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MOJARRA AESTHETICS IN *PIOLÍN POR LA MAÑANA*:

A TIME AND SPACE FOR THE DISLOCATED

A Dissertation Presented

by

J. LUIS LOYA GARCÍA

Submitted to the Graduate School of the
University of Massachusetts Amherst in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

May 2011

Hispanic Literatures and Linguistics

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A TIME AND SPACE FOR THE DISLOCATED

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J. LUIS LOYA GARCÍA

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DEDICATORIA

Pa John Emilio Vincent y toda la cuadrilla: mojarras, tlacuaches, nopales, nacos y nacas, pelados y peladas, comadres, compas, carnales y carnalas, hocicones y hociconas, valemadristas y en especial pa Chela. Pa ella oro: Santa cerveza que estás en el hielo, bien refrescante suena tu nombre, venga a mi vaso tu cuerpo, hazme sentir el sabor del encuentro, hágase tu presencia en la mesa como en el suelo, no nos dejes caer en la cirrosis y líbranos de la resaca porque mañana trabajamos. Salud.

Te quiero Carmela

In honor of my fellow dreamers.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I have enormous appreciation for those who have contributed in the realization of this dissertation: Professor Luis A. Marentes, my advisor, and the rest of my committee members. Professor Barbara Zecchi, Ilán Stavans, and Mari Castañeda. I admire you all for being great professionals, mentors, and more importantly, for your human quality.

But this dissertation has the collaboration of many more wonderful people for whom I have a great sense of gratitude. People who by pure generosity have touched my life in ways I will never forget. They have motivated me, inspired me and challenged me. Dr. Maryann Biggers, thank you for feeding me and hosting me in your house when I had nothing. Dr. Rose-Marie Kuhn, merci pour ta générosité, l'inspiration, la protection, et ta présence magique. Tu seras toujours ma fée marraine. Dr. Margarite Mahler, merci pour la patience, et la dévotion pédagogique. Dr. Irma López, gracias por guiarme. Tus clases me alentaron a seguir en el doctorado.

My profound appreciation reaches those who I love because they are just great people. Nigel, thank you for sharing your house. Larry and Euri, for letting me take care of Gypsy. Heidi, for being my sister. Carmen, for making me laugh. Amy, for your divine presence. John, for your unconditional support. Mamá, porque hiciste lo mejor que pudiste.

ABSTRACT

***MOJARRA AESTHETICS* IN *PIOLÍN POR LA MAÑANA*:**

A TIME AND SPACE FOR THE DISLOCATED

MAY 2011

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This dissertation is a cultural analysis of *Piolín por la Mañana*, a Spanish-language radio talk show conducted by Eduardo Piolín Sotelo and broadcast from Los Angeles. The program expands the boundaries of the performing arts as well as the reach and elasticity of literary tropes and study. It connects often geographically disparate "imagined communities" of working class Latino/as by revisiting traditional Mexican theater, joke delivery style, literary genre (e.g., magical realism and the picaresque), and taxonomies of everyday personalities. Central to my discussion of *Piolín* is listener participation, which stages community formation within the radio-text.

The introduction and the first chapter present the trope of the *Mojarra*, a person that crossed the U.S. border as a *mojado/a* (an undocumented immigrant), usually swimming or forging a river. *Mojarras* suffer *el Síndrome de la Mojarra*, the condition of feeling persecuted, believing that their freedom depends on the ability to evade capture. *Mojarra Aesthetics* revolves around the representational needs of the persecuted

immigrant community; this aesthetic is comprised of artistic techniques that use humor and in particular explosive laughter and *mitote*. The second chapter explores how *Piolín* is a medium that connects, as well as creates, Latino communities through radio; it maps "nonce taxonomies" of recognizable immigrant personalities. What follows, explores how *Piolín* encourages new ways of making and analyzing art, including the use of *cantinfleadas* and *albures* as central elements of oral folklore, comprising connections to traditional Mexican joke delivery (e.g., *colmos*, *parecidos*, *que le dijo*, *telones*, and *bombas*). The program, via this tradition, includes cultural tropes such as the *mojarra*, *tlacuaches*, *nopales*, *nacos*, *nacas*, among others. At the center of this dissertation is the carnival and, relatively new on the scene, the radio carnival. The radio program produces a *Mojarra Difrasismo*, deconstructing entrenched binaries and creating a new reality, forcing new critical thinking about what reality is or could be in relation to the immigrant experience and the immigrant body.

