

## Chapter 14

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### A Twenty-First-Century American Epiphany

In his travel journal, Ernesto “Che” Guevara jotted down a speech he had made at a birthday party given for him in 1952 at a leper colony deep in the Peruvian Amazon. Guevara thanked his hosts by telling them that after six months on the road, overcoming the many obstacles to travel between his home in Argentina and other American countries, “We believe, after this trip more strongly than before, that the division of America into baseless, illusory nationalities is completely fictitious. We are a single mixed-blood race that from Mexico down to the Magellan Straights presents remarkable ethnographic similarities. With this in mind and wishing to be free of even the slightest charge of provincialism, I raise a toast to Peru and to a United America.”<sup>1</sup>

As presented in the climactic scenes of Walter Salles’s film *The Motorcycle Diaries* (2004), Guevara’s toast transforms from a polite restatement of clichés into a symbol of a young man’s moral awakening. The film retells the story of Guevara’s eight-thousand-mile trek across the South American continent in 1951 and 1952 as a parable of a sensitive but somewhat callow youth coming into moral consciousness, who can say at the film’s end: “That aimless roaming through our enormous America has changed me more than I thought. I am not myself anymore. At least, I’m not the same inside.” Leaving the relative privilege of his family home, he confronted the misery surrounding the grandeur of the continent. In the process, he became an American. As the movie’s Guevara struggles to articulate the strong feelings his experiences have inspired, the simple words the screenwriter incorporated from Guevara’s posthumously published diaries transform into a call for intellectuals to find their vocation by dedicating their lives to improving the lives of their fellow citizens. Alberto Granado, Guevara’s traveling companion, presented in the film as a self-indulgent, roguish playboy, wipes away a tear. The message has been heard by another young intellectual who will straighten out and dedicate his skills as a pharmaceutical chemist toward improving the health of his people, understood at last as the working people of the entire continent. Immediately following the short

speech, the filmmakers dramatize the theme of a unity that transcends class, race, and national citizenship by having Guevara leap into the Amazon River and swim across to the opposite bank to the compound where the patients live separated from the doctors and nurses. He literally bridges the chasm dividing the professional staff of the hospital and the lepers with his own fragile body.<sup>2</sup> Guevara has become a man with a purpose prepared to assume his responsibilities as a leader of his people.

Many viewers of the film likely knew that a few years after the events dramatized in *The Motorcycle Diaries*, Guevara joined Fidel Castro's armed rebellion against the Batista dictatorship in Cuba. He became a leader of the new government, perhaps the single most visible symbol of the new revolutionary consciousness it claimed to promote. His specific charge was to develop a new industrial policy for Cuba. His policies were effective at first in boosting productivity, but then faltered. After the 1962 Cuban missile crisis, Guevara resigned his position and left Cuba to expand the revolution, fighting with a revolutionary movement in the Congo before going to Bolivia to lead an insurrection he hoped would spread from the Andes across the continent. In 1967 the Bolivian army captured and summarily executed him. In the aftermath of his martyrdom, Che's visual image became and remains the symbol without equal of the twentieth-century American revolution.

Others, perhaps the majority of the younger viewers who saw the film when it played in theaters, knew little of the history beyond what the film told them about Guevara. That story is one of an American youth coming to self-awareness through embrace of an ideal. What makes young Guevara a hero is his growing commitment to treat the people at the base of society with dignity, an outcome overlapping with but nonetheless distinct from a revolutionary commitment to tear down an economic system that requires privilege and inequality. Guevara's growth in the film is marked by a series of small acts of charity as he encounters representatives of his continent's poor: he gives his asthma medicine to an old woman dying from emphysema and too poor to buy what she needs to alleviate her suffering; he gives the U.S. dollars his girlfriend entrusted to him to buy her a bathing suit when he reached Miami to a mine worker and his wife, two communist activists in Chile who have fled death squads and need the money to continue their work organizing a workers movement; he convinces a young girl suffering from leprosy who has sunk into despondency to undergo the operation that might save her arm from amputation. None of these acts are found in either his diary of the journey or Granado's two published accounts. In those sources, there is no need for them to dramatize Guevara's growth because he is a committed communist from beginning to end. There is no leap of political consciousness. Granado described the trip across South America as "practical ratification

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of theoretical knowledge.”<sup>3</sup> The immediate impetus for the trip was Granado’s losing his job in a government biochemistry laboratory after he refused to become a member of the ruling Peronist Justicialist Party. Leaving the country was a way of avoiding further scrutiny into his activities, and traveling provided an opportunity to compare the situation in Argentina, with a sizable middle class and a population that was overwhelmingly white due to European immigration, to the poorer, less developed, more racially mixed countries of the Andes.

