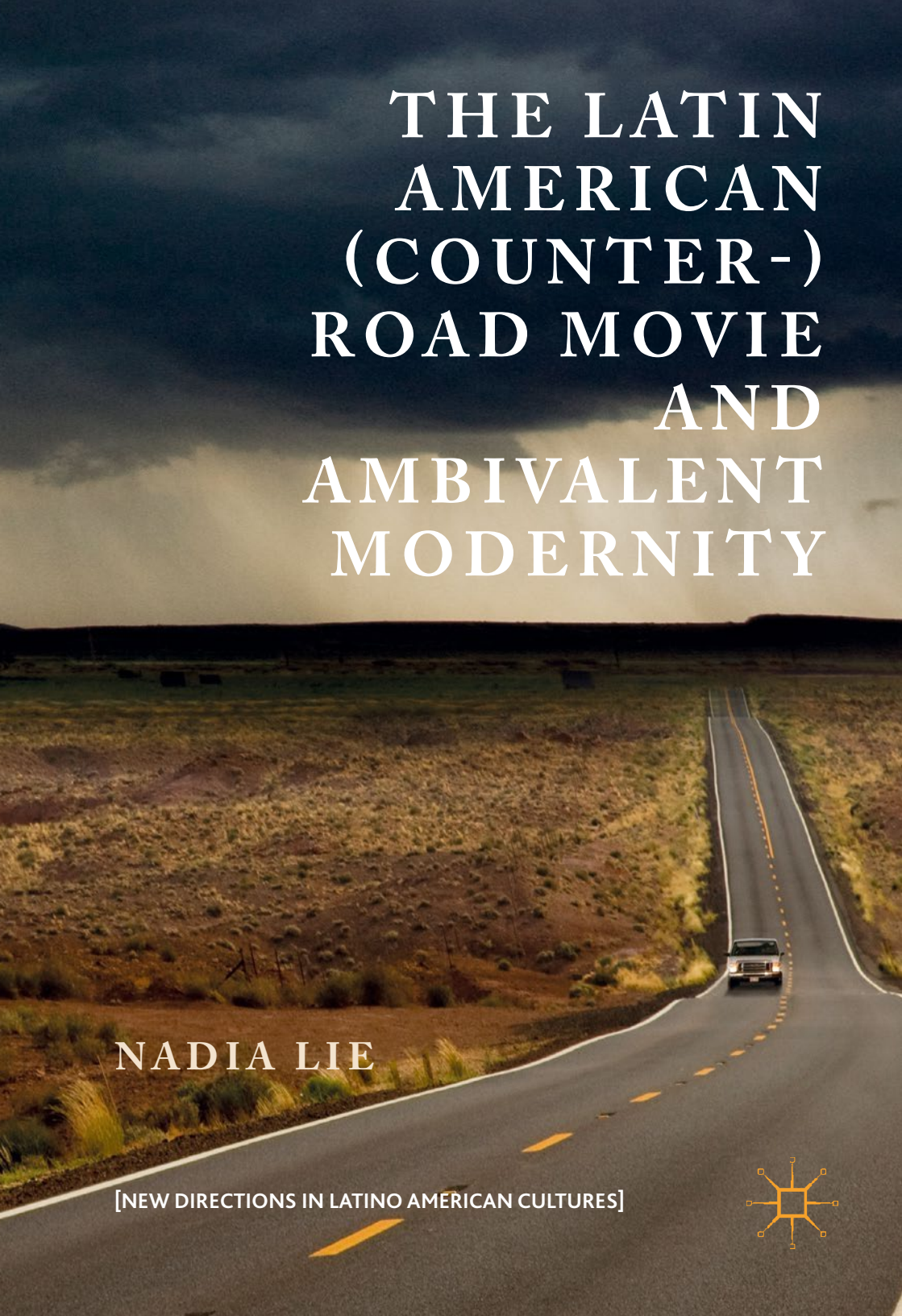
THE LATIN AMERICAN (COUNTER-) ROAD MOVIE AND AMBIVALENT MODERNITY



NADIA LIE

[NEW DIRECTIONS IN LATINO AMERICAN CULTURES]