PREFACE: METHODOLOGY

This dissertation deals with *Piolín por la Mañana,* a Spanish-language radio program broadcast from Los Angeles to the rest of the United States—and via Internet to the whole world. The majority of its listeners are working class Hispanic immigrants. I became deeply interested in this show when I was doing my Master's degree in Michigan. I was far away from my Hispanic community in California and wanted to feel at home. The Internet allowed me to be in touch with California's Hispanics; I appreciated the human connection of people that shared similar experiences and who also balanced their struggles through the power of humor. This dissertation is a tribute to the working class Hispanic immigrant community that lives and works in the United States. They are the heroes and heroines of my dissertation. Their desire for a better life resonates in my heart when I laugh. Humor, in my life, has been a powerful strategy to deal with problems. It allows me to soften hardships and to keep going. One of the factors that got my attention while listening to *Piolín por la Mañana* was audience participation; people from New York, Texas, Chicago, California, and the most hidden places with Hispanic immigrant workers, were verbally present in the show. They listened to the show at the same time they worked, and often participated in the midst of labor. In this era of controversial politics against Hispanic immigrants, this lively and joyous discourse really got my attention.

My dissertation presents sometimes overwhelming linguistic complexities. It has jokes in Spanish, English, and/or Spanglish. My hope is not to complicate life for readers whose understanding of one or the other of these forms of communication is limited. My

apologies to you should you find these translation issues impossibly difficult. I've done the best I can to communicate; either by translating or by explaining what I think is important about jokes. There is a language that deserves my whole attention; that is the language of my community, the working class Hispanic immigrant community in the US. It might seem improper, dislocated, impolite or even vulgar at times. But one must understand that this language often runs its finger along the very rough edge of very rough lives. These are people who aren't treated properly, politely, and/or respectfully—they often are dehumanized. Vulgarity helps them to forget about class, social, and economic, status. This is how they struggle with class consciousness. The vulgar and humorous content of my analysis requires some familiarity or training in "street culture," which is not taught in books, but in real life. I hope that any vulgarity in this dissertation earns its keep. Vulgarity is crucial to the community about which I am writing. I am a part of them.

Piolín por la Mañana is produced and broadcast by Univisión. This is the largest Hispanic media network in the United States. The corporate nature of Univisión revolves around marketing strategies that are very important to how Hispanic communities negotiate their lives with media in this digitalized and globalized era. However, for the purpose of this dissertation, my analysis will focus on the content of this particular radio program—I will not attempt to read the ways in which corporate culture influences program content; this investigation is important, however, it is secondary to my own. I hope that my investigations will enable such research.

I recorded a variety of programs over a span of three years. Further, many of the jokes I quote are available in Youtube. Also, *Piolín*'s facebook and *Portal Univisión*

allowed me to better understand the cultural importance that *Piolín por la Mañana* has within the working class Hispanic community of listeners.

My approach to the study of *Piolín por la Mañana* is based on my training in the humanities, particularly in Hispanic literature and culture. I value the ways in which traditional production and study of Hispanic cultural representations evolve in time and space. This digital era invites us to open our minds and stretch our understanding of communication, world-wide. My hope is to contribute to the study of US Hispanics and to emphasize the enormous cultural importance of the working class Hispanic communities in the United States.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION:

INTRODUCING *MOJARRA AESTHETICS*

In this dissertation, I explore *Mojarra Aesthetics*. I use the term *mojarra*[1] to identify a person who crossed the U.S. border as a *mojado/a* (an undocumented immigrant), swimming or forging a river, navigating the ocean and/or negotiating any other above- or under- ground surface. Indeed, I use the term *mojarra* instead of *mojado/*a to emphasize the stigma of the undocumented immigrant, one who might have to swim like a fish in order to survive. He or she often experiences *el Síndrome de la Mojarra*, the condition of feeling persecuted, believing that their own freedom depends on the ability to evade capture. Lila Downs describes the *Mojarra* condition in the following lyrics:

---

[1] In *Field Guide to Saltwater Fish*, Ken Schultz's writes:

> Mojarra are members of the Gerridae family of tropical and subtropical saltwater fish. Roughly 40 species are in this family, some of which also occur in brackish water and a few rarely in freshwater. They are small and silvery and have protractile mouths. The upper jaw of the mojarra fits into a defined slot when the mouth is not extended, or "pursed." When feeding, the mouth is protruded and directed downward. The dorsal and the anal fins have a sheath of scales along the base, and the gill membranes are not united to the isthmus. The first, or spiny, dorsal fin is high in front, sloping into the second, or soft-rayed, dorsal. The tail is deeply forked.
>
> Most mojarras are less than 10 inches long. They are important for predator species and are used as bait by some anglers. Some species are observed in schools on sandy, shallow flats.
>
> The spotfin mojarra (Eucinostomus argenteus) is abundant in the western Atlantic off the coast from New Jersey to Brazil. It occurs in the eastern Pacific along the coast from Southern California to Peru. The yellowfin mojarra (Gerres Cinereus) is common in Florida and the Caribbean. (135)

Llegué a Santa Ana con las patas bien peladas,

los huraches que llevaba se acabaron de volada,

el sombrero y la camisa los perdí en la correteada,

que me dieron unos güeros que ya mero me alcanzaban.[2]

In her song, Lila Downs tells the story of a *bracero fracasado,* an unsuccessful border-crosser who crossed the border and lived, evading capture. Lila Downs, in this song, portrays the *mojarra* condition well; her lyrics are an expression of *Mojarra Aesthetics*. This type of aesthetics involves overcoming adversity by turning pre-deportation into a narrative trope. The *mojarra*'s tragedy pivots on the stake of a joke. The lyrics of the above song makes adversity funny. This is *Mojarra Aesthetics:* the ability to laugh in the face of adversity. In contrast to the aesthetic of the above quoted song, some artists describe the social, economic and political situation of undocumented immigrants as more complicatedly and emotionally volatile; for instance, Ricardo Arjona in his song "Mojado" communicates the nostalgic desire to change the life of the undocumented immigrant who lives on the margins of society. That "life is miserable" is reflected in the following excerpt of Arjona's song:

El mojado tiene ganas de secarse,

El mojado está mojado

Por las lágrimas que gota la nostalgia

[2] Downs Lila. "El bracero fracasado." 14 Dec 2008. Youtube. Online video clip. Accessed on 12 Dec 2010.

El mojado, el indocumentado, carga el bulto

Que el legal no cargaría ni obligado.[3]

This song denounces the suffering of the undocumented; the song suggests that undocumented immigrants perform hard labor jobs that documented people do not. The upshot of the song communicates discomfort; nostalgia and negative emotion soak through the song's lyrics. The *Mojarra Aesthetic* does not share this song's yearning to transform the unfair to the just and the cruel to the humane. Instead of postponing happiness until life changes, *mojarras* on the other hand, exercising *Mojarra Aesthetics*, stubbornly, but goofily, decide to be happy with what they have. They laugh about themselves and their harsh living conditions. This feeling is explained in the Spanish proverb, "Si del cielo te caen limones, aprende a hacer limonada," the English equivalent of "if life gives you lemons, make lemonade." This type of attitude is often expressed in *Piolín por la Mañana*, a Spanish-language talk show where listeners mock adversity. In fact, the single most consistent aesthetic strand of the show is unmistakably *Mojarra Aesthetics*.

Mojarra Aesthetics revolves around the needs of the persecuted immigrant community; this aesthetic is comprised of artistic techniques that use laughter and/or any other strategy that eases the intimidated individual's resistance. Laughter allows *mojarras* to relax, to relieve tension, and to forget, for a period of time, that they are persecuted. It turns them into the heroes of their lives, though they are undoubtedly, and unmistakably, *picaresque heroes*. When *mojarras* are able to control their agitated feelings of being "wanted," they allow their body to relax in a particular way that permits

[3] Arjona Ricardo. "Mojado." 28 Feb 2008. Youtube. Online video clip. Accessed on 12 Dec 2010.