In Guevara’s diaries and Granado’s two books, the two men set off already convinced that, everywhere in the world, the capitalist system had created the class and racial hierarchies they would encounter. They saw the division between bosses and workers as the primary cause of the many problems facing the American nations. As a medical student, as an intellectual, Guevara had to choose whether he would serve the bosses or the workers. Social reality is like the two sides of a coin, Granado reports Guevara telling him during their trip. The wealth of a country is inseparable from the poverty of those who labor. Heads or tails, everything is one or the other. Each person must choose a side.<sup>4</sup> Even though the image reappears in the books on which the film was based, it was removed from the film, along with the political dogmas that divided everything in the modern world into a simple dichotomy: if not revolutionary, then reactionary.

The filmmakers curtailed the explicitly Marxist convictions that the young Guevara already had formed and in effect placed his ideas into an older, liberal conception of American unity that receded as racial and class divisions within America grew stronger. In Spanish-speaking America, these older liberal conceptions are often called *arielism*, after the title of the book by the Uruguayan essayist and philosopher José Enrique Rodó published in 1900, *Ariel, a la juventud de América* (“Ariel, to the Youth of America”), discussed in Chapter 1. Rodó galvanized his contemporaries with the idea of an inherent but hidden American unity based on a common Iberian heritage. The quest for union would be realized if every generation of young people turned their societies toward the ideals already embedded in the humanist tradition of their ancestral Latin culture. The division of the continent into nation-states had fostered a political culture in which self-interest and passion trumped principle. The challenge was to establish stable civil societies organized around the exchange of ideas and political structures that adhered to and respected the rule of law. Individual growth, not commercial development, was the core of modernity, Rodó argued, but the egoism that had flourished during the revolutions and the first century of American independence had to give way to the more difficult task of institution building.

*Ariel* became a classic of American literature, read in schools everywhere throughout Spanish-speaking America. Certainly both Guevara and Granado

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had read him and probably dismissed him, as most mid-twentieth-century Marxists did, as an old-fashioned liberal unable to see the deep inequalities at the heart of American society. Nonetheless, Guevara's toast to his hosts in the leper colony, as he reported it in his travel diary, is drawn from the Rodonian repertoire. The liberal faith in social progress and individual growth that Rodó propagated served to invisibilize Guevara's far harsher vision of a world that required heroes to give up their lives to the movement for liberation.

In 1956, as he prepared to join Castro's revolution in Cuba, Guevara wrote his mother that she must never expect moderation from him or even humility. "Every great work requires," he told her, "passion and audacity in large doses."<sup>5</sup> To act was already to win, he insisted, even if to act meant death. This was a radical humanism that Guevara summed up at the end of the diary of his first journey across America with the words of a humble, anonymous working man he met in Caracas, Venezuela: "The future belongs to the people. Little by little or all in one blow they will conquer power here and in every part of the world. What will be bad is that the people will have to become civilized, and this is not possible to do before taking power, only after. The people will become civilized only through learning the costs of their mistakes, which will be very serious." Everyone alive in today's corrupt world deserves to die for their very being has been infected with corruption. Indeed they must die before a future generation of new men and women can emerge endowed with a new psychology that assumes living in utopia is their natural right. The revolution will, and it must, consume everyone, both those who resist and those who join it. In the end, a new world arises where idea, action, and result are in harmony. Guevara concluded his own account of his trip by reconfirming that since humanity is divided "just into two opposing groups, I will be with the people." He saw himself falling gun in hand "sacrificed to the authentic revolution, origin of all our purposes."<sup>6</sup>

