror, and fear across other times and places, while *Granito* appears to collapse these two times and events into one person and one meaning: the filmmaker's love of Guatemala, which had "wrapped its arms around" her.

As the earlier sections have such an emphasis on the emotional and personal dimensions of the filmmaker, it is left to others she interviewed

to provide different perspectives. One of the strongest moments is the comment of Kate Doyle, a forensic anthropologist, who provides a view of the genocide:

> The origins of the Guatemalan genocide, like any genocide, anywhere in the world, were racism and fear, and greed for power and land. So, I don't think we can assign the genocide, in and of itself, the way it looked, the way it smelled, to the United States. I think that was fundamentally the Guatemalan project. But the United States was present at the creation of what became a uniquely savage counter-insurgency. And in that sense the United States helped build and then institutionalize both the doctrine: the mindset; and the apparatus: the technological capability. The United States helped create the machine that would go on to commit the massacres. And that is the responsibility that we bear.

This comment appears about halfway through the film, and it contextualizes what until that moment was mostly a personal mission or journey. Doyle's comment recalls the events with a nuanced hindsight, without reliance on the personal "hook" that Yates introduces, while remaining didactic. Being didactic, as this comment shows, does not mean not understanding the various dimensions of the story being presented. Instead, it entails providing more presence to those whose absences have been eradicated by unchecked power, while understanding the full extent of how this power has flourished. It is to explore how this power became banal in the hands of the military and in the hands of the guerrillas. It is a form of advocacy that corrects unchecked power.

In this film, it is Yates' relationship to Guatemala, and her journey, that consumes our gaze. Did she produce this film to "vindicate" herself because she documented the earlier struggles and genocide, but did not stay? Certainly *When the Mountains Tremble* led to recognition for Rigoberta Menchú after 1982 and gave a high profile to the plight of her people, with the result that in 1992 she received the Nobel Peace Prize. And *Granito* was helpful as evidence to indict Ríos Montt. Because of the emphasis placed on the filmmaker, however, the question remains: was *Granito* documenting the filmmaker or the plight of a group who suffered the massacres? In this ambivalence, the human rights spectator is caught in an ethical, political, and aesthetic bind: viewing an overly simplified message that seeks a response from a storyteller who looks like its audience, but not sure to whom it should respond: the filmmaker

or the people of Guatemala. I suggest that part of the problem can be placed at the feet of a commonly held understanding of human rights as first and primarily legal in nature. In *Granito*, there is heavy emphasis on lawyers and "the law" as the ultimate source in the struggle for retribution. This can lead to an oppositional adversarial imagination where there are ultimate "right" positions, and Yates has located herself as the champion of those who are legally right. Furthermore, she made this documentary in a cinematic climate in which the use of self and a personal "hook" for stories had become acceptable.

With this film, the limits of the politics of the personal are reached, however, and its excesses exposed. Yates is clearly working within a documentary terrain that was being negotiated for political films with *Mon Colonel*, and that accepted, incorporated, and worked the personal much more than in the past, when documentary films were performing supposed objectivity. Although there is certainly honesty in exposing the filmmaker within the film, and in the transparency of her presence, because all forms of filmmaking include these personal perspectives (Smaill 2010), the way in which *Granito* did this calls into serious question the ability to represent others' troubles. The terms of the "humanitarian imaginary" (Chouliaraki 2012) and my own "humanitarian gaze" (see chapter 2) posit a set of "looking relations" (Gaines 1986) that place the gazer as the more powerful in the relationship. If the appeal to that spectator needs to be arranged through a notion of "honesty" that recenters them and makes them the filter for all accounts, then others' troubles do ultimately become something about ourselves, as Chouliaraki suggests is the case in contemporary humanitarian advocacy.

This is not an indictment of Yates as a filmmaker. Her oeuvre contains many films worthy of praise, including, and especially in my estimation, *When the Mountains Tremble*. And *Granito* has provided a platform for her solidarity with the Indigenous people of Guatemala so that the genocide will not to be forgotten. Her cinematic work has received accolades for its commitment to social justice and for the ongoing advocacy *Granito* performs (Abrash and McLagan 2012; The Argentina Independent 2013). Moreover, as mentioned, *When the Mountains Tremble* brought to light the seriously dire situation for Guatemalan Indigenous peoples and particularly the plight of Rigoberta Menchú. I am more concerned with the limits that need to be placed on personal stories of the privileged when the focus is supposedly on the stories of vulnerable others, their struggles, and actions. As my discussion of *The*

Day After Peace (see chapter 2) illustrates, this brings into focus questions about whom we are actually watching, or want to watch: ourselves as good; or others' struggles so that we may join with them? The answers do not need to be mutually exclusive, but do need to consider the weight given to each.

Conclusion: Part III

The New York HRWIFF was the first human rights film festival in the world. Its primary interest for me was its primogenital position in the field of HRRFs, but also its historical location: it took place for the first time in 1988, a year before cataclysmic events shook the world irrevocably. The origins of the festival at that historical time positioned the festival in a key ideological moment, as did the activities of its parent organization, Helsinki Watch, which became Human Rights Watch (HRW) in the same year. Helsinki Watch had set out to monitor communist authoritarianism, and had become HRW as those regimes were crumbling; the organization's role was widened to watch the world. Monitoring as Helsinki Watch appeared to be heavily laden with the ideological tensions of that time. Helsinki Watch had, after all, decided to watch communist authoritarianism, as this was threateningly close, across the Bering Strait, to North America. It was a decision that had strong nationalist overtones as much as concern for human rights because right-wing authoritarian regimes, which were flourishing south of the southern border of the United States but which were no threat to it, were not monitored.

As I searched through some of the archived HRW Annual Reports, I became aware of a pattern of watching, which, until 1992, did not include an explicit section to watch North America. In the organization's first report, in 1989, a section called *United States Policy* exists, with a short description that began with "[f]rom the outset, a major aspect of the work of each of the Watch Committee has been an attempt to make the United States use its power, purse and prestige to promote human rights worldwide" (HRW 2014f). This suggests that the only relevant watching of the United States was for its role as promoter of human rights elsewhere. But Western Europe and Australia likewise received little to no attention. This seemed to show equivalence in a comment made by Jeri Laber in her autobiography of 2002. There she stated that the organization she had helped found had decided to support dissidents in the USSR to show them "how it could be done" and that "in the United States there was no such problem" (100). As human rights "watching" is done in order to find violations, it seemed that much

of the world, except North America, Western Europe, and Australia, was violating human rights. Either this was truly the case, or HRW was caught in a representational cycle of long standing, where the South, postcolonially speaking, required more monitoring—and using a Foucauldian lens, I called this surveillance—than the privileged North. Was the “watching” of films similarly located?

What I found was that while the festival follows much of the work being carried out by HRW (and it must be acknowledged that HRW has changed over time), it has also approached “watching” differently. Programming in all the years to which I had access showed the festival to be watching “its own,” although the bulk of the films are about other parts of the world, even when the films are produced in the United States. And while many of the films that were about the United States remained within traditional conceptions of human rights, that is, on civil and political issues, there was also a strand focusing on social and economic rights. Those films, on immigration, racial discrimination, gay and lesbian rights, homelessness, and so forth showed human rights violations as they were occurring within the United States. Many of the films from/about the United States also showed a clear slant toward the celebration of its activists/activism, and this mirrors the Buenos Aires festival. For both festivals, films and human rights are employed to further a form of pronationalism. This is because the films are clearly intended to reflect back to their local audiences something about their own goodness and moral strength, even in the midst of troubles; however, this is not necessarily the case for the portrayal of others outside the nation or region. I will have more to say on this as it relates to both festivals, in the concluding chapter.

In the films that celebrated resilience, creativity, and agency there was, nevertheless, a movement away from the discourse of violations on which the monitoring role of HRW had been founded. Even where most of these “resilience” films are from/about the United States in the case of the New York festival, this sort of watching is not strictly what HRW sets out to do. The resilience films were also seen in those from/about Latin America that deal with environmental topics. The inclusion of films related to the environment, as this begins to extend beyond the strict focus on humans with rights (although most films had to do with the effects on human habitation rather than on the rights of nature and the nonhuman world) demonstrates that the strict alignment with its parent organization, and HRW’s binding discourse of watching human rights violations, has been partially interrupted. When I attended that festival in 2011, I was told by staff that films on environmental topics

were fairly recent and stood outside the traditional purview of HRW's concerns. The decision to include such films had been made by festival staff with the sanction of HRW as a concession to the different work the festival does.

This festival has, in fact, been bound by human rights quite differently from the Buenos Aires festival. This is largely because in the United States, human rights have been entrenched in nation-building narratives, and institutionalized, for much longer. This history has produced a closer sense of "ownership" of human rights in the United States, and also a particular configuration for their practice that has focused on a very narrowly confined set of issues: those publicly visible and justiciable, focusing on political and civil freedoms. These factors have hemmed in the festival to some degree, binding it to the display of violations of a certain type. This was best seen in the emphasis on dictatorships in the films from/about Latin America, and those on prisons for the United States. The decision to have films represent human rights, however, has had an amplifying effect beyond these traditional topics. That is, as films are selected, they must be from within a narrow range of the total produced, but must still say something "human rights-y," so the film range is usually (documentary) films of a "social issues" nature (Nichols 1991). These are films that are produced by filmmakers for a much wider audience and are not exclusively for human rights, even in cases in which the filmmaker self-defines as such, as did Pamela Yates. Social issue documentaries are largely produced by independent filmmakers with few resources, both in and outside the United States, and the festival has screened a large number of such films from the United States. The best example of these sorts of films was the twin set of *The Yes Men* and *The Yes Men Fix the World,* screened across two significant time slots at different festivals. These two films symbolized both the reliance on independent documentary films, as well as the inclusion of topics that are not traditionally seen as related to human rights. In these two films, the festival tendered a critique of neoliberal values that was present in stronger tones in Buenos Aires, but was here represented in terms of their economic effects in the United States and beyond. That critique poses issues of a different nature to political freedoms, and condemns an entire system entrenched in inequality, one that is, furthermore, dominant in the United States.