a nonanxiogenic stream of consciousness; people lose fear for an instant and words (and inspiration) flow out of their mouths like fire from fire breathers'. This process often develops into improvised artistic utterances in the form of *albures* and *cantinfleadas.* *Albures* are games of words with double meanings, often with sexual and/or scatological implications and *cantinfleadas* are verbal games employing nonsense. In *Mojarra Aesthetics,* life itself becomes a work of art where conditions and situations are manipulated in order to create positive affect. This is the use of conscious awareness to empower the self through laughter, an attempt to not pay attention to the adverse situations of life, even for a moment. For instance, when Chela Prieto, one of the fictitious characters in *Piolín por la Mañana*, tells her story about crossing the border; she turns her harsh and painful narrative into something ridiculous and amusing:

> CHELA. Esta otra cicatriz fue cuando venía corriendo por la frontera y me quedé atorada patas p'arriba, en un alambre de púas. Ya hasta parecía carne de cecina. [Risas]
>
> BETTY. Ay, ya bájese de ahí porque parece que tiene un freeway, lleno de caminos su panza.
>
> CHELA. Nombre. Luego que me sigue la migra en su carrito cuatro por cuatro, ahí por el desierto. Y que yo salgo como la India María cuando la iban siguiendo por Los Ángeles y nombre que me brinco el muro como los perros cuando los andan siguiendo pa marcarlos. [Risas y sonidos de vacas y de trotes corriendo] Como cuando levantan a un torero comadre. [¡Chela! Risas] Nombre, que me subo en el primer camión que venía pasando por el freeway. No lo vas a creer, que venía lleno de puercos vivos. [Risas] Ay no comadre, bien feo. Lleno de puercos vivos. Ahí fue donde conocí al Naranjito.[4]

In this *testimonio,* Chela explains that the *migra* started to follow her in a 4x4 truck and she started to jump like a dog about to be branded with red hot iron. Finally she hopped

[4] "Doña Chela habla cómo cruzó la frontera." 3 Jun 2009. Online video clip. Youtube. Accessed on 6 Jan 2011.

inside a truck full of pigs and that is where she met Naranjito. People often mock Naranjito's girth and call him a pig because he is fat. This fictional fragment exemplifies a type of humor where harsh and adverse experiences become excessive commotion in the radio studio and explosive laughter all around, for listeners and performers. *Mojarra Aesthetics* becomes a strategy of survival in the radio-text --an attempt by working class immigrants to forge a place in a culture that aggressively ignores their existence.

Analyzing the artistic aesthetics of people of Mexican descent, Yolanda Broyles-Gonzalez explains: "Rasquachi Aesthetic refers to the creation of artistic beauty from the motley assemblage of elements momentarily seized" (36).[5] This aesthetic emphasizes the beauty and artistry of mundane materials, the capacity to make art from anything available. *Rasquachi Aesthetics* is identified in the way *El Teatro Campesino* used any type of supplies to organize the *mise en scène* of *actos*, short theatrical pieces assembled to educate field workers about their social, political and economic conditions. For instance, actors and actresses would simply wear signs to differentiate their characters instead of wearing elaborate costumes. *Piolín* takes aesthetics to the level of words and sounds, and his aesthetics is experienced through the embodiedness of laughter.

Expanding the perception of aesthetics for people of Mexican origins, Jennifer Alvarez Dickinson[6] develops the term "pocho" into an artistic and creative notion, particular to the hybrid peoples of Mexican descent. The word "pocho" has been used to identify people of Mexican origins who have partially or entirely assimilated the US culture. She defines "pocho aesthetics" as:

---

[5] Yolanda Broyles-Gonzales studies the historical importance of the Teatro Campesino in the Chicano movement in *El Teatro Campesino*.
[6] *Pocho Humor: Contemporary Chicano Humor and the Critique of American Culture.*

> …a sensibility that simultaneously acknowledges traditional cultural markers and questions their validity, a mocking laughter that asks audiences to rethink citizenship, ethnicity, and difference. In this sense, pocho does not only refer to Americans of Mexican descent who have "lost" their cultural ties to Mexico. [It] also refer[s] to those who see themselves as Chicanos, [and] who recognize the constructedness of identity. (59)

"The *pocho*," for Alvarez Dickinson, is a term that describes how cultures get hybridized by an individual who vexes simple cultural categories. This subject, "the *pocho,"* defies dominant discourses using *pocho* humor, speaking many tongues, assuming multiple identities and addressing manifold audiences.