New Directions in Latino American Cultures

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The Latin American (Counter-) Road Movie and Ambivalent Modernity

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In memory of my parents, who wanted me to drive

Acknowledgments

In many ways, writing a book is like embarking on a journey. You meet new people along the road, while remaining in touch with old friends. You travel with maps, yet often end up somewhere you didn't expect. Sometimes, you get lost or stuck, and you need the support of friends and families to get back on the road. Having arrived at the end of this journey, I want to express my sincere thanks to all those who accompanied me in one way or another.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

In the past two decades, Latin American cinema has witnessed a boom in road movies. Whereas hardly any films in that genre are mentioned through the 1990s in the classic surveys of the continent's cinema,[1] this book includes a filmography of nearly 160 road movies, no fewer than 139 of which have appeared since 1990. Without a doubt, the breakthrough of the Latin American road movie came with the international success of two films in that vein: *Y tu mamá también* (2001), by Mexican film director Alfonso Cuarón, and *Diarios de motocicleta* (2004), by Brazilian filmmaker Walter Salles. Salles even went on to earn the honor of directing the world's first film version of Jack Kerouac's *On the Road* (1957), often considered to be the seminal novel of the genre. These two films, however, are only the tip of the iceberg. From the 1990s onwards, well-known Latin American directors such as Tomás Gutiérrez Alea (*Guantanamera,* 1995, Cuba), Fernando Solanas (*El viaje*, 1992, Argentina), and Arturo Ripstein (*Profundo carmesí*, 1996, Mexico) turned to the genre, and several of today's most prominent filmmakers have also engaged in it: Pablo Trapero (*Familia rodante,* 2004, Argentina), Carlos Sorín (*Historias mínimas*, 2002, Argentina), and Carlos Reygadas (*Japón*, 2002, Mexico)–to name but a few. That being said, the bulk of contemporary road movies have been made by young directors, from all parts of Latin America, for whom the road movie has the added attraction of low production costs (Eyerman and Löfgren 1995, 67). Road movies then also direct us to the heart of what is currently being made in Latin America by a new, promising generation of filmmakers.

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This book presents the first cross-national monographic survey of the genre as it is practiced in Latin America.[2] It centers on road movies from the 1990s and later, for the simple reason that the genre only started to flourish then, but when appropriate, examples of older road movies are included and analyzed. Films from different national cinemas are brought together in each chapter to bring to the fore the transnational dimension of the issues this genre addresses. While proposing a systematic mapping of the diverse landscape of the Latin American road movie, my book also transcends a merely encyclopedic account of the genre. It does this in two ways. First, the book proposes a definition of the genre that takes into account the specificity of the Latin American case, and uses it throughout to grant consistency to the readings. A variant of the road movie, which is remarkably present in the body of works analyzed here, has been identified and a new term has been coined for it: the "counter–road movie." Second, the study pays specific attention to the genre's relationship with the issue of modernity and examines how the road movie's alleged ambivalence in this respect is to be conceived from a Latin American perspective.

The Rebirth of Latin American Cinema

The success of the contemporary road movie cannot be detached from recent evolutions in Latin American cinema. While the 1960s witnessed the breakthrough of a new generation of Latin American writers, known as "the boom,"[3] the 1990s inaugurated a period in which Latin American cinema would become a regular presence in European and US movie houses and festivals. True, there had been an earlier moment of internationalization in the late 1960s, when filmmakers from several countries in Latin America became known in Europe and the United States through a new kind of "revolutionary" cinema, which was designed and promoted under different labels, the best known of which is "New Latin American Cinema." In theoretical works and manifestos, filmmakers Glauber Rocha (Brazil), Fernando Solanas and Octavio Getino (Argentina), Jorge Sanjinés (Bolivia), Julio García Espinoza and Tomás Gutiérrez Alea (Cuba), and Miguel Littin (Chile) defined a new aesthetics for a "Third World Cinema" that would produce "an active cinema for an active spectator" (Martin 1997, 17). But by the 1970s and 1980s, the hopes for real change on the continent that had motivated this movement had been dashed. First there were the military dictatorships (e.g., Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay), which implied censorship and exile; then, there was the economic crisis that hit Latin America in

the 1980s, introducing a period of sharp cuts in state subsidies to national film industries. The dramatic descent in productivity this caused in some of the continent's most established film industries has been documented in several books.[4] What is important, in this context, is that this economic downfall brought with it a change in the production and distribution mechanisms for Latin American cinema that would definitively alter the conditions for filmmaking on the continent. Even if countries such as Argentina and Brazil voted in new film laws starting in the 1990s to stem the dramatic decline in production, filmmakers had learned to look for support beyond their country's borders and even the continent's.