As film festivals are sites of organized unruliness, as discussed in chapter 2, they are also events that are in some measure invested in place, as well as in the politics of subversion. Originally, film festivals were established to promote national cinemas, as a subversion of the dominance of

Hollywood, but in more recent times they have come to be used to promote cities and nations. In Buenos Aires, the festival became a conduit for the promotion of a dilapidated national cinema, and specifically its political cinema. In New York, located in the same nation as Hollywood, the festival has turned to a strand of independent filmmaking that must be deemed political and subversive, such as *The Yes Men*, elements of which also benefit from a recent heightened demand for documentaries. The filmmaking that emerges from that sector has the possibility also to subvert the humanitarian gaze. As this gaze is worked through unequal relations of looking, where some may look while others are looked at, and those who look search for specific figures of suffering or those trying to become "like us," *The Yes Men* pair of films does not conform to this gaze, nor did *Love Crimes of Kabul*.

One film that appeared to be set squarely within the humanitarian gaze was *Granito,* which was screened in a significant time slot by a filmmaker whose association with the festival has been long and continuous. That film, centering on Yates' role in the indictment of the Guatemalan leader who presided over the genocide of thousands of Indigenous people in that country, led me to question whether the limits to the subjective turn have been reached. As the film focused almost entirely on Yates, I considered whether its inclusion had been intended to appeal to audiences who would see themselves reflected in her, and thus add an extra layer of credibility to the tragic story she told. *Granito* seemed to be part of a stream of recent documentaries, screened at HRFFs, that center on one "super" individual; other examples are *The Day After Peace* and *The Island President* (J. Shenk 2011), which focused on President Nasheed of the Maldives in relation to global warming. Although *Granito* had many positive features, such as its being a sequel to a film that was instrumental in indicting Ríos Montt, and was made by a filmmaker whose commitment to social justice for the Guatemalan people is unquestioned (Abrash and McLagan 2012), the attention given to her is uncomfortably tipped. If part of the reason for the unequal relationship in the humanitarian gaze is, as Lilie Chouliaraki says of the humanitarian imaginary, because "doing good" is motivated by wanting to say something about ourselves, then this film clearly sits within that context. I do not wish simply to equate *Granito* to *The Day After Peace* because the latter is self-congratulatory in ways that *Granito* is not. I explain *Granito* as a sign of an era of filmmaking in which the questioning of abstract ideals has been necessary, but such films also become a glorification, an obsession even, of the visage of one individual for the telling of a story, even if that story encompasses many people as a group

and the social conditions that have made the situation possible. While I agree with Yates' assertion that "we connect with faces . . . We look for meaning in each other's eyes" (Abrash and McLagan 2012, 329), I also wonder to what degree the move to individualize issues has led to foregrounding those individuals rather than the issue.

In the selection of *Granito*, and *The Yes Men* films, another feature is evident. This festival, like the Buenos Aires festival, is situated in a place that is immersed in a set of relationships to human rights and to cinema. That relational network produces audiences predisposed to a HRFF with specific expectations. Ultimately, HRFFs have to conduct their screenings with an audience in mind. This produces a tension with human rights discourse, which encourages a "looking out" that can be either an interest in others, in a shared humanity, as an ethical position of care for others not like us, or a Foucauldian surveillance of others. In this festival the films selected were clearly an appeal to a type of audience for whom human rights may be a moral framework to be used for surveillance of others, fed by the traditions created by the humanitarian gaze (see chapter 2). The ongoing attention to Eastern Europe is the strongest indication that this may be part of what is going on, as this fits with a broader ideological orientation of anticommunism in the United States (Gibbs and Goodall 2009). The lack of attention to Cuba illustrates a tension in which the festival is caught in this regard, however. On the one hand, there is the orientation toward the surveillance of communism that has been there from the beginning of HRW, and on the other hand, there is the need to recognize the subversion of capitalism that has been part of the critique of neoliberalism at the festival, and that Cuba represents.

The audience response to *Love Crimes of Kabul* was a clear indication that there is an expectation by audiences of surveilling others, especially as they transition to be "more like us." The confusion induced by *not* seeing women victims of Islamic traditions on the screen suggests the overturning of an expectation on the part of the audience to see such victims. And that need forms part of a broader tension introduced by the reading of "the Muslim Woman" as oppressed. It could be read broader yet, as Afghanistan becomes, once again, the locus for the West's installation of its global power, religion being one of the grounds for such a struggle, as predicted by Samuel Huntington (1993).

The prevalence of films on Palestine and the Middle East more generally, on the other hand, suggests a different type of appeal, one that turned back on a section of their audiences' privilege. The issue of Palestine concerns a wide segment of the population in New York, and is highly divisive for its Jewry. The inclusion of such films is, therefore, an

appeal to a section of that Jewry for whom the issue is a moral thorn. But it also appeals to a broader audience not of Jewish descent for whom the issue demonstrates something about the way in which power is configured within the United States. These films stand on the side of a metaphorical David in a David and Goliath story, and are therefore a type of surveillance of the latter's power. With these films, an attempt at a redistribution of power is apparent, with an issue that implicates United States-Israel relations directly.

The relative absence of films from/about Latin America, Africa, and Asia, suggests a different relationship yet again to audiences in the United States, and to surveillance. This study paid particular attention to Latin America, and this relative absence is noteworthy not only for its geographical proximity to the United States but also because Latinos are becoming one of the most sizable populations there. HRW has given a substantial amount of attention to Latin America, and so the relative absence of films from/about Latin America at the festival suggests either a perceived disinterest by its audiences or avoidance by the festival. The first is backed up by evidence that U.S. foreign policy is placing more attention on terrorism. The suggestion that the relative absence is motivated by an avoidance of surveillance, however, is more complicated. Overall, the films that are included are represented by two issues: dictatorships of the past and environmental activism. The first might suggest a unidimensionality in the treatment of the region by the festival, a perspective of those regimes as stuck in the past. I contend that the focus on those dictatorships, however, points to a remnant guilt about the deleterious impact of U.S. policy and interventions in the region, and the failure of Helsinki Watch to notice. The inclusion of "resilience" films on environmental activism is, then, a recognition of the present agency and strength displayed by civil groups in reclaiming their rights in the face of large-scale corporate power and political machinery. Given HRW's prevailing discourse about watching violations, the first films may more clearly be seen as a signal of violations by the United States in Latin America and as a warning from past interventions, and the second as signals of the future. That is, these films may be acting *together*, simultaneously reminding the United States of its past violations, while showing the innovation of the people of Latin America in solving their own problems.

The New York Human Rights International Film Festival was a most interesting festival. Its history located it squarely in the ideological wars of the 1980s, and I fully expected to find evidence of this as a "looking out," as a form of surveillance of others, which mirrored the triumphal

comments by Laber. She proclaimed that Helsinki Watch's surveillance was carried out, in part, in order to show others how it could be done. The festival has not aligned itself with this form of "looking out" except for the region where Helsinki Watch began, in Eastern Europe; the "looking out" regime of surveillance is strongest in relation to that region. In all its programming aspects, which mirror the Buenos Aires festival to a large degree, what is included and what is left out—what is made present and what is absent—has more to do with a gaze that has been worked through locally. This is distinct from the internationalizing impulse of human rights as a sense of solidarity with humanity. Human rights, therefore, in this place, become an integral part of their locatedness and of national identification, where their invocation occurs in order to look at others from a position of ownership.

Some of the familiar ways of looking at others, the looking out, have been turned on their head by the festival, and they have also turned the gaze back on the nation, as I have shown with *Love Crimes of Kabul, The Yes Men,* and those films from Latin America in general. In its looking at Eastern Europe, however, the festival has retained an older relationship, in fidelity to its parent organization's history. Thus in some of its programming, the festival has followed HRW and retained some of the familiar relations of looking, focusing on civil and political matters, and on violations. Many of the films about the United States, for example, were organized around the discourse of resilience and agency rather than violations, as they focused on that country's activists. This appeared to reinforce the belief expressed in one of the earlier HRW Annual Reports that the United States did not require watching, but simply had to "use its power, purse and prestige to promote human rights worldwide" (HRW 2014f). As the festival has stepped away from some of HRW's traditional framework, different patterns of watching have emerged. In two, *The Yes Men* films, the focus is placed on economic and social issues, and the gaze is turned back on the nation. It is in the films on environmental issues, topics not of direct interest to HRW, that the festival is manifesting its own identity, however. This is where the festival is stepping beyond human rights violations and displaying others' agency as a possible new model for human rights organizations: showing what needs changing but also how civil groups and communities attempt to do this on their own terms. This can begin to shift the relation of looking that is so invested in the humanitarian gaze and to help us recognize that those living with troubles have strengths and resources to resolve their problems. What is being made manifest with the environmental activism films is not an appeal premised on

inadequacy and failure, but one in which the obstacles for social change are such that they require assistance from others. I would further suggest that some of the unsettling of the familiar looking relations has been made possible by the inclusion of films themselves, as creative texts, and by their location in film festivals, which permits forms of unruliness to play out in a confined space-time. In this way, the New York HRWIFF is performing work that can be said to extend the traditional work of human rights into arenas that HRW could not have entered given the discursive parameters within which it functions. In doing so, the original motivation for establishing the festival, to reach a wider audience, is being achieved.

Conclusions

There is no such thing as a human rights film. But there are human rights film festivals. Film festivals are the places of organized unruliness—subversive spaces of alternative exhibition—where films that were not originally seen as "human rights films" can be constructed as such. Without the space and the entire field of activities that these festivals encourage and enable, individual films screened for human rights purposes would remain a fragmented set of stories that approximate the work of the organization hosting the screening. In these places of unruliness festivals create a wider and richer experience for a spectator, where films are a major part, but not the whole story.