Piolín por la Mañana also challenges simple notions of citizenship, ethnicity, and difference. However, *Piolín*'s audience does not lose ties with Latin America; on the contrary, *mojarras* maintain strong cultural bonds with their countries of origin and expand their conception of citizenship by embracing Latin America as a common denominator of the *mojarra* experience in the United States. *Mojarras* maintain affiliation with individuals from diverse Latino origins. José Martí wrote, "Nuestra América," where he invites Latin American countries to unite their strengths and not allow US imperialism to take over Latin America. Martí highlights the responsibility of young generations in the construction of governments that understood the needs of the indigenous populations. This union happens in *Piolín* when *mojarras* of diverse Latin American backgrounds gather the power of their laughter to see the bright side of things in order to appreciate life.

Mojarras theorize their living conditions because they *have to*. As Foucault notes,[7] to name a "perversion" is to offer those identified *as* that, to identify *with* a stigmatized position, and thereby create a community and a politics based on the reclaimed identity term. This powerful shift from *being identified* to *identifying with* is most clearly put forward in the seminal works of queer theory. Queer theory itself reclaims a formerly stigmatized term in the way that, were they theorists, *Piolín's* guests would reclaim identity terms. *Mojarra Theory* is also a negation of a negation that highlights the importance of the surviving body and the survivor.

For the survivor, the primacy of the body is crucial. Materiality is stubborn and this stubbornness, on the positive side for the human body is best illustrated by laughter. Shaking laughter, laughter that shakes the body, bursting with laughter, erupting into laughter, and most strangely, grotesquely, literal: splitting your sides with laughter. In Spanish, this gets even more grotesque, and becomes "cagarse de risa" or "shitting of laughter." In theory, *Mojarra Aesthetics* is a *Mojarra* ass-thetics. It is the insistent presence of the body in the verbal medium.

Mojarras theorize with their physical bodies, affect, and emotion, to reclaim their "Cultural Citizenship." Judith Flores Carmona argues that regardless of immigration status, "Latino/a Cultural Citizenship" allows Latino/as to "organize and practice their citizenship rights while remaining grounded in their cultural Latina/o identities" (52). Latino/a Cultural Citizenship debunks the governmental definition of citizenship. This concept of "cultural citizenship" among Latino/as provides space for documented and undocumented individuals who have been marginalized in the US society. Latino/a

[7] *History of Sexuality V. 1.*

Cultural Citizenship gives Latino/as the opportunity to defend themselves against hostility. Flores Cardona uses Chicana/Latina Feminist theoretical approaches to analyze how education is transmitted among Latina Women in the form of *consejos, testimonios, sobrevivencia*, and their intuitive *facultad*. She writes "these concepts accentuate the ways in which many Latinas make sense of their teaching and learning across generations in transnational spaces" (30). The *mojarra* also educates himself/herself and others through the multiple suggestions, testimonies, acts of survival, and intuition, such as those that are shared in *Piolín por la Mañana.* Participants are indeed cultural citizens, but even more importantly, as *mojarras*, they are *citizens of the body*. The body has become territorialized and as such has become colonized by the inhabitants of the very body in question—in practice, a kind of indigenous governance at the molecular level. As a citizen of the body, the *mojarra* is sensitive to the physical and the emotional. He/she lacks governmental protection and lives under the regulations of his or her own corporeal system. The *mojarra* is a citizen of the body and within that territory he/she experiences *un duelo*, a mourning for something lost. Araceli Colín[8] argues that "Algunas disciplinas 'psi', como la Psicología, la Psiquiatría y el Psicoanálisis, se refieren al duelo para nombrar un estado que sucede a varios tipos de pérdidas, pérdida de un miembro del cuerpo, perdida de la patria, pérdida de una relación de noviazgo, etc." (28). That is, psychology, psychiatry and psychoanalysis identify "mourning" as the state that happens after individuals experience a loss of something: a human body part, the native land, a love relationship, among others. The *mojarra* lost a *patria*, a country, and wants to belong somewhere. He/she feels nostalgia, sensing and half-remembering what he/she left behind in his/her native land. The *mojarra* mourns what might have

[8] *Antropología y psicoanálisis. Un diálogo posible a propósito del duelo por un hijo en Malinalco.*

been lost and feels nostalgia for an uncertain future; he/she tempers negative emotion with laughter. Colín analyses the rituals of *duelo* particular to indigenous groups in the State of Mexico and argues that when the mourning is about a human being who has passed, the grief involves a ritualistic dimension that is related to the memory of the dead person. In other words, the person or group of people involved in the *duelo* feel negative emotion in the process of discovering the particular tie that might have been lost within themselves when someone dies. Colín writes:

> El duelo implica tanto la dimensión ritual que pauta un modo de vincularse a la memoria del difunto y la forma como pretende inducir una determinada eficacia simbólica sobre el duelo subjetivo para asumir su pérdida, como el itinerario no pautado por el cual una persona busca y pretende localizar el trozo de sí que perdió con el difunto. (29)

This feeling of loss that follows a death transforms the relationship between the living and the dead; it reconfigures social relations among, particularly, the members of the affected family. This same feeling of having lost something manifests in *Piolín*. Listeners gather aurally to temper the loss of their *patria*, and through affiliation they find a way to construct *mojarra* citizenship. As "citizens of the body," *mojarras* locate their body (and laughter) as a mode of translation between the larger culture, however hostile, and their own desires and positive affective states.

For the *mojarra*, *el cuerpo* is a vehicle with diverse functions. It transports him/her to different places in time and space, and it protects the integrity of the *mojarra*'s "self" from the physical and emotional danger of the external world. In this regard, the

mojarra knows that he/she depends on his/her body to continue swimming. Comandante Marcos[9] expresses it in the following terms:

> This is who we are/ This Zapatista National Liberation Army/ The voice that arms itself to be heard/ The face that hides itself to be seen/ the name that hides itself to be named/ The red star that calls out to humanity and the world/ to be heard, to be seen, to be named/ The tomorrow to be harvested in the past/ Behind our black mask/ Behind our armed voice/ Behind our unnamable names/ Behind us, WE are YOU/ Behind, we are the same simple and ordinary men and women/ We are repeated in all races/ Painted in all colors/ speak in all languages/ and live in all places/ The same forgotten men and women/ The same excluded/ The same under-rated/ The same persecuted. WE are YOU. (The Zapatista National Liberation Army)

Similar to what Marcos states, the *mojarra* wants to have a visible body, and an audible voice. The *mojarra* wants to exist as a person not as an alien. He/she wants to be seen as a flesh and bone being who lives in a body.

Lourdes Pacheco Ladron de Guevara[10] argues that it is necessary to recognize oneself as a subject with a body and to stop considering the body as a circumstance. It is important to stop sailing the route of the objective-subjective dichotomy to incorporate more "reality" and enrich knowledge with other dimensions. The challenge is to put knowledge in contact with corporeal elements, which are the conditions that gave birth to

[9] Comandante Marcos. "EZLN Our Word is Our Weapon." 12 July 2006. Youtube. Online video clip. Accessed on 12 Nov 2010.
[10] "El horizonte epistemológico del cuerpo"

corporeality. She suggests that epistemologists ought to stop thinking in abstract terms about the subject who thinks, feels, and imagines. The restraint of the body in epistemology is suppression, Pacheco argues. The development of an epistemology of the body allows individuals to reconsider processes, spaces, and concepts of perception in order to recuperate the body as an excluded element. In order to formulate an epistemology of the body, she contends, it is imperative to consider the role of the body in the comprehension and construction of knowledge;[11] this allows individuals to have a measure of control over the dimensions of perception. Pacheco contends that pure observations, or reflections, do not exist independently of the sensations of the subject. All knowledge is bodily perception, selection, translation and interpretation. The *mojarra*, along these very lines, perceives, selects, translates, and interprets, through the displaced, illegal immigrant body. The body becomes clothing, a house, a *caparazón* (caparace), or a country or a citizenship where he/she guards his/her dignity. It is a moving medium that transports him/her across time and space.

Mojarras feel joy and pain; they eat and shit, drink and piss. Sylvie Shaw in "Reclaiming the Ecoerotic: Celebrating the Body and the Earth" proposes different reasons for the repulsion of dirt in the Western World. She writes, "the notion of dirt as disgusting and the dirty body as degenerate has been used to inform (mis)conceptions of race and class bias and methods of social control" (1). She argues that the desire to control the erotic body is strongly linked with the desire to control nature, and contends that "reclaiming the ecoerotic" is a way of comprehending the disconnection that the Western world has with nature in a carnal, sensual, and aesthetic manner. Shaw calls for

[11] "Theory in the Flesh" by Cherrie Moraga.

a re-awakening of the body-nature connection that makes people conscious about the importance of protecting the Earth. The *mojarra* belongs to Earth, and is protected by *Ondine*,[12] the spirit of the water. This feminine entity, in Irish mythology, is able to become a human being only by marrying a man. This condition of dehumanization is also experienced by the *mojarra*, who exists in ether, and is subject to the political regulation of structures of power that refuse to see him/her as an earthly, human being.