John King (2000, 265) explains that "co-production became the dominant viable route for filmmakers from the late eighties onwards," as demonstrated by the international success of such films as *Old Gringo* (Luis Puenzo 1989) and *Fresa y chocolate* (Tomás Gutiérrez Alea and Juan Carlos Tabío 1993). Starting in the mid-1990s, a series of alternative foundations set up to support filmmakers from "emergent economies" increased international financing opportunities, especially for young filmmakers (Shaw 2007, 2). The most important institutions in this respect are the Sundance Institute (US, 1985), the Hubert Bals Foundation (the Netherlands, 1989), and the Ibermedia program (Spain, 1997). These foreign foundations were less commercial-minded than the parties involved in international co-productions and gave out grants and loans to talented young filmmakers without making demands regarding cast and scripts. The new freedom this gave filmmakers was heightened by the concurrent appearance of more independent production companies, such as El Deseo, El Anhelo, and the Tequila Gang. Most of the road movies discussed in this book received funding from one of the aforementioned foundations, which makes it plausible to attribute part of the road movie's current success to its own "traveling" conditions in terms of financing and production. Of course, there have also been road movies made without that support, either because they used the low-budget facilities of digital filmmaking (e.g., Alberto Fuguet's *Música campesina*, 2011) or because they relied exclusively on national subsidies (e.g., Patricia Riggen's *La Misma Luna*, 2007), which eventually reappeared after a period of extreme austerity. These films are less easily available on DVD, but they also travel thanks to the new opportunities afforded by the internet.

An important difference between the cinema currently being made and the 1960s movement of "New Latin American Cinema" consists in the positioning towards Hollywood. The ideological program of the

revolutionary filmmakers of the 1960s and 1970s had implied a critical distance with respect to US and European cinema in an effort to carve out "a third way." Contemporary film directors, on the contrary, create films that rely on a more dynamic and flexible concept of international models and styles. Specialists on "world cinema" have pointed to this phenomenon and observed an evolution in scholarship towards a new, "decentered" way of conceiving relationships between different cinemas:

> Current scholarship on the transnational scale of cinematic circulation now takes for granted a geopolitical decentering of the discipline. Areas once considered peripheral (that is, less developed countries, the so-called Third World) are now seen as integral to the historical development of cinema. The assumption that the export of European and US cinema to the rest of the world, from the silent period onward, inspired only derivative image cultures has been replaced by a dynamic model of cinematic exchange, where filmmakers around the world are known to have been in dialogue with one another's work, and other cultural and political exchanges to form the dynamic context of these dialogues. (Newman 2010, 4)

This does not mean that power relationships have disappeared from the cinematic map. US films in movie houses across Europe still largely outnumber ones by Latin American directors, or even European ones. But the clear-cut distinctions between what counts as a US film and what does not have become blurred. Thus, Harry Potter's adventures in *The Prisoner of Azkaban* (2004, distributed by Warner Brothers) were filmed by Mexican director Adolfo Cuarón, and two of his compatriots–Alejandro González Iñárritu and Emmanuel Lubezki—figure in the 2016 list of Academy Award winners (both for *The Revenant*, 2015), and not in the special category of "foreign films."