Films and Human Rights

Film becomes part of a larger story by being associated with the discourse of human rights and by directing the spectator's gaze toward themes that convey human failures or struggles for rights. But films are indicators of something else as well, that is, a life beyond the films, a reality filled with people and organizations attempting to act for others. Acting for others is, however, a road filled with potholes and minefields, because in the context of human rights and humanitarianism in general, it crosses into other peoples' territories, cultures, worldviews, politics, and so on. As visual images are used in films, there is also the added dimension of their mediation. Films are not transparent windows into life; rather, they are living texts that organize and rearrange life as images on a screen, often in such new and creative ways that they fail to reflect any of the life from which they emerge. The fact of films' mediation represents a complex set of factors for an activist film festival, in which films are intended to negotiate and portray the life of others in a direct and indexical manner, but yet never can. The very heart of films is to show us a life unseen, but in doing so they are negotiating their own artificiality and failure to ever show us life as it is (as difficult as this is to define). This is their beauty, to put on display things beyond our everydayness, but it is also their excess, or what can disconnect the viewer of films for social change. That is, because of their obvious constructedness,

they may readily be dismissed as not directly mirroring our everyday lives. This poses limits, which are, to some degree, bypassed by these film festivals through the use of documentaries because the viewer of these films identifies with them differently. Documentaries are identified as closer to the regimes of truth telling because they attempt to throw us back to the life-world of which Vivian Sobchack wrote. To use film for the purposes of activism and social change is to make the life of the "human," of human rights, much more real and palpable, and film's greatest asset. But as creative texts, films are created from within specific contexts, and mediate ideas and points of view from within those contexts, and this needs to be kept in mind.

Film's representative strength is also that which can permit the reproduction of the humanitarian gaze, a geopolitical relationship between donors/helpers and supplicants for help that is unequal, and expected to be unequal. This gaze has built up over time, especially through the medium of television news coverage and through stories of urgency and panic. It repositions the privileged within their privilege, through stories that enhance our political and cultural superiority and that tell us that what we do is ultimately good. This is not an altogether bad motivation, as it directs us to be responsible in the world. But the humanitarian gaze also expects to show us that others need our efficacy and strength because they have little agency or capacity for agency themselves. This is also intended to make us feel good. And this acts to enable us to write ourselves on others: in their incapacity, to write our own agency in its place.

Part of the problem lies with the fact that films are not produced for the exclusive consumption of human rights audiences, as is the case for the majority of films screened at a HRFF. So what leads festival programmers to choose films that can be deemed to represent human rights? I suspect that this occurs partly through a redefinition of human rights, to match themes that are present in films already produced and submitted, or sought for screening. The interpretation ends up sifting through a number of local human rights experiences and possibly only retains a notion of some sense of transnationalism and of violations of human beings, or injustices that people are suffering somewhere. The prevailing discourse of human rights, therefore, is retained at quite a "supra" level—of some sense of cross-border-ness coupled with some sense of injustice—and is then matched to existing film stories. In effect, the human rights discourse as based on universalism and legalism is totally overturned by distinct localness, diversity, and the uncertainty of human lives in storytelling. This is, therefore, the power of films,

not only that they are powerful storytelling texts, but that in HRFF programming human rights have to be subsumed within stories that have already been produced for other reasons. Human rights, then, have to be fitted to these other reasons and the meanings they bring. I say subsumed because film programmers match their understanding of human rights with their local audiences' current interests, and this is the localness of which I speak. Not that the films are locally produced, but that they fulfill some localized need or interest, although the fact that they are locally produced may be part of the need of that particular audience, as I discovered in Buenos Aires.

The local is always written into any meaning-making venture, even in the consumption of images that circulate globally, such as Hollywood blockbusters. This is the case with human rights discourse even with its universalism principle. As discussed in chapter 1, contemporary human rights have been configured by a set of political struggles and expressed in a language that has led to an abstracted humanity's making claims through an elite expert syntax. As those historical struggles were for and about specific aims to replace an old order of power with a new one, human rights lent the necessary moral justification to that transition. Human rights, therefore, cannot help but be imbued with much of their original meanings, as a nation-building visionary tool for political change, but also contextualized in political structures largely established in Europe. For this reason also, they were revolutionary tools, although in contemporary times were reengaged in order to provide a moral justification for the *continuation* of an old order, as opposed to the overturning of one, as did the two revolutions covered. The order that the notion of human rights sought to conserve had established human rationality as the source for explanations and laws as removing the locus of decision-making from the body of European kings to separate structures. The claim to universality that contemporary human rights makes is, then, but a frame to provide that order with a generalizability that shows such rights to be natural to the human condition, but that in fact resembles and reflects only some of the peoples of the globe. Like the use of the idea of human rights to justify what would otherwise have been an act of treason in the American Revolution, a recourse to a generalized notion of humanity both permits these actions to be read as natural to being human and allows the frame within which that humanity is shaped to be applicable everywhere. Human rights cannot be seen as universal, in the sense of being everywhere the same, because they have to be filtered through a located system of meaning, and even in the articulation of its abstraction—through language—cannot avoid this.

And the meanings through which they have traditionally been filtered have validated some peoples more than others, and some systems of knowledge more than others. I do not want to become further engaged in the ongoing universalism/relativism debates (Aziz 1999; Parekh 1999) beyond suggesting that questions may be asked about human rights that point to them as a set of discursive mechanisms that are not "natural" or preordained. Rather, human rights can be viewed as manufactured truth regimes with the moral power to reward and punish. That constructedness was demonstrated fully by both festivals through a set of programming choices that were mostly about their local audiences' interests rather than an abstracted set of universal moral values that apply in the same way everywhere. In Buenos Aires, those moral values were transformed into a vision of a fairly explicit political nature, as the festival sought to use human rights to return a lost political frame. In New York, human rights were equally political, but not acknowledged in this way, as they became tangled up in a watching that originated in the ideological wars of the 1970s and '80s, and centered on the tensions between the United States and the Soviet bloc. Both festivals changed over time in relation to these originating themes, but always in the direction of the needs of local audiences.

Films have also been made to perform a function for human rights. As films are used to illustrate a human reality of which the moral backbone, human rights discourse suggests, should be fashioned from the idea of rights, some of their function is that of surveillance by human rights. The surveillance occurs through the application of the organizing idea of violations or abuses. This was seen particularly at the New York festival, where "watching" human rights had been fashioned by its parent organization explicitly as the monitoring of human rights violations (more on this below).

Human rights discourse has been influenced by the creative dimensions of filmmaking, and such influences are radically altering the reach of human rights and how they are understood. This is already apparent as other influences have made their mark on this discourse. For example, there is now a ready slippage between the use of "human rights" and "social justice," which emerged from quite different and radical political frames. (Social justice discourse is premised on political visions that embrace wealth redistribution). These influences are "becoming" human rights, and also altering what human rights "becomes," which can only enrich the discourse as it extends beyond legal knowledges. Bruni Burres, one of the early organizers of the New York festival, alludes to this when she comments on the manner in which films can capture

a more complex and nuanced account of events than a strict focus on legal justice principles permits:

> I think a lot of people in the human rights world who work in it, who haven't been directly affected by [social upheaval], have a much harder time because they feel that justice has to come first. And I think sometimes if you talk to some people who actually lived through it, there's so much a desire for normality, or a return to some kind of normality, that some people will give up justice if there can be a kind of moving on. (Lehrer 1997, 17)

Clearly the justice to which Burres is referring is the traditional manner in which human rights has been practiced, and the lived experience is that which films can capture and expose. Films come closer to that life toward which, Vivian Sobchack has said, documentaries throw us with their images. Burres is here commenting on the role films play in showing the complexity of life, where decisions cannot be made in the same way as the legal process, as it attempts to determine distinct truths and thereby guilt. Most of life is lived in grey areas rather than in the black and white areas of legal justice, even if the latter has very useful functions. In times of postconflict this is particularly so, as I became aware in East Timor as a community development worker. As part of the reconciliation work at the end of a protracted conflict between East Timoran liberation movements and Indonesia, in which some local people had been recruited to fight for the latter, the notion of guilt and "justice" had to give way to reconciliation so that these individuals could return to functioning within their communities and not burden the fledgling government with punitive measures. This is what most communities wanted in order to "move on." Truth and Reconciliation panels were established, which were not necessarily about establishing guilt, but rather about how those who might be deemed guilty of offenses against their own people were to be dealt with, by/in the communities. Films of the type shown in a HRFF, as storied texts that mirror in some ways the lived lives of people with their contradictions, tensions, ambivalences, and disruptions, allow for these complexities to be shown and to be part of the very fiber of their production.

Although some scholars, as mentioned in chapter 2, suggest that mediating texts such as films cannot bring proximity, but instead produce distance, others maintain that a new emphasis on "sensuous, existential or phenomenological" documentary filmmaking (Grimshaw 2011, 256) is resulting in the "use [of] the image as a means to reconnect

with iconic and indexical referentiality and to underplay the symbolic" (Hughes 2012, 246). This description incorporates something of the cinema verité tradition, which was a cinematic tradition in the 1950s and 1960s that sought to represent life "as it is." Anna Grimshaw and Helen Hughes signal possibilities in documentary filmmaking that are attempting to bring proximity between viewer and image. As fraught as this will always be, given the artifice of all films, film production can attempt a texture that reaches toward a sensuality that may "touch" vision with other senses. This relates back to Sobchack, who suggests that documentary films throw the viewer back onto the life they come from, and to Third Cinema also, in which films are part of "the protagonist of life." To some degree some (documentary) films attempt to approximate life as lived by that protagonist.

Films as storied, constructed, creative texts may approximate the life of the protagonist of life, but are not produced necessarily to surveill others through the frame of human rights. They may, at times, unsettle a preestablished way of looking, as such ways of looking can reflect a dominant configuration of power. This may include the dominant way of looking of which human rights are a part, or the humanitarian gaze. Watching others as a surveillance mechanism of human rights is enabled, then, to change from monitoring to exploration and questioning. Films may, indeed, still be used for the monitoring function of "watching" others, but they may also add the complexity of lived experiences and points of view, and so interject the clarity of legal truth and its regimes of surveillance. It is when they are positioned as part of festivals, however, that films may fulfill more completely the role of unsettling dominant power, a "surveillance of power" as it were.