The *mojarras* are natives of *Pachamama*,[13] and inherited from *Huitzilopochtli* the strength to fight the structures of power that disallow them to have freedom. Chris McManus[14] writes:

> The principal war god of the Aztecs was known as Huitzilopochtli, which is usually translated as "left-handed hummingbird." It has been pointed out that 'humingbird' is a rather cute name for a war god, and adding "left-handed" makes the name completely bizarre [queer]. A metaphorical interpretation seems far more likely, the tongue and sound of the hummingbird echoing the appearance and sounds of the rattlesnake. A left-handed hummingbird is therefore the deadly rattlesnake. (273)

Mojarras similar to the "left-handed Humming bird" are revolutionaries, rebels who seek social change and aspire to a fairer society. If they are denied basic social and human

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[12] An ondine is a water elemental or a water spirit. According to Irish folklore they are able to obtain a soul only by marrying a human (usually a man). Also see *Ondine* movie (2009) by Neil Jordan.

[13] In *Rituals of respect: the secret of survival in the high Peruvian Andes*, Inge Bolin writes, "Pachamama, literally 'Earth Mother,' is the principal deity of Andeal religion. Pachamama is the earth itself, sustainer of all life. In the words of one of the villagers, 'Pachamama gives us life, she nourishes us through our existence on this earth and when we die, we go back to our Pachamama from where we will rise again.' She sustains life for animals and plants alike, but she can also kill with devastating earthquakes and allow lighting to strike. Pachamama and the god of thunder and lightning are considered *compadres*" (32).

[14] *Right Hand, Left Hand: The Origins of Asymmetry in Brains, Bodies, Atoms and Cultures.*

rights they become nomads and look for freedom despite borders and political structures of power that would immobilize them.

The *mojarra* is a *peregrino/a*, a pilgrim. N. Ross Crumrine and Alan Morinis[15] study pilgrimages as dynamic institutions that constantly change. They argue that an important element in the study of pilgrimage is the sacred location as well as the changes in the association of the place with the complexity of religious components. The authors write, "…pilgrimage at its core is structured interaction of human belief and behavior with particular geographical locations" (9). The changes in landscape over time can trace the evolution of pilgrimages; shrines are established, topography is modified, steps cut, and patterns of settlement altered. This is the consequence of the development of pilgrimages in history. Flows of people elevate the status quo of earthly geographical locations and assign them divine functions. When "pilgrimage shrines are identified with the nation-state they can play an important role as national symbols, linking the celestial and terrestrial power sources" (17). The *mojarra* is a pilgrim in a constant search for freedom. I call it *la búsqueda de Quetzalcoatl;* which is the search for that ideal element of life that will make people happy. It can be decoded into the longing for liberty, which can be financial, social, political, religious, gender related, among many others. The search for *Quetzalcoatl* stretches back to the Spanish conquest, when the Aztecs anticipated divine redemption with the arrival of Quetzalcoatl, the feathered serpent god. Misidentifying Hernán Cortez by the coming god, suddenly, the blessings expected were divinely transformed into *chingadazos*, beatings and humiliation by the colonizers.

[15] "La Peregrinación."

When the *dzules*[16] arrived in America (the continent not the US), the *itzaes* fled to the mountains to protect their way of life. *Cagados de miedo* (scared shitless) they escaped to continue to exist despite violence and oppression; they became nomads in their own land and found refuge in distanced places. The *itzaes*, trying to find a place to belong, arrived in the mountains. Quetzalcoatl stayed in the psyche of the community and people keep on looking for him/her in the United States. *Mojarras* look for Quetzalcoatl in the United States because colonization masked in globalization and capitalism has invaded their land. Without the chance of survival they are forced to migrate and to live a life on the margins of society.