This new, transnational dynamic explains why genres hitherto identified with US cinema have started to travel outside that geo-cultural domain. The road movie is one of them, but even the Western—a genre so strongly tied to the US landscape—has shown an ability to move into foreign territories (Higgins et al. 2015). What's more, the overall view of what a genre is has changed. Once a basically scholarly notion used to describe the similarities between different works of art, the concept of "genre" now appears as a key player in the transnational circulation of films. Thus, Luisela Alvaray notes: "Filmmakers in Latin America are considering elements of genres–or a combination thereof–as shortcuts to tell autochthonous stories. And

producers are using crossover genres to appeal to wider audiences" (Alvaray 2013, 69). And Joanna Page contends, more generally:

> Reappropriations of genres arising originally at different points in time and space provide particularly rich pickings for a kind of cultural archaeology that seeks to mine the complex relationships between text and context. The mediations between the local and the global at the aesthetic level in these films (as well as in their narrative content) produce multiple readings: intersecting, superimposed, and contradictory. (2009, 86)

Focusing on transnationality in Mexican, Argentine, and Brazilian cinema, Paul Julian Smith (2012) proposes a distinction between "prestige blockbusters," "genre films," and "festival films."[5] The first category refers to the fact that previously established distinctions between "commercial cinema" and "auteurist cinema" have become blurred since non-US directors, in particular, need to profile themselves as "auteurs" to get access to the global market. *The Revenant*, alluded to above, is a clear example of this: the Academy Award-winning movie derives part of its prestige from its stars (Leonardo Di Caprio and Tom Hardy), but much of it also from the technical virtuosity displayed by the Mexican Emmanuel Lubezki as director of photography. Another example is *El secreto de sus ojos* (Juan José Campanella, 2009), which combines the use of Argentine celebrities (in particular, Ricardo Darín) with the auteurist mark of the long take (see the football stadium sequence). In general, though, the Latin American directors of road movies lack the means and facilities to aim for a "blockbuster," which is why nearly all of the films discussed in this book (with the exception perhaps of *Diarios de motocicleta*) fall into the other two categories.

In the case of genre movies, a reliance on well-known formats such as the thriller, the zombie movie, or—indeed—the road movie makes local stories more recognizable for international audiences, even if new contexts imply that the genres need to be adapted. In this respect, the road movie has been presented as a "traveling genre" (Berger 2016, 172) that adapts particularly well to new, intercultural contexts (Moser 2008, 26; Everett 2009, 167), even if scholars long presumed that it was intrinsically North American.[6] As for the festival films, these are closely tied to the circuits of alternative funding and screening presented above and often marked by characteristics

associated with art house cinema. Smith summarizes these characteristics as follows:

> They employ little camera movement and extended takes without edits; they tell casual or oblique stories, often elliptical and inconclusive and they often cast non-professionals whose limited range restricts their performance to a consistently blank or affectless acting style. "Festival films" may well be shot in black and white, and will certainly lack a conventional musical score. (Smith 2012, 72)

Smith's distinction between "genre movies" and "festival films" suggests that the concept of genre is not relevant to the latter. Festival films, indeed, tend to profile themselves in opposition to mainstream cinema and its typical strategies. Nevertheless, many of the films included in this book belong to the festival circuit and were still explicitly marketed as road movies. In almost all of these cases, however, the road movie is clearly appropriated very freely, even ironically, with travelers traveling in canoes (Lisandro Alonso's *Los muertos*, 2004) or on donkeys (Ciro Guerra's *Los viajes del viento*, 2009), or even not traveling at all (Fernando Eimbcke's *Lake Tahoe*, 2008). The road movie, then, cuts across the different categories identified by Smith, allowing for different forms of appropriation and even crossovers between the categories. *Y tu mamá también*,[7] for instance, was originally a genre film but turned into a "prestige blockbuster" afterwards.

The transnationalization of Latin American cinema in the past two decades has not only led to new analytical categories, between which the road movie navigates, but also coincided with a change in filmic language generally referred to as "the return of the real" (Aguilar 2008, 24). As several scholars explain (e.g., Andermann and Fernández Bravo 2013), this evolution amounts to more than a simple rebirth of realism after a period in which filmmakers had explored the possibilities of enriching cinematic language through the allegorical, the fantastic, and the grotesque. In the context of contemporary Latin American cinema, it demonstrates an interest in cinema as an "investigative tool" of reality (Aguilar 2008, 17), which also implies a distancing from the established, industrialized modes of "realist" filmmaking. Thus, the so-called "return of the real" impacts the scripts and casts of contemporary films, opening them up to the unexpected and the coincidental and welcoming non-professional actors (Aguilar 2008, 28). In many cases, fictional films are endowed with documentary