The makers of *The Motorcycle Diaries* structured their narrative around a fictional epiphany that recuperated Guevara for the post-Cold War world by eliminating the radical, existential politics that were at the core of his personal motivations and to the violent conflicts that gripped Latin America from 1948 to 1989. The film shifts Guevara to the liberal humanist tradition that Rodó epitomized—a tradition that regained pertinence as the organization of civil society and rule of law grew in importance as practical alternatives to revolutionary action. Additionally, the understanding of social difference shifted from a hard-edged Marxist understanding of class and race as products of an economic structure to a more moral foundation. One of the key images of *The Motorcycle Diaries* occurs as Ernesto and Alberto travel down the Amazon to the leper colony on a river cruiser. The spacious and comfortable cruiser, where foreigners

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and middle-class professionals like Alberto and Ernesto find many diversions, tows a crammed little vessel with a makeshift roof where the poor have been segregated. They are completely apart, completely helpless were a problem to develop. “So much injustice,” Ernesto says as he studies the towline separating him, a young man of good education and a respectable family, from the common masses. The film emphasizes that Ernesto and Alberto were broke, but their backgrounds gave them a presumption to security and comfort that most of their fellow Americans were forbidden to enjoy.

W. E. B. Du Bois stated at the beginning of the twentieth century that the color line defined the modern world, a position that Marxists for much of the century found an irritant to their representation of the world as structured by class and economic power. We should be clear that the division of the world Du Bois described was not simply a question of difference, whether cultural or biological, nor was it simply a question of hierarchy and stratification. The question facing the world in the form of the color line was one of a system based on active separation of people. The color line meant a forcible division of the world into the *sano* and the *enfermo*, to use Ernesto’s language in the leper colony as he responded to what struck him as arbitrary and demeaning treatment of the patients the doctors were in theory there to serve. The *well* and the *ill*, which is another way of saying the *pure* and the *impure*, or in the peculiar twist that contemporary U.S. politics has provided, the *legal* and the *illegal*.<sup>7</sup>

As a result, even if the *Motorcycle Diaries* liberalized Che by refocusing the political message from revolutionary challenges to an economic system to the moral dilemmas of a society ideologically dedicated to personal growth, there nonetheless remains in the film’s presentation of social difference glimmers of who he already was. In a scene adapted from Granado’s travel diary, the filmmakers have Alberto announcing his fantastical plans to dedicate himself to an American revolution based on interracial sex that would create a united mestizo American people through the power of love and desire. Ernesto dismisses the idea curtly, “A revolution with no guns? No way.”<sup>8</sup>

That revolutionary change requires violence was a conviction that Granado insisted Guevara already had as a middle-school student. In 1943 Granado asked Guevara to organize a student strike at his school to demand the release of Granado and other political prisoners. “You’re going out to march without guns so that they can beat us with clubs?” the fifteen-year-old Guevara asked his friend before rejecting the idea. “That’s crazy. I’m not going without a revolver.”<sup>9</sup> The necessity for violence to achieve liberation hovers around the film as a kind of excess that will not go away despite all the good feelings that the filmmakers worked hard to produce. The question of violence must be put in the shadows, a puzzling remainder to the problem of how to achieve both jus-

tice and unity in the Americas. Over the closing credits, a voice-over narrator gives due homage to the aspiration for liberation that the *image* of Che Guevara had come to symbolize around the world, an image that said that the division and separation of the world into the privileged and the despised be ended once and for all. The voice-over then asks, “Was our vision too narrow, too partial, too rushed? Were our conclusions too rigid? Maybe.” The answer implied is yes, and indeed one of Guevara’s more recent biographers has noted that despite Che’s romantic, idealistic image, to plunge into his life and environment is to return to the failed and static political mind-set of the post-World War II decades where contradictions between communist theory and actual practice and everyday life were explained away as “petty-bourgeois deviations.”<sup>10</sup>