Film Festivals, Audiences, and Human Rights

HRFFs are a part of geopolitical power that is manifest at the local level as a gaze that may seek impoverishment in others and aggrandizement of our own goodness. As I discovered in this study, HRFFs are also well positioned to subvert that gaze and throw the spectator right back onto his/her privilege, their (our) implicatedness in others' social, economic, or political poverty, or through the celebration of others' strengths. There were instances of all of these at the two festivals, as seen in the screening of films such as *Love Crimes of Kabul,* and *The Yes Men* twinset in New York, in the films about Indigenous land struggles in Buenos Aires, and, at both festivals, the films about environmental activism. I explain this through the "festival" effect. That is, as film festivals are

sites of organized unruliness, they perform both a surveillance role *and* a role that seeks to subvert. They organize the direction of their audience's gaze to conform to an understanding of human rights, some of which may be guided by the looking relations of humanitarianism. The festivals also subvert that by extending the scope already established by the discourse. For each festival, surveillance and subversion interacted in different ways, according to the meanings given to human rights. In Buenos Aires, human rights had become a mechanism used for "looking in" rather than for monitoring others. It was as if the discourse itself was configured so that Argentineans could not look at others, but only themselves. This closely coincided with the pronationalist formula of Third Cinema, and with the use of human rights for furthering a defunct national cinema. In effect, this festival used human rights to further the right of their own people to tell their own stories. The surveillance, therefore, was not configured through a motivation to monitor others, but only their own people, including the Latin American region. It may be said that the discourse of human rights itself was subverted through the limited ways in which human rights was made to function in the early days of the festival. The acquiescence to it was through the strict focus on the dictatorship, as this coincided with a more traditional view of human rights.

As Florencia Santucho took over the directorship of the festival, however, this looking in was turned around. Attention was gradually turned toward others outside, and the festival became more closely aligned with traditional articulations of human rights, especially as formulated by the UN. And yet, because human rights in Argentina had such a limited focus, this widening of focus could well be called a subversion of human rights discourse in Argentina, toward conformity to the institutionalized vision. And therefore the conformity was a type of subversion. The festival took its audiences to new places they had not traveled before, and under the rubric of human rights this was given validity. Audiences in Argentina could feel a part of something beyond their own troubles, while still being grounded in their own issues. If I take subversion to be at the nexus of "what is said (seen)" and "what is not said (seen)" so that the latter is given attention that it was not previously granted, then this festival has been active in using human rights both to subvert narratives of deficiency and to bring to light topics not widely disseminated. In the festivals' excessive focus on their own nations and regions, however, I wondered to what extent they felt surveilled by the discourse of human rights. Although this looking in did shift with time, it seemed to me to be a partial acquiescing to an unspoken discursive request by human

rights that only certain people may monitor, while others are monitored. But as I considered the tenets of a strongly nationalistic Third Cinema, and the cinematic landscape in Argentina when the festival came into being, then this may well be a partial fulfillment, and also a partial subversion, of a discourse that the festival utilizes but in which it does not fully participate.

In New York the organized/surveillance, unruliness/subversion parameters of a film festival played out differently. The interplay of these occurred largely as the work of the festival intersected with that of its parent organization, but also as other demands made their mark. This festival was thus itself monitored, and became a monitor of others. It was monitored by the need to maintain a level of fidelity to its parent organization, and this became the primary point of departure for its work and its relationship to surveillance. Programming revealed significant alignments with HRW, but divergences as well. In the emphasis on prisons and the justice system, and the focus on Eastern Europe, the festival closely followed HRW. As the festival steered toward issues of an economic and social nature, and with the environmental films, they were beginning to subvert that close identification and forge an identity of their own. The greatest divergence with HRW, however, was in the looking in/looking out configuration. As the archival material from some of the Annual Reports and Jeri Laber's autobiography on HRW demonstrated, the organization saw itself as monitoring the world, and not the nation from within which it emerged. This looking out was, and still is, reflected in the relatively large focus HRW places on nations other than the United States. The festival, however, while having a strong focus on places outside North America, has always screened a substantial number of films about the United States' own troubles. Although much of that attention has focused on prisons and the justice system, and on activism, the festival has also included films about the United States that have attended to its complicity in poverty both within and outside the United States, and on social issues such as racial discrimination, the situation of "illegals," homelessness and gay/lesbian rights. This looking in has been a kind of subversion of the festival's supposed alignment with its parent organization, although it was not intended as such. I suggest that what is making these orientations possible is that the festival is standing outside the legal knowledges that bind HRW. And thus, in that regard, it is not a subversion, but an extension of the limits legal knowledges place on HRW, and therefore the festival is performing a complementary function. In effect, these two organizations work in tandem. Yet, I would also say that these reorientations

and expansions by HRWIFF have been made possible because the films' were screened at a festival and that without this context, without the unruliness that allows the stepping outside of established norms, the reorientations would not be possible. Film festivals, however, are more than sites of unruliness. The "festival effect" that I mentioned above also involves the ways in which the space configures people and their watching.

Audiences and Spectators at HRFFs

I suggest that proximity between spectator, image, and lived experience is enhanced by the location of (documentary) films' screening at film festivals. Festivals interpellate their audiences differently from other contexts, and enmesh them in a holistic experience. In that time-space, people make meaning differently. At activist film festivals, moreover, there is a specific type of spectator who is brought into being and enthralled through communal-like mechanisms (Bazin 1955). These mechanisms involve discussion panels and other activities. The conglomeration of films, the setting, the activities, the groups involved, and the audiences, create a space-people effect that accumulates meaning. At an activist film festival, films create meaning differently, I suggest, because they circulate among these many other features, and they are not the sole means of making sense of the issues to which they are pointing. Films circulate together as a team, and in conjunction with all else, adding to each other. In combination with the postscreening discussions and other activities at the festival, they become more than any one film alone. The process begins with programming decisions, and the groups to which the organizers provide access in this space, and continues with the classification of films according to theme.

All of these decisions direct the audiences' gaze, and in those decisions there is a surveillance of the discourse to which the festivals are primordially aligned—namely, human rights. This is the "organized" aspect of film festivals. But there is also an excess that organizers cannot control, and this is their "unruliness" factor. Some of the unruliness has to do with outside influences, and how these have already shaped audiences' viewing traditions. These are factors that festival organizers must take into account as they devise programs that will align with the festival's aim, and how their audiences are already configured, as well as how the festival may perform unruliness of its own and interrupt that.

Activist film festivals call forth certain audiences, and these are then embraced within these spaces in a network of activities that binds them deeper into consideration of the films housed therein. Films, in these

settings, become part of a set of relationships that is much wider than simply that between spectator and film, and explicitly so, rather than as background to the relationship. Films in a HRFF are not simply symbols removed from quotidian life, but are in an indexical relationship with it, as suggested by Hughes, and the attachment can be made deeper because of their inclusion in a festival. In order to act as indicators of life, however, and because festivals operate within specific contexts, festival organizers connect with their audiences through programming schedules that make sense to those viewers, and through stories that will draw their attention. In that regard, these are stories that either reinforce something good about their audiences, such as *Argentina Latente* did by putting on display for Argentine audiences the innovation that had been possible in the face of the financial crisis, or something that requires changing, as did *Granito* in New York.

Audiences who are interested in human rights, who are located in different cities, also confront activist film festival organizers with their own distinct set of interests; these are mirrored in programming that follows different patterns for each of the festivals. In Buenos Aires, the selection of films was based on, first, the dictatorship of 1976 and its effects, and then subsequent social and economic changes due to the 2001 financial crisis. In New York, this is seen in the recent decline in films about/from Latin America, and the almost total lack of attention given to Cuba, as the United States focused instead on the Middle East and terrorism, as well as the ongoing interest in Eastern Europe and Palestine. This last area of interest also points to the kind of audience to which the festival appeals: liberal, progressive, middle-class individuals, including a strand of the Jewry in New York; this is suggested by the pro-Palestine stance reflected in many of the films. Whether these features characterize audiences of a HRFF more widely was outside the scope of this study. However, from my own experiences as a festival organizer and from attending these sorts of festivals around the world, I would suggest that this is largely the case, although what the terms “liberal,” “progressive,” and “middle-class” mean differs for each place. For example, in Buenos Aires there was a cross section of ages and genders, but it appeared to me, from their dress and language during discussions, that these were people who had achieved a certain level of higher education and this, in Argentina, is more usual for the middle classes, even though university education there is now free. This is in spite of the very low cost of admission to the festival there (approximately US$1) in contrast to festivals in affluent countries, where to see a film in a HRFF costs as much as, and sometimes more than, a regular film, as the festival uses admission prices to raise funds.

The effect of personal influence cannot be underestimated in understanding what determines the direction that a festival takes. This was seen particularly in Buenos Aires, where the political affiliations of Julio Santucho clearly coincided with those of an older strand of political cinema. As he established this festival, his notion may have been to continue the vision that had been interrupted by his exile, but under a new guise, one that had, furthermore, proven quite successful for the Madres' activism during the dictatorship. In this case, he incorporated human rights into *his* cause, of furthering a political vision through a political cinema, both of which had been mostly neutered by the dictatorship, although cinema had been given a reprieve and a boost with the *Law of the Cinema* of 1994. As his daughter became involved in 2004, and subsequently took over as director in 2011, the festival began to have a distinct new flavor, one that widened the geographical focus, as well as applied new principles for the organization of the festival. This, as I have already said, is likely to be the result of her birth and early development in Europe, which would have provided her with a broader exposure to, and understanding of, human rights. In the case of New York, it is more difficult to notice the effects of personal orientations, given that officially the festival is supposed to follow its parent organization in its programming choices. I suspect that in the growing inclusion of films about social and economic issues rather than strictly political ones, there is a fair degree of personal influence, as these do not fit neatly within the traditional purview of the discourse of human rights, and especially not the traditional work that HRW has carried out.

The inclusion of films about environmental issues demonstrates the effects of personal inclinations on programming more vividly, but also suggests how using films *for* human rights is expanding the ways in which human rights are conceived, as "the environment" is not generally viewed as a "human rights problem," at least within the more conventional framing of human rights. Many of these films cover the traditional human rights implications (i.e., civil and political rights) of environmental degradation or destruction, while others extend the analysis to consider environmental impacts on economic, social, and cultural rights. More radically, some films are also concerned with extending the idea of "rights" beyond the "human," to include the rights of nature or animal rights, which is well beyond traditional human rights understandings. Although no evidence exists that this latter type of film is being included in the festivals, the leap to them is logical. Such films are introduced into HRFFs when individuals within organizing bodies are exposed to the topic elsewhere, and as festivals

receive increasing numbers of film submissions on the topic of environmentalism. In recent times, more films are being produced on environmental issues, as the development of FINCA in Buenos Aires has suggested. The cross-fertilization that is occurring between filmmakers and their interests, the wider community of activism, and festival organizers shows the influence of film in expanding the definitions of human rights, as topics not traditionally *of* human rights are being incorporated into the discourse through the use of film. This is part of the unruliness that film festivals can permit. A discourse that has traditionally focused on political and civil issues, and that has in more recent times turned to social and economic issues, shows a porosity that was likely not possible as long as "human rights" continued to be confined within traditional knowledges. This is further enhanced as films enter the unruliness of film festivals. The focus on the environment, with the potential to decenter human beings, illustrates clearly how new influences may be absorbed into a discourse that had previously been established around reductive principles of law, and epistemologically premised on legal regimes of evidence.