dimensions, producing new synergies between the two modes of filmmaking and storytelling (Haddu and Page 2009). Most importantly, perhaps, the very idea of "telling" gives way to a method of "showing" that generally leaves explicitly political, ideological grids of interpretation aside. As David Oubiña explains: "Compared to the solemn and artificial recipes of the old cinema, one of the great merits of this rejuvenation was the frontal gaze with which it encountered the real, without any preconceived notion as to what it would find there" (2013, 31). As we will see in the next section, several features of the road movie combine particularly well with the new emphasis on the observational and coincidental in Latin American cinema as a whole. Given the recent upsurge of the road movie, it even seems legitimate to state that the road movie fulfilled a key role in this overall return of the real.[8]

Defining the Road Movie

The appearance of the road movie in Latin American cinema should not be understood as the mechanical transference of a previously developed model into which local stories are injected. New contexts bring with them new characteristics or change the ones that were already there.[9] Even the editors of *The Road Movie Book* (1997)—the first volume on the road movie—emphasize the historic variability of the genre that already existed in the US context, distinguishing, among other things, between the films that appeared before Jack Kerouac's seminal novel *On the Road* and the ones released afterwards (Cohan and Rae Hark 1997, 14). Moreover, the genre is known for its ability to blend with other genres, often manifesting under hybrid forms (Sargeant and Watson 1999, 6). That being said, any study of road movies needs a definition of the genre, if only to explain why certain films are examined and others are not. After a long period during which the road movie was described as a particularly "elusive" genre that had been systematically "overlooked" or "bypassed" (Corrigan 1991, 143; Laderman 2002, 2–3), the recent growth in road movie scholarship has led to a great number of definitions, demonstrating not only the variety within this category, but also—more problematically—a lack of consensus on what a road movie is.

For the purposes of this study, I have compared an extensive list of what directors, producers, and film critics consider to be Latin American road movies with the existing definitions in road movie scholarship. Schematically speaking, we can differentiate between "narrow" and "broad" definitions of the genre. Narrow definitions have the advantage of being clear.

A good example is provided by Timothy Corrigan, who published the first extensive article on the genre in 1991 and gives an actualized, "prescriptive" definition of the road movie in his standard work, *The Film Experience*, co-written with Patricia White.

> A prescriptive definition of the road movie would doubtless focus on automobiles or motorcycles as the center of narratives about wandering or driven men who are or eventually become buddies. Structurally, the narrative develops forward, usually along a linear path, as an aimless odyssey toward an undefined place of freedom. Encounters are episodic and disconnected and traveling shots of open roads and landscapes are the stylistic heart of the genre. (2004, 318)

This description applies perfectly to *Easy Rider* (Dennis Hopper, 1969), a film inspired by Jack Kerouac's *On the Road* and often cited as the prototypical road movie in US cinema (e.g., Laderman 2002, 66; Benoliel and Thoret 2011, 4). *Easy Rider* depicts how two male characters in their twenties—nicknamed "Captain America" (Peter Fonda) and Billy Wyatt (Dennis Hopper)—drive around on their Harley Davidsons through the Southwest of the United States, until they are shot down by two conservative drivers for no other reason than their alternative, hippie lifestyle. The film shares with *On the Road* the reference to the counter-cultural background of the main characters (the beat generation in Kerouac's novel, hippies in Hopper's film) and presents two male buddies for whom being on the road is more important than the place they are heading. Famous Latin American road movies such as *Diarios de motocicleta* and *Y tu mamá también* fit this narrow definition rather well.