Even so the ideal was neither false nor disingenuous. The trap was in being seduced into believing that sheer willpower could achieve the goal of social transformation. Whoever questioned either goals or methods became a demoralizing element “objectively” serving foreign capital and domestic privilege. Romantic identification with the impoverished seemed to require an insistent dismissal of intellectuals as a perpetual threat to revolutionary action. Granado recalls that while traveling through Peru they witnessed a small group of fellow passengers clear off a blocked road in short order. Ernesto remarked that the episode was a demonstration that the people can easily work miracles, but they are usually held back by the hesitations of intellectuals: “It’s true that there is strength in unity, but it must be the strength of people who work. If anyone had said that they weren’t going to up a pick and shovel, the unity would have broken. This is surely what would have happened if instead of a busload of truck drivers, peasants, and some loose canons like us, there had appeared a couple of professionals like we knew back home.”<sup>11</sup>

But are not voluntarism and a belief in the power of the will to break through long-standing barriers inherent features of the liberal vision? Is not the hero the purest expression of individuality uncompromised by collective demands? Is not the vocation of the hero to illuminate the consciousness of others so that they see the world in new, previously unimaginable ways and suddenly see new ways of acting within it? The combination of willpower, vision, and discipline was at the core of José Enrique Rodó’s vision of Americans slowly uniting into a political union after they had built a whole set of shared cultural institutions that would allow for regular exchange of ideas and perspectives.

Developing America into a single community that could discuss matters of mind and beauty required transnational institutions, particularly markets for books and periodicals, that did not yet exist in 1900 when Rodó’s *Ariel* was published, nor in 1915 when the Second Pan-American Scientific Congress convened in Washington, D.C. Cooperation between governments, universities,

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and other not-for-profit public institutions over the following decades facilitated more regular interchange between intellectuals and artists from different countries. In the 1930s in particular, mass media markets began to appear across the western hemisphere, and whether the product was books, magazines, motion pictures, radio programs, or phonograph records, exchange between producers in different countries helped establish a cultural market where profits were reliable only if cultural goods crossed national boundaries.

Pan-Americanism contributed to each nation separating from Europe as the indispensable cultural homeland, a belief that for centuries had rendered the Americas as inherently savage or barbarian, a series of “wild wests” where fortunes could be made but no stable, civilized order could take root. Imaginary connection to other nations in the western hemisphere facilitated new forces within each country working to develop robust national cultures to proceed without simultaneously falling into isolation. In principle, pan-Americanism celebrated symmetric difference as the foundation for a utopian vision of the world. In practice, it hardened asymmetric differences and shaped the process by which media markets developed to favor particular results, those most consistent with U.S. practices. These could be imagined by its proponents, who could be Mexican or Brazilian as well as from the United States, as the time-tested, most efficient way of distributing national culture. Critics saw the direct hand of cultural imperialism. In general, cultural producers in most countries needed international sales to cover basic production costs. Given a large national market and citizens with relatively large levels of disposable income, U.S. firms entered international cultural markets with basic costs already covered. Any income they earned in other countries was additional profit, which gave U.S. firms considerable flexibility in the arrangements they could make with local distributors of their work. Over time, the structures of cultural markets converged, but in the process asymmetries provided opportunities for the unscrupulous and an orientation that reinforced stereotypes on all sides rather than insight and learning. Jürgen Habermas, replying to critics of his arguments about the democratic potential of the public sphere, has noted that “it’s not the notion that makes the difficulties; it’s the implementation.”<sup>12</sup> The asymmetrical relationships within the Pan American Union were never hidden. Always in plain sight, they demanded response, and some responses involved acting to correct evident problems, which had been Elihu Root’s starting point for how to achieve effective and lasting social transformation. Pan-Americanism promoted the development of regional markets in publishing, film, phonograph records, and radio, but an essential feature of a media market sharing both content and methods across borders has been national segmentation. A transnational market appeared to consumers to be national in nature, because each



market privileged national ways of looking as an essential element in the packaging of similar content.