Universalism and Film Festivals

Films have been brought into this complex field to tell human rights stories. Films of the type used by a HRFF are, primarily, human stories rather than the documentation of a set of laws established to enforce a universal idea(l) of human. Thus, they partially fulfill a human rights' regime of truth by telling stories of those who have not had their humanness enabled, but they also upset this regime because these stories do not, strictly speaking, address the way in which human rights have traditionally been defined. They are thus only approximations, and to that extent festival programmers are usually fumbling in the dark, trying to align a vague idea of human rights with the films they select to represent them. What may occur is a sort of compromise, and selections then take place according to the perceived scope of interest of local audiences rather than based on a thorough understanding of human rights. What may interest local audiences, however, is also likely not driven by "human rights" as these concepts have usually been understood as the domain of the legal world and not necessarily as stories of human struggle and resilience, survival, injustice, and so forth. That interest is more likely to have been organized through the humanitarian gaze, which has, on the whole, been constructed

by news stories of emergency and immediacy, and which seeks violated figures or those whose struggles bring them closer to our way of life. Human rights organizations follow this discourse by focusing on *violations* as the source of their work, as the descriptions used by HRW, in particular, illustrated. Those who have some contact with these organizations are then also predisposed to seek and find these violated figures.

In both festivals, films extend the audiences toward vistas that had not been possible for them to see before, in the same way. This function also shows the responsibility that programmers carry in taking their audiences toward that newness. But ultimately this illustrates the tensions that programmers for a HRFF will always face as they attempt to straddle a set of demands from human rights, films, and film festivals. These demands pull in different directions: ideas about human rights toward an internationalization that pursues a "looking out"; films toward aesthetic formulae that will attract attention; and film festivals toward subversive newness within a localness that pulls the entire venture toward a "looking out while being here."

What takes place that is of greatest interest is that human rights discourse, with its apparent search for an expansive vision of humanity, must make that vision mean something to everyday folk, or else it will remains the abstracted ideals of philosophers and the practice of elite legal procedures. In using films to produce that connection, human rights necessarily have to be drawn into a locatedness that necessarily diverges from that capacious vision. Perhaps we need to see universality as an abstracted principle that, as Jacques Derrida et al. say of democracy, is a driving ideal, an aspiration, that is always "yet-to-come" (2004). Or it may be that it is always-already unachievable because it should be, and bonds of solidarity across geopolitical space need to be constantly worked at, requestioned, and reestablished. Instead, we should see universality as a give-and-take shared humanity (Ife 2010; Baldissone 2008), which admits tensions, contradictions, and yet a wish to ultimately connect with others. As Gayatri Spivak mentions, even while human rights' cultural and political bias may be acknowledged "[o]ne cannot write off the righting of wrongs. The enablement must be used even as the violation is renegotiated" (2004, 524). Human rights may be one of the few viable visions still left for showing concern for, and creating solidarity with, others across space and time, and as biased as they are historically, politically, and culturally, we may need to heed Derrida's words in this regard:

> We must (il faut) more than ever stand on the side of human rights. We need (il faut) human rights. We are in need of them and they are in need, for there is always a lack, a shortfall, a falling short, an insufficiency; human rights are never sufficient. Which alone suffices to remind us that they are not natural. They have a history—one that is recent, complex, and unfinished. . . . To take this historicity and this perfectibility into account in an affirmative way we must never prohibit the most radical questioning possible of all the concepts at work here: the humanity of man (the "proper" of man or of the human), which raises the whole question of nonhuman living beings, as well as the question of the history of recent juridical concepts or performatives such as a "crime against humanity," and then the very concept of rights or of law (droit), and even the concept of history. (Habermas et al. 2003, 132–33).

To position films in a landscape that was only abstracted principles or laws beyond the reach of many people, was to extend the reach of human rights. In so doing, the HRFFs have ventured into terrain where the visual storytelling device of film had been developing (no pun intended) happily and separately for decades, and film festivals for a slightly shorter period. In that forging, I believe, is the next step in the evolution of human rights discourse, which until now has been removed from the quotidian lives of citizen-spectators. The inclusion of a cultural form, films, to do this will have its biases given the mediated nature of such a visual text, but it is also making human rights "real." In that sense, films are stretching the boundaries of human rights, while locating them in a realness of everyday life that was missing until the HRWIFF brought human rights and films together.

Ultimately, films at a film festival for human rights will always remain in tension as the various demands facing programmers are given different weight: the locatedness in the need to appeal to particular audiences' viewing traditions; the need to seek newness through independent cinemas that for these festivals means political cinema; and the universalism, or at least cosmopolitanism, of human rights, which becomes expressed through a looking at others beyond our borders on screen. All of these things come together in uncertain, new ways in a human rights film festival.

Notes

Part I Introduction

1. In this chapter, I do not provide references, other than when I quote directly, or when the full reference is not provided elsewhere.

Part II Introduction

1. My own translation from original Spanish text.

Chapter 3

1. In what follows, I will provide the official name of the organization in Spanish and then my own translation. I provide both because the translation is not an officially sanctioned one, but my own.
2. Personal communication with Mariano Mestman, Universidad de Buenos Aires, May 2011.
3. In what follows, I will provide my own translation from the Spanish text.
4. And Margaret Bouvard (1994) particularly suggests theirs was apolitical because they were not aligned ideologically. The extent to which their work was without ideology, and on these grounds considered depoliticized can be seriously questioned. Most of the desaparecidos had been aligned ideologically, and some of the Madres, such as Azucena Villaflor, had come from families deeply embroiled in radical politics (National Security Archives 2002)
5. Mariano was also my main informant for this leg of the research. He is a senior film studies academic at the Universidad de Buenos Aires, and I owe him much gratitude for introducing me to the main issues related to my work in Argentina.
6. This article, found in the Harvard University student daily newspaper, contains only an authorial attribution to Solanas and has the date April 16, 1971. Because it refers to Solanas in the third person, this suggests that it may have been written by someone else and that the authorial attribution refers to the film itself. The reference to a screening of the film in the Orson Welles Cinema (which ran from 1969–80) suggests the date of the piece is as stated. It may well be archival material added after the newspaper went digital. The full piece can be found at http://www.thecrimson.com/article/1971/4/16/a-film-essay-on-violence-and/.
7. It must be acknowledged that this reference discusses primarily ethics in relation to the responsibilities of corporations and corporate power. While my discussion covers mostly the ways by which neoliberalism has reconfigured

subjectivity, Grahame Thompson also includes a comment that goes to the heart of the philosophy and applies to individuals and corporations governed by this ideology. He states, “It seems to be fundamentally premised on the construction of a moral agency that accepts the consequences of its actions in a self-reflexive manner. . . . This trend can be understood as one expression of the move towards various forms of ‘governance of the self’ in modern societies” (2007).

Chapter 4

1. Interview with Silvina Baviacchi, Festival Coordinator, in May 2011.
2. When three sections occur, namely: “dictatorship and authoritarianism”; “work and globalization”, and; “resistance and rebellion.”
3. These refer to people who were tortured by the military dictatorship and subsequently drugged and dropped while alive into the ocean. Some of their bodies washed up on beaches.
4. The term neoliberal continues to be used to describe films, however, in their respective summaries, as can be seen in the example below
5. Literally “cardboard-collectors,” but functionally “refuse collectors.” They are individuals who collect cardboard but also other refuse for recycling.
6. My own translation from the original Spanish text.

Chapter 5

1. My own translation from original Spanish text.
2. My own translation from original Spanish text.
3. My own translation from original Spanish text.
4. My own translation from original Spanish text.
5. My own translation from original Spanish text.
6. Gerardo Halpern was another informant for this part of my study. He is an academic at the Universidad de Buenos Aires, and he pointed me to many of the racialized and class elements of the immigration debates in Argentina.
7. My own translation from original Spanish text.
8. One of my informants in Argentina, Alejandra Oberti, from the organization *Memoria Abierta* (Open Memory) also reiterated this in 2011.

Chapter 6

1. My own translation.

Part III Introduction

1. Human Rights Watch International Film Festival now screens in many more cities throughout the United States, but also in Europe, the main other city for the festival being London. I will only focus on New York, as a different set of films are screened in each city, sometimes being a smaller subset of

the New York films, but at times, such as in London, with some new films included.

2. There was a three-year hiatus between 1988 and 1991, but it has been running every year since then: http://www.hrw.org/reports/1996/WR96/Back-07.htm#P803_219786 (retrieved 13 February, 2014).
3. In 2013, when the full PDF brochure was available online, some of the festival screenings were organized according to a few thematic sections, which suggests that this may have occurred previously, as archival material was then placed on the website as individual films screened, and not as they were shown in the festival brochure.

Chapter 7

1. Although there were/are significant critiques of their ideas, I am not interested at this point in engaging with the debates to which they gave rise because I am not using these ideas as prescriptive but rather descriptive of the time.
2. This term makes reference to the Jonestown, Guyana, mass suicide of 1978, when the followers of Jim Jones drank a cyanide-laced sweet drink and waited to die.