The vast majority of road movies included in this book, however, fall outside these prescriptive boundaries. An important reason for this is that the motorized vehicles referred to are much less common in Latin American road movies than they are in US and even European examples of the genre. Characters travel by any means they see fit: buses (María in *Historias mínimas*), trains (Diego Quemada-Díez's *La jaula de oro*, 2013), trucks (Jorge Bodanzky and Orlando Senna's *Iracema*, 1975), taxis (*Guantanamera*), bicycles (*El viaje*), and even—as mentioned before—canoes (*Los muertos*), horses (Israel Cárdenas and Laura Amelia Guzmán's *Cochochi*, 2009) and donkeys (*Los viajes del viento*). Frequently, they hitchhike (Tania Hermida's *Qué tan lejos*, 2006) or walk on foot (Héctor Ferreiro Dávila's *Pacha*, 2009). Another important difference

between the prescriptive definition and the films included in this study concerns the (un)motivated nature of the movement. While the prescriptive definition stresses the idea that characters move without any clear direction or purpose, most characters in Latin American road movies know where they are going and for which reason: finding a lost relative (Marité Ugás's *El chico que miente*, 2009; Humberto Solás's *Miel para Ochún*, 2001), paying the last respects to a deceased family member (Juan Carlos De Llaca's *Por la libre*, 2000; Hernán Jiménez's *A ojos cerrados*, 2010), or bringing oneself to safety (Jeanine Meerapfel's *Amigomío*, 1995; Juan Carlos Cremata's *Viva Cuba*, 2005). In fact, traveling for leisure, as depicted in *Easy Rider* and *On the Road*, is a luxury few characters can afford in the body of works analyzed. At the same time, the definition by Corrigan and White very clearly sums up some of the characteristics that often appear in road movies. Part of the solution, then, will be to consider the different elements of it as characteristics that may, or may not, appear in a road movie and that seldom appear all together at the same time.[10]

At the other end of the spectrum, we find "broad definitions," such as the one introduced by Hans Bertelsen in his pioneering book on the genre from 1991. Situating the genre against the background of US cinema, this German scholar locates the specificity of the genre in its depiction of a journey:

> The central motif of the road movie is the journey. It is used in the same way the *frontier* is in the Western: to dramatize the conflict between individual freedom and society. [. . .] Within the road movie, different statements regarding the problem of freedom can be observed and in all of them the motif of the journey is used in different ways. (1991, 47)[11]

By centering on the motif of the journey, Bertelsen enables scholars to include not only the vast majority of Latin American road movies, but even earlier US examples, such as the ones cited by Steven Cohan and Ina Rae Hark, like *The Grapes of Wrath* (John Ford, 1940—based on the eponymous novel by John Steinbeck), in which an American family travels from Oklahoma to California during the Depression in search for a better life, or *It Happened One Night* (Frank Capra, 1934), in which a young, spoiled girl, named Ellie Andrews (Claudette Colbert), flees home and falls in love with journalist Peter Warne (Clark Gable). The broad definition also has the advantage of inscribing the road movie in a long and prestigious tradition of travel literature, the importance of which has been underscored

by David Laderman (2002, 6–13). The road movie's frequent use of the journey as "a means of cultural critique" (Laderman 2002, 1; Mazierska and Rascaroli 2006, 4) recalls literary precedents such as the picaresque novel and *Candide* (Voltaire, 1759), and the spiritual transformation of many travelers during their journey has been related to the Bildungsroman (Corrigan 1991, 144; Tomkins 2013, 39).[12] From a structural point of view, road movies share with travel narratives a loosely articulated, open-ended plot and episodic way of storytelling—features referred to in Corrigan and White's prescriptive definition. Working on literary texts, Mikhail Bakhtin coined the term "chronotope of the road" for this mode of storytelling,[13] and Burkhard Pohl has proposed that road movies be considered as actualized versions of this chronotope (2007, 54). In spite of these interesting aspects, broad definitions of the road movie run the risk of becoming so loose that the analytical force of the concept is diminished. If the journey is the central motif of the road movie, in which way can the genre be delineated from film versions of literary works such as *Don Quixote* or *The Odyssey*, for instance?