The irony was that the construction of a continental cultural market linking the different nations of the Americas was achieved first by Hollywood, followed by mass media industries largely based on a North American model, even in those cases where national capital took the lead. Given their divisions and the orientation of their economies toward export to the more industrially developed North, the countries of Latin America did not initially have the resources to do it themselves. Spanish firms, though long organized to reach the book market across the continent, were too small to expand beyond the role they had secured of providing books and journals for educated élites. Their model of a global market was one that need reach only a tiny fraction of the population, a group that took its privileges for granted and its cultural distinction very seriously. Enterprises based in the United States had the capital and the organizational ability to produce and distribute cultural products on a truly hemispheric *and* mass basis. Often, U.S. companies marketed the same products they made for domestic distribution. With increasing frequency, U.S. firms invested in developing a continental market that applied the same principles and procedures used at home for products developed specifically for Spanish-speaking or Portuguese-speaking America relying on local talent to provide the content. The cultural market that emerged through the twentieth century supported a Latin American identity but one that has been difficult to separate from Anglo American cultural hegemony.<sup>13</sup>

In the late 1960s, U.S. investment in Latin American media markets declined, and in the larger countries, local entrepreneurs took over as the primary producers of programming. *Telenovelas* developed as the signature genre for television programming produced in Latin America, quickly dominating prime-time hours. The system shaping the broadcast industry and the production of telenovelas was North American in its origins, developing from adaptation of the radio soap opera genre to Latin American social situations. In the process, dramatic conventions incorporated many elements from Iberian and Latin American narrative traditions. Given lower advertising rates, production budgets initially were considerably smaller than those of equivalent North American productions. The genre could be inexpensive but still attractive to viewers because shows spoke to their own life situations and values in a manner that mirrored their own limited personal resources. Even with costs considerably below those found in U.S. television production, program sales had to be continental given the anemic state of national television markets in a period when television programming could be very popular but television sets were not a product most households could afford. Television producers like book publishers before them had to appeal to regional

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identity instead of national loyalties if they were to survive. Class differences and social inequalities proved a popular topic for many telenovelas, as did the continuing relevance of Catholic mores in emerging consumer societies. Questions that had less relevance in North America but were vital across Latin America shaped the emergence of national media companies that grew in importance as consumer markets grew.

By the 1980s, Globo in Brazil and Televisa in Mexico were among the five largest media companies in the world. Both began investing in North American and European media companies, in some cases acquiring control. In the 1980s, export of Latin American television programs outside Latin America became increasingly important. Production budgets increased, and editorial controls reshaped stories and other production elements to appeal more to international viewers. In the United States, programs generally played only on Spanish-language television, which was a rapidly growing market. Telenovelas were particularly popular in southern Europe, where cultural roots and social-political questions were similar. In the 1990s, Latin American programming was popular in postcommunist eastern Europe. Telenovelas found markets in northern Europe, Britain, and Australia as well. For a brief period, the share of U.S. television programs in major markets around the world declined. By the beginning of the twenty-first century, U.S. series, generally developed for cable networks like HBO or Showtime, resecured North American dominance of international television markets. *The Sopranos*, *Mad Men*, or *Breaking Bad* broke the older U.S. broadcasting model of an open-ended series by developing a more novelistic form with an ongoing story across multiple episodes. The Latin American share of international television markets declined, but producers responded to the U.S. development with comparable series, many coproduced with U.S. cable networks and presented in the United States. *Epitafios* (2004, 2009), produced in Argentina with HBO participation, featured an emotionally disturbed rogue cop in Buenos Aires working with a psychiatrist to track down serial killers. *City of Men* (2002–2005, Globo TV, released in the United States on the Sundance Channel and then on DVD) was derived from Paulo Lins's novel *City of God* and the internationally successful film adaptation that Fernando Meirelles had made. Starring two young boys who had secondary roles in the film, the television series explored life in Rio's favelas through the lives of two high school students trying to get by without joining one of the gangs. The show and its actors won Emmy Awards in the United States, a triumph that was made a central event in the series' finale. In 2009, Meirelles created a second successful television series for Globo TV, *Som e Fúria* ("Sound and Fury"). The second series had equally good actors, scripts, and production values, but has not yet been released in United States on cable or DVD. Set in a struggling theater company in São Paulo, the series focused on the

lives of middle-class Brazilian professionals. Their problems would be recognizable to North Americans, but middle-class Brazilians have been fated to remain invisible in the North except as victims in crime shows. Since 2000, U.S. cable networks have been very successful in Latin America, recapturing ground lost by U.S. television programming the last four decades of the twentieth century. To some degree, resurgence may reflect significantly improved quality, but it could as likely have been a by-product of U.S. dominance of digital technology in all formats and media. The extent of U.S. control over media programming in Latin America and other parts of the world remains a major topic for debate among communications industry scholars, as does the question of whether Brazilian and Mexican television producers have changed the programs they make to reflect global rather than national culture.<sup>14</sup>