Chapter 8

1. I give this term scare quotes not because I am dubious of the term, but because this was what was used to describe the characters upon whom the films were based.
2. It must be remembered that only about two to six films are screened each year per region, and for at least two years, only one film was screened for this region.
3. Although it is unfair to say that this film is entirely one dimensional as it does attempt to portray some of the wider sociopolitical dimensions of sex trafficking, it often falls into the binary trap of portraying the women as ultimate victims without agency, and the men involved in the consumption and organization of the trade as fairly one-dimensional monsters.
4. One of them, using a gender lens, would be to discuss the ways in which women are at the center of many of the films mentioned above, as victims of the war.
5. I recognize there are multidimensional factors in this decision that intersect gender with the geopolitical dimensions of the humanitarian gaze, but it is impossible for me to do justice to this discussion here. What can be noted is that *The Price of Sex* represents women as victims of "other" men, of communist failures, and of tradition, all significant themes at the festival, while *Love Crimes of Kabul* does none of these.
6. "Apparently" because there are no indications in the archival material that there were focus areas before 2013, and Andrea Holley, assistant director for the festival, stated that this has only been occurring for a couple of years (personal communication June 5, 2013).

7. I carry out this discussion more fully in those chapters because that festival has kept its thematic organization in its archival material, and has been structured in that way for almost a decade since its inception.
8. In an interview conducted in June 2011.

Chapter 10

1. Interview with Marina Kaufman, Festival Chair.
2. Bruni Burres, for example, one of the earliest festival directors, could only recall a rough date of early 1990s for the screening of *Section Spèciale* (Special Section, 1975).

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Film Index (by Film Title)

5 Broken Cameras (2011), Burnat, E., Davidi, G., 151
19/ 20 (2003), Menassé, S., Tealdi, M., Golder, C., Gemetro, F., 72
19/ 20: Ecos de Una Rebelion (2003), Adamovsky, Bergel, Llanos, Costa, Agosta, Percovich, Blotta, Sainz, Laguna, 72
99%—The Occupy Wall St. Collaborative Film (2912), Ewell, A., Aites, A., Read, L., Krstic, N., 160
Act of Resistance, An (1997), Leppzer, R., 159
Afghan Star (2009), Marking, H., 152
Afroargentinos (2002), Fortes, J., Ceballos, D., 108
Amnesia (1994), Justiniano, G., 179
Anita (2013), Mock, F., 160
Argentina Latente (2006), Solanas, F. E., 54, 212
Argentina: Hope in Hard Times (2004), Dworkin, M., Youn, M., 83
Backyard (2009), Carrera, C., 182
Bajo un mismo techo/Under the Same Roof (1996), Mosenson, M., 108
Better this World (2011), Galloway, K., Duane De la Vega, K., 160, 180
Bidder (2012), Gage, B., Gage, R., 160
Bye Bye Babushka (1996), Feig, R., 156
Calle Santa Fé, (2007), Castillo, C., 180
Calling the Ghosts (1996), Jacobson, M., Jelincic, K., 156
Camden 28, The (2006), Giacchiano, A., 159
Camera/Woman (2012), Zoubir, K., 161
Carla's Song (1996), Loach, K., 74
Cartoneros de la Villa Itatí/Cardboard Collectors from Villa Itati (2003), Mignona, E., Cacopardo, A., Jaschek, I., Spinelli, P., Irigoyen, A., 82
Cecilio Kamenetzky (2010), Haddad, A., 77–79
City of Photographers, The (2006), Moreno, S., 181, 183
Close Protection (1994), Knox, I., 74
Cocalero (2006), Landes, A., 169, 183, 184–185
Colores Sean Unidos, Los /The Colours are United (2006), Doudchitzky, P., 105
Colours at the End of the World (2009), Corte. E., 105
Combinación Perfecta, Músicos Peruanos en Buenos Aires, La /The Perfect Combination: Peruvian Musicians in Buenos Aires (2002), Muñoz, R., 107
Contract, The (2003), Lee, M. S., National Film Board of Canada, 75
Conversation with Haris, A (2002), Sofian, S., 149
Corporation, The (2003), Achbar, M., Abbott, J., 137, 138
Crude (2009), Berlinger, J., 183
Cuento Chino, Un /Chinese Take-Away (2011), Borenzstein, S., 99
Cumbite (1964), Alea, T. G., 181
Day After Peace, The (2008), Gilley, J., 31–33, 141, 194, 198
Deadline (2004), Ebert, R., 157
Death of a Bureaucrat (1966), Alea, T. G., 181

Death Squadrons: The French School (2004), Robin, M., 169, 179
Devil Came on Horseback, The (2007), Stern, R., Sundberg, A., 159
Devils Don't Dream! (1995), Hoessli, A., 138, 160, 169, 170
D-Humanos (2011), Arruti, M., De Silvio, J., Guarini, C., Habegger, A., Nisenson, P., Paz, R., Pereira, M., Rey, L., Rossell, U., Schellemberg, A., 116
Días de Cartón/ Days of Cardboard (2003), Souto, V., 82
Dignidad de los Nadie, La (2005), Solanas, F. E., 115
Eden is West, (2007), Costa-Gavras, 186
Escape to Paradise (2002), Jacusso, N., 75
Estudio Para Una Siesta Paraguaya/Study of a Paraguayan Siesta (2003), Dansker, Nacano, Blanc, 107
Even The Rain (2010), Bollaín, I., 184
FASINPAT: Fábrica sin Patrón/FASINPAT: Factory Without a Boss (2004), Incalcaterra, D., 82
Figli/Hijos (2001), Bechis, M., 179
Ford Transit (2003), Abu-Assad, H., 151–152
Forest for the Trees, The (2005), Mellis, B., 159
Four Men on a Raft (1942), Welles, O., 74
Germán/Herman (2004), Schindel, S., Molnar, F., Batlle, N., Juck, B., 76
Global WARming (2007), Gnorski, K., 112
Going Up the Stairs (2011), Maghami, R. K., 161
Good Husband, Dear Son (2002), Honingmann, H., 149
Granito: How to Nail a Dictator (2011), Yates, P., 158, 172, 185, 189–193, 198–199, 212
Grissinópoli: El País de los Grisines/Grissinopoli: Breadstick Ville (2004), Doria, D., 83
Herdswomen (2007), Boman, K., 105
HIJOS: El Alma en Dos (2002), Guarini, C., Cespedes, M., 179
Historia Oficial, La (1985), Puenzo, L., 95, 115
Honeymoons (2009), Paskaljevic, G., 149
Hora de los Hornos, La /The Hour of the Furnaces (1968), Solanas, F., Getino, O., 8, 51, 86
Hunters of Utopia (1995), Baustrín, D., 178
If a Tree Falls: A Story of the Earth Liberation Front (2011), Curry, M., Cullman, S., 158, 160
In a Time of Betrayal (1994), Castillo, C., 179
In the Land of the Free (2010), Jean, V., 157
Informes y Testimonio. La Tortura Política en Argentina 1966–72/Reports and Testimony: Political Torture in Argentina 1966–72, (1973), Eijo, D., Giorello, E., Moetti, R., Oroz, A. O., Vallina, C., Vega, S., 59
Interview, The (1997), Farocki, 75
Into the Abyss: A Tale of Death, A Tale of Life (2011), Herzog, W., 158
Inundados, Los (1962), Birri, F., 64, 115
Invisible War, The (2011), Dick, K., 161
It Ain't Love (1997), Todd, S., Young, A., 161
Jekh Kam Jehk Sel (2007), Mustafa, S., 108
Jung: In the Land of the Mujaheddin (2001), Lazzaretti, F., Vendemiatti, A., 152
Justifiable Homicide (2002), Osman, J., 157
Juva y Washiná (2005), Vaccaro, S., Vellacott, T., 108
Juvies (2004), Neale, L., 157

Kabuli Kid (2008) Akram, B., 152
Laburante, Crónica del Trabajo Recuperado/Labourer: Chronicle of Work Regained (2003), Mamad, C., Digilio, P., Cilges, N., 82
Last Best Chance (2010), Robertson, S., Camerini, M., 160
Lesson of Belarusian, A (2006), Dembiński, M., 150
Lost Angels (2010), Napper, T., 160
Love Crimes of Kabul (2011), Eshaghian, T., 34, 40, 45, 147, 153–155, 171, 198, 199, 201, 208, 219
Madres (1996), Subiela, G., 74
Mardi Gras: Made in China (2005), Redmon, D., 138
Marooned in Iraq (2002), Ghobadi, B., 75
Mater Gloriosa (1996), Pereda, A., 74
Meat the Truth (2008), Soeters J., Zwanikken, G., 112
Memories of a Sacking (2002), Solanas, F. E., 80
Memories of Underdevelopment (1968), Alea, T. G., 181
Miles to Go (2003), Subramani, N., 113
Missing (1982), Costa-Gavras, 129, 172, 178, 185–189
Missing Young Women (2001), Portillos, L., 182
MOCASE, la lucha por la tierra en Santiage del Estero/MOCASE: The Struggle for Land in Santiago del Estero (2004/ 2005), Menutti, E., Mascaró J., Otero, M., 103–104
MOCASE, la tierra para quien la trabaje/MOCASE: Land for Those Who Work It (2002), Muñoz, A. O., 103
Mon Colonel (2006), Costa-Gavras, 62–63, 78, 119, 129, 186–188, 190, 191, 193
Mountains and Clouds (2010b), Robertson, S., Camerini, M., 160
My American Dream: How Democracy Works (2006), Robertson, S., Camerini, M., 159
Newen Mapuche (2010), Varela, E., 113
No Boundaries: Tim Hetherington (2010), Hetherington, T., 160, 161
Noche de los Lapíces, La /Night of the Pencils (1986), Olivera, H., 92
Pachamama, Bajo el Asfalto (2003), Bel, C., 107
Papá Iván Roqué (2000), M. I., 115
Patagonia: The Colours of a Conflict (2010), Maldavsky, J., 105
Persons of Interest (2004), McLean, A., Perse, T., 157
Pescadores, La Ciudad de los Ojos Cerrados/Pescadores: The City with Its Eyes Closed (2004), Jarmoluk, S., 81
Petit Apocalypse, Le (1992), Costa-Gavras, 186
Pinochet's Children (2003), Rodríguez, P., 179
Pizza Surveillance (2004), Gutis, P., 157
Plaza de Mayo (1997), Bayer, O., Job, R., 74
Presumed Guilty (2008), Hernandez, R., Smith, G., 182
Pretty Dyana (2003), Mitic, 105
Price of Sex, The (2011), Chakarova, M., 147, 150, 155, 161, 219
Promise to the Dead: The Exile Journey of Ariel Dorfman, A (2007), Raymont, P., 180
Puma's Daughter, The (1994), Hultberg, U., 74
Pussy Riot: A Punk Prayer (2012), Lerner, M., Pozdorovkin, M., 150
Putin's Kiss (2011), Pedersen, L. B., 150
Rafea: Solar Mama (2012), Noujaim, J., Eldaief, M., 161
Raising Resistance (2011), Borgfeld, B., Bernet, D., 112, 184
Ralph Bunche: An American Odyssey (2001), Greaves, W., 184