In order to avoid the pitfalls of both narrow and broad definitions, I will adhere to a minimal definition of the genre, to which I will add supplementary characteristics that, as said, *may or may not* appear. Thus, I consider a Latin American road movie to be any story that centers on **mobility** and takes place in an era in which **automobile transportation** exists. Without these two elements, there is no road movie—end of story. I prefer the term "mobility" over that of "journey" because a limited number of Latin American road movies portray characters whose displacements have no direct destination, for instance because they are homeless (e.g., *Iracema*; María Victoria Menis's *El cielito*, 2004). Moreover, the term "mobility" helps us understand why road movies often give way to broader reflections on issues of social and economic mobility—an aspect that partially explains their attraction for contemporary filmmakers (Eyerman and Löfgren 1995, 54; Gott and Schilt 2013, 8). From a theoretical point of view, the term "mobility" stands for "movement imbued with meaning" (Adey 2010, 34), which brings to the fore the interest road movie scholars have in tracing the different meanings of the displacements they study.[14] As for the situatedness of road movie stories in the era of motorized transportation, this solves the problem of the scarcity of cars and motorcycles as primary means of transportation in Latin American road movies. While many characters do not possess a car of their own, the fact that they live in a world in which they might have used one is significant for their positioning with respect to

modernity–an aspect I will return to below. The Colombian film *Los viajes del viento*, in which the protagonist displaces himself on a donkey, is a road movie, then, because the film takes place in the late 1960s (as explicitly mentioned in the film). A conquest film like Nicolás Echevarría's *Cabeza de Vaca* (1991) is not a road movie, because the whereabouts of this lost conquistador are situated in the sixteenth century.

These two elements—mobility and being of the automobile era—lie at the core of my definition of the Latin American road movie. They apply to films of fiction, as well as documentaries, which is normal for a genre in which this line is often blurred (Brandellero 2013, xxiii). Nevertheless, for reasons of consistency, this book centers on fictional road movies.[15] An important remark concerns the degree to which "mobility" should be present in the film in order for it to be a road movie. Indeed, nearly all contemporary films contain at least one scene in which a character travels by a motorized means of transportation, but does this turn them automatically into a road movie? The answer is no. In order to be a road movie, mobility should be a central concern of the story, not just an action occasionally undertaken to take children to school, for instance, or go to work. Moreover, mobility in road movies is not only at the center of the story, but also leads the characters outside their daily environment, out of their comfort zone, so to speak—a phenomenon that is referred to by the term "defamiliarization" (Laderman 2002, 2). For this reason, a film like *Velódromo* (Alberto Fuguet, 2010), in which many scenes are devoted to the protagonist's cycling around in Santiago de Chile, is not a road movie, because this form of mobility does not take him out of his natural environment; *Ciclo* (Andrea Martínez Crowther, 2013), on the other hand, is a road movie, because this documentary shows two elderly men leaving their domicile in Canada to cycle their way back to the Mexico they left in the 1950s.

But what if only a small part of a film contains a road movie element, as happens in *Los insólitos peces gato* (Claudia Sainte-Luce, 2013), in which the children and friend of a mother dying of AIDS accompany her on an impulse trip to the sea in the final part of the movie? Here, Walter Moser's distinction between films clearly belonging to the genre of the road movie ("le road movie") and others showing only partial kinship ("du road movie") is useful (2008, 21). The films analyzed in this book pertain to the first category, in the sense that at least half of the film takes the form of a road movie. The book's filmography, on the contrary, also includes films in which smaller parts of a film relate to the genre, on the condition that the

road movie portion fulfills a significant role in the overall story. Thus, *Los insólitos peces gato* is included because the final trip represents the growth of the various characters into a new kind of loving family, as well as the admirable capacity of the mother-protagonist to hold on to life until the very end. Sebastián Borensztein's *Un cuento chino* (2011), by contrast, is not included: although the film starts in China and depicts the displacement of a Chinese man to an Argentine village, the film does not elaborate on the displacement itself, but zooms in on the intercultural confrontation that springs from it.