One point needs to be stressed: television viewers in Latin America watch programs produced in a range of countries, including news programming. U.S. television on the other hand remains restricted to nationally produced shows plus a few British programs that typically appear on public television. The U.S. public has only occasional exposure to information and ideas that are commonplace in Europe, Latin America, or Asia. The integration of television and computer services will make it feasible for more people to access much more than was possible at the beginning of the twenty-first century. The question remains, though, that Elihu Root posed a century ago: can a country be a responsible global leader if its citizens know nothing about other places, and have no interest in hearing what people in other countries find important and compelling? That the question remains as pertinent a century after Root posed it would not have surprised him, given how many generations he believed significant changes need to overcome deeply entrenched habits—and organized resistance.

What then is the nationality of *The Motorcycle Diaries*? The director Walter Salles is Brazilian, and the screenwriter José Rivera a U.S. playwright from New York, the son of a Puerto Rican family that had migrated to the mainland. The idea for the film originated with Robert Redford, a Hollywood movie star turned producer with a well-known track record of promoting independent films and a reputation as a social progressive. He assembled the funding, hired the writer and director, and remained engaged in the shaping of the film throughout its production. Gaël García Bernal, a young Mexican movie actor with international star appeal, played the role of Ernesto Guevara. *The Motorcycle Diaries* is a Hollywood film produced by a U.S. company and distributed by Universal Pictures. It is safe to say that it is an “American” film, in more than one sense of that contentious word.

As a collaborative artistic statement, it is an American film in the sense that Americans from different nation-states came together to express the sentiment

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of “nuestra América,” the America that is not the United States (or Canada). The film allowed several Latin American intellectuals to speak about the relationship of intellectuals to the working poor of their countries. But Redford’s role was not incidental, nor was that of Universal Pictures. As a commercial product, it is a U.S. film, and its form and content rely on many tried and true Hollywood conventions that audiences around the world have demonstrated they like. *The Motorcycle Diaries* was designed to be compelling to American audiences, whether they speak English, Spanish, or Portuguese. The film, whatever else it may be, is a stepping-stone in the synthesis of the Americas, not excluding the United States, into a shared cultural market that involves more than blockbusters. Walter Salles and José Rivera working with other producers continued their collaboration with a film adaptation of Jack Kerouac’s *On the Road* (2012), tackling a very different icon of post-World War II American rebellion against the status quo.

Robert Redford’s Sundance Institute, critical for developing a market niche for U.S. “independent” films that did not fit into the Hollywood big-budget machine, has made a priority of developing “independent” film production in other American countries. It is one of several U.S.-based organizations that have become involved in helping develop an “alternative” Latin American cinema and then providing a distribution outlet within the United States that has increasingly shifted from theatrical release to availability on cable and digital streaming services like Netflix, Amazon, or Hulu. Latin American films of a broad variety of types have become increasingly available to U.S. consumers in the digital and DVD markets. No film from a Latin American filmmaker, however, has matched the phenomenal success of Ang Lee’s Chinese-language U.S. film *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*. Lee adamantly refused to release his film, a philosophically inflected martial arts spectacle set in imperial China, with an English-dubbed track. The film still found the mass audience he was confident was there for the genre. Despite Redford’s stature in the film business, *The Motorcycle Diaries* played exclusively in the art house circuit.