Reckoning: The Battle for the International Criminal Court, The (2009), Yates, P., 158, 159, 189
Reconstrucción/Reconstruction (2004), Rada, J., Medina, D., 76, 110
Red Dawn (1990), Fons, J., 182
Reportero (2011), Ruíz, B., 182–183
Rubios, Los /The Blondes (2003), Carri, A., 78, 92–94, 115, 119
Salma (2013), Longinotto, K., 161
School of Assassins (1996), Richter, R., 74
Scilingo (1996), Polizzi, R., 75
Scout's Honor (2001), Shepard, T., 159
Section Spèciale (1975), Costa-Gavras, 186
Sequía, castigo de la naturaleza/Drought: Nature's Punishment (n.d.), Canal 7, 112
Sing Your Song (2011), Rostoc, S., 160, 161
Snow (2008), Begić, A., 149
Speaking with the Enemy (1994), Kakoseo, N., 74
State of Fear (2005), Yates, P., 189
State of Siege (1973), Costa-Gavras, 187
Survivors, The (1978), Alea, T. G., 181
Switch Off (2005), Mayol, M., 180
Take, The (2004), Klein, N., Lewis, A., 83
Tall as the Boab Tree (2012), Teicher, J., 161
Tango, El Exilio de Gardel (1985), Solanas, F. E., 99
That the Women Live (2001), Becue-Renard, L., 149
Three Poems by Spoon Jackson (2004), Wenzer, M., 157
Tiempo de Revancha (1981), Aristaraín, A., 91
Tierra de Avellaneda/ Land of Avellaneda (1993), Incalcaterra, D., 74
Tough on Crime, Tough on Our Kind (2000), Educational Video Center, 157
Trials of Henry Kissinger, The (2002), Jarecki, E., 138, 169, 180, 185
Twelve Chairs (1962), Alea, T. G., 181
U.S.A. vs. Al-Arian (2007), Halvorsen, L., 157
Ultímos Días de las Víctimas (1982), Aristaraín, A., 91
Una de Dos (2004), Taube, A., 179
Under Rich Earth (2008), Rogge, M., 184
Unreal Dream: The Michael Morton Story, An (2013), Reinert, A., 158
Up To A Certain Point (1983), Alea, T. G., 181
Violin, The (2005), Vargas, F., 182–183
VIVISECT (2003), Gajicki, M., 149
Warming (2007), MacIsaac, 112
When the Mountains Tremble (1982), Yates, P., 185, 189, 190, 191, 192, 193
Whistleblower, The (2011), Kondracki, L., 149
Workers Leaving a Factory (1995), Farocki, H., 75
Yes Men, The (2003), Ollman, D., Price, S., Smith, C., 41, 137–140, 142, 144–147, 159, 197–199, 201, 208
Yes Men Fix the World, The (2009), Bichlbaum, A., Bonanno, M., Engfehr, K., 137–140, 142, 144–147, 159, 197–199, 201, 208
You Don't Like the Truth: 4 Days in Guantánamo (2010), Côté, L., Henriquez, P., 158
Z (1969), Costa-Gavras, 187

Index

Aaron, M., 33
Abrash, B., 193, 198, 199
Abreu Hernández, V. M., 182
absence/presence, 126, 129, 177–178
activism, 27–30, 40, 41, 42–47, 59–63, 92–94, 105, 119, 125, 149–150, 159–161, 164–165, 169, 179, 204, 213
Afghanistan, 31–33, 151–153, 199, 152–155
Aguilar, G., 88
Alberdi, J. B., 98
Alea, T. G., 169, 178, 180, 181
alterity, 39
Amado, A., 78, 88–90, 94, 116, 119
Amelio, G., 64, 90
Amnesty International, 15, 29, 59, 61
Andermann, J., 65, 78, 90, 93
Anderson, B., 26
Appiah, A. K., 27
archaeology of knowledge, 5
Arendt, H., 22, 26, 38, 143, 171
Argentina
  cinema, 73–101
  economic crisis, 71–72, 78, 79–83
  films in New York festival, 178–179
  history, 58–72
  military dictatorship, 29, 58–65, 74–78, 90–92
  politics, 58–72
Argentina Independent, The, 193
Argentine Central Bank, 96
audience, 11, 170–172, 208–214
Australia, 26
auto-organizations, 79–83, 85
Aziz, N., 206

Baldissone, R., 215
Barnard, T., 64, 81
Barnett, M., 34, 36
Bartolone, P., 97
Batlle, D., 94
Bauman, Z., 22, 23, 27
Bazin, A., 70, 211
Benetton, 95–98, 105–106
Benjamin, W., 8, 10
Betsalel, K., 141, 142
Bill of Rights (Britain), 18, 24
Bishop, C., 174
Boltanski, L., 37, 38, 42, 67, 68, 143, 171
Bonotto, A., 78, 90
Border Artists, 183
Bordwell, D., 140
Borland, E., 62, 72, 94, 103
Bosco, F., 61, 62
Bosnia, 149–150
Bouvard, M., 60, 61, 62, 217
Bowen, C., 190
Bradley, A. W., 17
Brenez, N., 65, 66, 67
Briley, R., 140
Brown, W., 36, 69, 80, 133, 137
Bruzzi, S., 78, 90, 188
Buenos Aires Ciudad, 73
Buenos Aires Festival Internacional de Cine Independiente (BAFICI), 73
Buchanan, J., 185
Burres, Bruni, 13, 206–207
Burucúa, C., 91
Butler, J., 19, 24, 42

Caine, B., 27
Çali, B., 25
Cameron, L., 42
Campbell, J., 32
Carranza, M. E., 71
Carri, A., 92–94
Carter, J., 60, 166, 189
Castaeda, J. G., 170
Chanan, M., 46, 67, 78, 89, 90, 141, 144, 172, 173, 175, 188
Charters of Freedom, 23
Cheung, R., 70

Chile, 165, 179–180
Chouliaraki, L., 5, 34, 37–40, 67, 144, 152, 171, 172, 193, 198
Cineaste Editors, 9
cinema
  national, 9, 30, 71, 73, 85, 87, 130, 144
  political, 9, 63–68, 78, 88–101, 119
cinephilia, 28, 145
Cmiel, K., 22
Cold War, 132, 134, 165
compassion fatigue, 37
CONADEP, 35, 91
Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (UN), 26
Copertari, G., 64, 65, 73, 85, 94
cosmopolitanism, 26, 28, 53, 88, 101, 108–111, 120–121, 216
Costa-Gavras, 8, 41, 62–63, 78, 91, 93, 119, 129, 137, 172, 178, 185, 186–189
Council of Canadians, The, 112
Crowder-Torraborrelli, T., 88
Cuba, 65, 169, 180–182, 199
Cyrus Tablets, 17
Czach, L., 30, 116

D'Alessandro, M., 61
Davidi, G., 151
Davis, T., 33, 143
de Barcelos Sotomaior, M., 78, 90
Debord, G., 35
Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen (France), 18, 21, 23, 130
desaparecidos, 63, 84, 93, 116, 117, 119, 164, 187, 217
Denzin, N. K., 14, 35
Derrida, J., 142, 174, 215–216
De Valck, M., 30, 44, 45, 116
Devoto, F., 98
Dewey, J., 135
Díaz López, M., 65
dictatorships, 75
Dinges, J., 165
discrimination, 106–108
Dissayanake, W., 67
documentary film, 7, 42–44, 78, 89, 90, 92–94, 134, 140–144, 172–176, 188, 193, 208
  'critique' and 'celebratory,' 81–83
Dolan, J., 174
Donnelly, J., 19
Douzinas, C., 18, 19, 20, 23, 25, 26, 142
Downing, L, 9, 32
Drake, P., 59
Drew, J., 176
Dworkin, M., 83

Eastern Europe, 148–150, 199
Economist, The, 99, 171
Edelstein, J., 92
Eijo, D., 59
Elena, A., 65
Elsaesser, T., 44, 70, 75, 116
emergent design, 14
Enlightenment, the, 4
environmental issues/activism, 29, 41, 88, 101, 104–5, 111–114, 121, 146, 160, 178, 183–186, 196–197, 200–201, 208, 213–214
equality, 20, 27
Equipo Nizkor, 59
Eseverri, M., 94
Esteban, F. O., 98
ethical responsibility, 9, 38–40, 143

factory takeovers (Argentina), 72, 75, 78–79, 83
Faiola, A., 99
Falicov, T., 64, 65, 79, 81, 83, 85, 94, 103
Farocki, H., 75
Farrell, N., 32
Felbab-Brown, V., 169, 185
Fernandez, A. M., 94
Fernández Bravo, A., 65
Festival Internacional de Cine de Derechos Humanos, (Buenos Aires), 3, 35–6, 41, 51–122
film act, 45, 67, 176
film and human rights, 203–216
film festivals, 9–10, 42–47, 70
  human rights, 10–11, 15–16, 28, 29, 30, 202, 203–216
  activist, 40, 41, 42–47, 71, 211–212
films, 7–9
Fischer, A., 42
Foco por Derechos Humanos, 59

Fontana, P., 89, 94
Foster, D. W., 64, 81, 88
Foucault, M., 4, 5, 35, 38, 77
Frann, M., 68
Fraser, N., 173
freedoms, 24
Friesen, E., 78
Fukuyama, F., 130
Fundación Pachamama, 112