Now that the core definition of the road movie to be used in this book has been presented, we can complete the picture with a set of characteristics that—as mentioned before—*may or may not* appear, but in any event help identify a film as a road movie when they do. There are a great many characteristics associated with road movies, but the ones listed below are the ones most frequently cited and also most applicable to the road movies discussed in this book.[16] The first of these features is the use of a pair of protagonists, referred to as a "buddy couple." According to Cohan and Rae Hark, the road movie's fondness for this device is due to practical considerations: "Two people in the front seat of a vehicle make for easy classical framing and keep the dialogue going" (1997, 8). Prototypically, the buddies are male adolescent characters—as in *On the Road* (Sal Paradise and Dean Moriarty) and *Easy Rider* (Captain America and Billy Wyatt)—but other variants exist as well, from the already mentioned Ellie and Peter in *It Happened One Night* to Bonnie and Clyde and Thelma and Louise in the eponymous films by Arthur Penn (1969) and Ridley Scott (1991) or Travis and his 7-year-old son, Hunter, in *Paris Texas* (Wim Wenders, 1984).

This buddy structure punctuates many Latin American road movies. Besides the typical male buddies (*Diarios de motocicleta*; Jaime Cuesta and Alfonso Naranjo's *Dos para el camino*, 1981), we find a wide variety of combinations: from father and son (Jaime Sebastián Jácome's *La ruta de la luna*, 2014) to mother and daughter (María Paz González's *Hija*, 2011); from female friends (María Novarro's *Sin dejar huella*, 2000) and lesbians (Diego Lerman's *Tan de repente*, 2002) to children (Isthar Yasín's *El camino*, 2007) and family relatives (Gonzalo Tobal's *Villegas*, 2012); from heterosexual couples (Manuel Rombero's *La rubia del camino*, 1938) to people who occasionally meet (Charly Braun's *Por el camino*, 2010) or are accompanied by animal buddies (the dog in Carlos Sorín's *Bombón: El perro*, 2004; the horse in *Cochochi*). However, several other

Latin American road movies depict a single traveler only (e.g., *El viaje*; Lisandro Alonso's *Liverpool*, 2008), larger groups of people traveling (e.g., *Bye Bye Brasil*; *La jaula de oro*; Luis Buñuel's Mexican road movie *Subida al cielo,* 1952) or even entire families (e.g., *Familia rodante*; Nelson Pereira Dos Santos's *Vidas secas*, 1963; Vicente Amorim's *O caminho das nuvens*, 2003). The buddy structure provides the film with a different kind of dynamic than usually ensured by the action in the story or the events: characters can quarrel or, conversely, befriend one another, and the appearance of a woman often leads to tensions in male friendships (*Y tu mamá también*; Marcelo Gomes's *Cinema, Aspirins, and Vultures*, 2006).

A second characteristic is the traveling shot, complemented by a number of related camera techniques. The traveling shot replaced the "talking heads framed against a process screen" (Orr 1993, 130), as used in *The Grapes of Wrath* or *It Happened One Night* for instance, and endowed the road movie with a much more dynamic feel. With the camera placed on or inside a moving vehicle, "road movie traveling shots attempt to convey a visceral sense of traveling at a hyperhuman, modernized speed. As such, the point of view of these traveling shots is usually located with the driver of the car itself" (Laderman 2002, 15). Instead of looking at the characters in the car, we now frequently look with them outside of it and participate in their sense of displacement, a sense which—according to Devin Orgeron—grants road movie spectators a specific pleasure. He refers to this pleasure as "spectatorial drift" and defines it as "the ability to let the eyes move freely through space and cover wide areas of landscape; the sensation, also, of traveling with the characters, while staying at home" (Orgeron 2008, 105). According to Laderman, traveling shots sometimes assume the form of "side by side traveling shots" from a nearby car, and are often complemented by "aerial shots" centered on the vehicle as they drive through wide open spaces (2002, 15). Other frequent techniques are the "rearview mirror shot," "long panning shots," "high-angle shots," and "campfire scenes and low-key light" (Oropesa 2008, 95). Most importantly, "the road movie makes use of the formalistic frame-within-a-frame so as to foreground the crucial act of looking and seeing while driving" (Laderman 2002, 16). As we will see, looking and seeing are strongly thematized in the road movies we will analyze, and this connects directly to the overall interest in the observational of contemporary Latin American cinema. A noteworthy example in this respect is Karim Ainouz and Marcelo Gomes's *Viajo porque preciso, volto porque ti amo* (2009), in which the truck driver whose voice we hear throughout the film is never shown, only the views from his vehicle.