At the same time, Hollywood began recruiting the best talent developing in the Latin American film and television industries. Alfonso Cuarón, the director of *Y tu Mamá también*, one of the most commercially successful films ever made in Mexico, went on to make one of the Harry Potter films, an adaptation of P. D. James’s novel *Children of Men*, and *Gravity*, a science fiction film. The creative team behind *Amores perros*, another commercial success from Mexico, then made *24 Grams*, an English-language film set in the United States using Hollywood stars, followed by *Babel*, weaving together actors from and situations in the United States, Mexico, Morocco, and Japan to construct a parable of “globalization” and its linking of the personal and local crises of people from

different parts of the world. Alejandro González Iñárritu, the director, has since made *Biutiful*, a Spanish coproduction starring Javier Bardem as a petty crook dying of cancer in Barcelona; *Birdman*, a U.S. coproduction set in New York City filmed entirely in English with a cast of prominent U.S. actors led by Michael Keaton in the title role; and *The Revenant*, another English-language film starring Leonardo DiCaprio set in the Rocky Mountains during the 1820s with a visceral story conveying the physical and psychological terror inherent to creating a “new world.” The ability of Iñárritu and his largely Spanish-speaking creative team to move between countries and languages, cobbling together financing from a variety of sources, points to an embryonic “global culture” that escapes national situations to explore different aspects of the “human condition” (meaning reality as understood by a global middle class?) without ever letting go of the specifics of being criminals in Spain; theater performers in Manhattan; or Yankees, French Canadians, and Native peoples fighting over control of the fur trade. In Spanish-speaking Latin America, Spanish television has played a central role in building a regional film industry, expanding the opportunities to work for actors, writers, and directors, while encouraging them to think of their films and television programs as set in particular countries but being produced for international audiences who take market economies and democratically elected governments as signs of normal societies. Some Brazilian filmmakers like Walter Salles and Fernando Meirelles work in the United States and Europe, and then are able to leverage their more commercially oriented projects to find funding for smaller budgeted films. In 2008, Meirelles directed the film *Blindness*, from a novel by the Portuguese Nobel Prize winner José Saramago. The film was shot in English, with an international cast including Gaël García Bernal, Julianne Moore, Mark Ruffalo, Danny Glover, Alice Braga, and Yoshino Kimura. The film, an allegorical drama of society collapsing into Hobbesian chaos as an epidemic sweeps the world leaving the survivors blind, was unlikely ever to be a major theatrical success. That it could be made reflects the emergence of a group of creative people emerging around the world whose careers are as much transnational as rooted in the cultural industries of their native countries. Their ability to work rests on being able to think about their audiences as global and diverse, united by education and an ability to participate relatively freely in consumer society. At the end of 2016, Gaël García Bernal and Chilean film director Pablo Larraín responded to the election of Donald Trump as president of the United States with a determination to use their filmmaking skills to speak to audiences in the United States and around the world about divisive issues that have made the future seem so unpredictable. As Latin Americans from countries with violent political histories, they asserted that their films can help the public understand what is at stake in the

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temptation to seek radical solutions to difficult problems.<sup>15</sup> Given that the work García Bernal and Larraín have done directly for U.S. films and television programs, the U.S. public may well turn to them for perspectives that only a foreign observer can provide.

Which returns us to the question of why contemporary liberals who have done so well in the commercial mass media might reserve a place for Ernesto Guevara in their pantheon of heroes. Liberalism need not be synonymous with the dominance of the market, which can be understood as a mechanism that serves human purposes, but only one mechanism of many that we need. *The Motorcycle Diaries* might then be seen as part of an effort to recover liberalism as a moral philosophy fostering individual growth, freedom of choice, and responsible self-government of formal equals, whose differences may, but need not, result in actual inequalities. Despite two hundred years of polemics from opponents left and right, liberalism remains a living ideology, contradictory, multiple, diverse, hybrid. Its tradition includes a long debate on the relation of legal rights, private property, and moral development. It is a debate that Redford as a well-known progressive entered with a vengeance. The saga of young Ernesto Guevara helped convey to early twenty-first-century audiences that individual moral stance and a sense of responsibility to others in the community might well be the most important and defining characteristics of liberal philosophy. The continuity between the heroes of the revolutionary wars and the present is maintained, for if the film's somewhat awkward coda acknowledges the limitations of the *actual* Guevara's politics, it recuperates the ideals as fundamental for a developing global civilization, which may well have a robust market-based economy but need not be defined or governed solely by market mechanisms.