Gabriel, T., 46, 47
Gaines, J., 39, 41, 129, 147, 193
gaze, the, 34–5
gender, 161–163
genocide, 22–23, 36, 158, 191–192
Getino, O., 7, 8, 42, 44, 45, 47, 63, 65, 66, 86, 152
Gibbons, M., 60, 61
Gibbs, J., 169, 182, 199
Gibney, M., 141, 142
Gilley, J., 31–33, 39
Gleyzer, R., 65
globalization, 79–83
González, N., 67
Goodall, A., 169, 182, 199
Gosselin, W., 189
Grace, W., 5
Grimshaw, A., 207, 208
Grugel, J., 170
Grupo de Base, 63, 65
Grupo Cine Liberación, 63, 65
Guatemala, 189–193
Guest, I., 72
Guisepi, R. A., 181
Guneratne, A. R., 67
Guttal, S., 80

Habermas, J., 216
Hacher, S., 97
Hall, J. L., 173
Hall, S., 152
Halpern, G., 98, 107, 218
Hamann, T. H., 69, 70
Harvey, D., 70, 133
Hayden, P., 17
Headley, J. M., 20, 22
Hedges, I., 181
Heidrich, P., 71
Helft, D., 97
Helsinki Accords, 36, 134
Helsinki Watch, 36, 125, 132, 134–138, 145, 168, 194
Hennebelle, G., 187
Hesford, W. S., 9, 37, 67, 68, 143, 144, 161
Hill, J., 89
Hollywood, 66, 81, 187
Holocaust, the, 22, 24
Hughes, H., 208, 212
human rights, 15–30, 79, 90, 114–116, 119–121, 166–168, 203–216
  civil and political, 25, 135, 158
  history, 17–23
  practice, 41
human rights film festivals, *see* film festivals, human rights
Human Rights Film Network (HRFN), 15
Human Rights Watch (HRW), 11, 12, 28–29, 125, 126, 134–138, 145, 157, 194–197
Human Rights Watch International Film Festival (New York), 3, 27, 36, 41, 125–202
humanitarian gaze, 7, 10, 34–42, 67, 87, 106, 117, 129, 136, 146, 154, 155, 163, 170–172, 183, 189, 193, 198, 199, 201, 204, 214–215, 219
humanitarianism, 34–36, 39, 41
humanity, 26, 28, 39, 45
Hunt, L., 19, 20, 24
Huntington, S. P., 132, 133, 199
Hyde, Marina, 32, 33

identity, 98–100, 110–111
identity politics, 133
Ife, J., 4, 25, 158, 215
imagined communities, 26
Imperfect Cinema, 27, 180
Indigenous peoples, 71, 95–98, 103–106, 117–118
Instituto Multimedia Derhumalc (IMD), 60, 76, 77, 82, 83, 86, 104, 105, 107, 110, 111, 120
International Monetary Fund, 71, 80, 96
internationalism, 6, 25–27
internationalization, 28
Iordanova, D., 28, 41, 42, 44, 45, 70, 71, 143

Ishay, M., 17, 25

Jay, M., 35, 142
Jetter, A., 60
Jewish population (of New York), 27, 128, 151, 171

Kamenetzky, C., 76–77
Kaplan, E. A., 35
Kapur, J., 69, 71, 80
Kaufman, Marina, 13, 129
Keenan, T., 37, 67
Kendrick, J., 187, 188
Kèvorkian, R., 23
Kickstarter, 140
Klein, N., 83, 118
Kriger, C., 91, 92

Labaké, J. G., 96, 97
Laber, J., 36, 134, 136, 145, 147, 149, 168, 195, 201, 210
land, 95–98, 103–106
Lanza, P., 89
Latin America, 127, 164–170, 177–194
Latinos, 128, 164, 171
Lattes, A., 98
Lauren, P. G., 24
legalisms, 17, 23–25
legal knowledges, 6, 7, 142
Lehrer, J., 207
Levin, B., 173, 173
Levin, J., 181
Lévinas, E., 33, 39, 143, 171
Lewis, A., 83
Lewis, R., 173–174, 175
Ley del Cine (Law of Cinema, Argentina), 94–95
Liga Argentina por los Derechos del Hombre (Argentine League for the Rights of Man), 58
Lincoln, Y. S., 14
Lischer, S. K., 34
local, the, 16, 27, 205
locatedness, 28, 30
"looking out—looking in" 6–7, 11–13, 35–36, 103, 117, 130
Luka, E., 94
Lusnich, A. L., 64, 85, 88, 89, 116, 118

McHoul, A., 5
McKee, Y., 42
McLagan, M., 16, 42, 171, 193, 198, 199
McLane, B. A., 175
McSherry, P. J., 165
Macdonald, L., 78
Madres de Plaza de Mayo, 29, 52, 54, 58, 59–63, 74, 76, 84, 93, 103, 119–120, 142, 164, 165, 168, 213, 217
Madrid, R. L., 170
Magna Carta, 17, 18
Martin, M. T., 65
Marzano, N., 65, 67, 86
Masud-Piloto, F. R., 182
Meckled-García, S., 25
Mercopress, 97
Mercosur Treaty, 99, 107
Mestman, M., 43, 44, 63, 66, 67, 79, 109, 217
methods, 13–14
Metz, C., 35
Meunier, J. P., 43
Mexico, 178, 182–183
Michalczyk, J. J., 91, 186
Middle East, 150–155, 199
Middleton, N., 34
migration migrants, 95, 98–100, 106–108
Mikula, M., 41
Minority Rights Group, 96
Mirodan, S., 97
modernity, 22, 25
Moeller, S. D., 37
Morales, E., 184–185
Movimiento Campesino Santiago del Estero/ Rural Movement SdE (MOCASE), 103–104
Mulvey, L., 35
Munck, G., 59
Museo de la Memoria y los Derechos Humanos, 165

Naficy, H., 45, 46
nation-state, 16, 26
National Security Archive (Argentina), 60, 167, 217
Nead, L., 142

neoliberalism, 68–72, 78–83, 87, 88, 95–98, 117, 137–138, 217
Nichols, B., 114, 140, 141, 175, 188, 197

O'Keefe, N., 34
Ong, J. C., 42
Operation Condor, 165–168
other, the, 103, 117, 143
Oubiña, D., 91

Page, J., 70, 71, 88, 93
Page, P., 63, 64, 65, 85, 88, 94
Palestine, 27, 150–152, 199
Parekh, B., 206
Peace One Day, 31
Pearson, R., 72
Perth, Australia, 3, 15, 31
Petras, J., 72
Piedras, P., 64, 78, 85, 88, 89, 90, 92–94, 118
power-knowledge, 4, 38
privatization, 78
programming, 10–11, 29, 35, 36, 73–78, 172–174, 211
Puenzo, L., 91

Ranciére, J., 174
Rangil, V., 88
Raszewski, E., 97
Resha, D., 173
revolutions
  American (US), 5, 17, 18, 130
  Cuban, 65
  French, 5, 17, 18, 21
Riggirozzi, P., 71, 72, 170
Rocha, C., 70, 71, 81, 87, 94
Rohter, L., 99
Rose, N., 70
Ruckert, A., 71, 78

Sachs, A., 80, 81
Said, E., 154
Santucho, Florencia, 53, 60, 84, 87, 88, 110, 117, 120, 209
Santucho, Julio, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 73, 90, 99, 104, 117, 137, 213
Saxton, L., 9, 32
Schertow, J. A., 105
Scott, M., 42
Sel, S., 13, 88
SERPAJ (Fundación Servicio de Paz y Justicia/Foundation for Peace and Justice), 59
Seu, I. B., 42
Shaw, D., 65
Shiman, D., 135
Shragge, E., 41
SICA (Sindicato de la Industria Cinematografica Argentina), 64, 87
Sitrin, M. A., 72
Slack, K. M., 165
Smaill, B., 141, 175, 193
Smink, V., 97
Sobchack, V., 43–44, 144, 204, 207, 208
Solanas, P., 7, 8, 41, 47, 54, 63, 65, 66, 72, 79, 80, 81, 86–87, 99, 115, 118, 128, 137, 169, 177, 178, 217
Sontag, S., 36–38, 67, 68, 168
spectatorship, 42–47, 67–8, 77, 211–214
Spivak, G. C., 28, 215
Stiegler, B., 142, 174
Stiglitz, J. E., 80
Stratton, J., 69, 80, 98, 133
Stringer, J., 30, 45
suffering, 34, 36–37, 40, 42, 45, 67, 146
Support Group for the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo Argentina, 61
Swartz, D. R., 133
Swimelar, S., 33, 142

Tambyah, S. K., 27
Tascón, S. M., 22, 31, 32, 39, 61, 63, 67, 143, 171, 172, 176, 187
Tavares, D., 86
Taylor, M., 71, 78, 96
Third Cinema, 8, 9, 27, 42–45, 46, 51, 54, 63–68, 85–86, 109, 118, 137, 152, 176, 177, 180, 208, 209, 210
truth, 7
Third World Newsreel (TWN), 175–176
Thompson, C. J., 27

Thompson, G., 70, 218
Thompson, K., 141
Thumim, N., 152
Torchin, L., 28, 41, 44
Tsutsui, K., 28
Tudor, D., 80
Tussie, D., 71

United for Human Rights (UHR), 17, 29
United Nations (UN), 5, 13, 96
United Nations Economic and Social Council (UNESC), 112
Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), 21–23, 29
universalism, 16, 17, 19–23, 27, 206, 214–216
universality, 6, 11, 27, 205
Urbez, L., 187
USA
  Bill of Rights, 18, 23, 24, 130
  cinema, 144–147
  Declaration of Independence, 18, 19, 23
  human rights issues in, 155–163, 196, 197
USSR, 36, 148–150

Vidal, H.
Vidal, J., 112

Wagner, K. B., 69, 71, 80
Waldman, D., 173, 174
Wander-Argentina, 73
Wayne, M., 67
White, J., 173, 174
Winston, B., 141, 175
Witness, 152
World Bank, 80
World Trade Organization, 71, 80, 138
World War II, 21, 24
Wotipka, C. M., 28
Wylde, C., 71

Yates, Pamela, 129, 158, 185–186, 189–193, 197–199
Youn, M., 83
Youssef Zayzafoon, L. B., 154
YouTube, 32
Yugoslavia, 148–150

Zapatista movement, 104
Zielinski, G., 30, 43, 70
Zimmer, C., 187
Zimerman, N., 53
Žižek, S., 30