The *mojarra* uses the body as a testimonio. John Beverly in "The Margin at the Center,"[17] defines testimonio in the following terms: "By testimonio I mean a novel or novella-length narrative in book or pamphlet (that is, printed as opposed to acoustic) form, told in the first person by a narrator who is also the real protagonist or witness of the events he or she recounts, and whose unit of narration is usually a 'life' or significant life experience" (31). Beverly argues that testimonio can share similarities with literary and non-literary forms such as: autobiographical novel, oral history, autobiography, confession, memoir, diary, eyewitness report, interview, life history, nonfiction novel, *novela-testimonio* or what he calls "factographic" literature. The narrator of the testimonio, according to Beverly, speaks in the name of a community taking the function of an epic hero without "assuming the epic hero's hierarchical and patriarchal status" (33). This dissertation analyzes *Piolín por la Mañana*, a Spanish-language talk show that

[16] According to the Chilan Balan, the *dzules* are the Spanish colonizer and the *itzaes* are the Mayans. See *Libro de Chilam Balam de Chumayel : traducción del maya al castellano* by Antonio Mediz Bolio ; prólogo, introducción y notas, Mercedes de la Garza.
[17] *Testimonio* by John Beverly.

allows *mojarras* to share their *testimonio* of life through laughter. Their presence in time and space constructs a new reality, a paradigm change, where they decide with lucid and ludic awareness that they also exist. Their laughter becomes the deadly rattlesnake sound of *Huitzchilopochtly*, and their behavior transforms into left-handed actions that rebel against structures of power that do not allow them to exist.

The second chapter "***Piolín por la Mañana*: connecting communities through radio**," briefly sketches the history of Hispanics of Mexican descent in the United States. These groups utilize Spanish and English ("contact languages") to interrelate and collaborate. Radio amplifies this linguistic and cultural interaction. It is a powerful transborder medium with an important history of connecting geographically and nationally diverse Mexican populations. The radio talk show is central to the linguistic and cultural power of the medium. Interestingly, Arbitron, the company that keeps account of the popularity of radio stations in the US is, arguably, deeply unreliable when it comes to Spanish-language radio--this, in direct contradistinction to the importance of the cultural information Arbitron's statistics might provide. The chapter introduces *Piolín por la Mañana,* as the most popular Spanish-language radio show in the United States; it is notoriously famous in California, as Joel Russell[18] argues. Russell points out that Mexicans and Central Americans dominate Los Angeles' Spanish-language radio market, while Puerto Ricans dominate the market in New York and Cubans do in Miami: "[This state of things] makes national programming a challenge. [However,] Piolín currently ranks as the top Spanish-language DJ across the country, thanks in large part to

[18] "Cucuy makes his exist after ratings slide: Piolín grips top of Spanish scene." http://www.allbusiness.com/population-demographics/demographic-groups/11666151-1.html

marketing by Univisión. Piolín's show is syndicated in 50 U.S. markets [*i.e.*, regions]….”[19]

The chapter describes and begins to analyze Piolín’s talk show. *Piolín por la Mañana* maps what critic Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick calls “nonce taxonomies.” In the case of *Piolín*, the program flashes recognizable immigrant personalities, types of people that one might come across in the everyday, working-class, life of people of Mexican descent. His program features comic segments that depend on audience participation and audience interaction with these characters. He puts real people in conversation with “real” people. *Piolín* mediates much political and technological contact with Latino/a popular culture. The program has a distinctly, but not immediately obvious, political angle where politicians attempt to seduce the Latino/a community, with diverse degrees of success. I argue that the show allows, and encourages, audience identification with *particular* groups of relocated migrants. For instance, a Chicana, born and raised in the US, self-identified as Chicana/Mexicana, moves from Los Angeles to North Carolina; she can stay in touch with the “imagined community” she identifies with, Los Angeles’ Hispanics. Immigrants from Latin America experience a similar identification with “imagined communities.” As they traverse the United States, they bring with them a sense of their cultural identity with the now pervasive, and modest, technology of the radio receiver.

The third chapter of my dissertation, “***Piolín por la Mañana*: revolutionizing literature and the performing arts**,” presents *Piolín* as a Spanish-language radio talk show that takes place during the age of the Internet and the World Wide Web; these technologies have revolutionized the ways of making and studying literature. I argue that

[19] *Ibid.*

Piolín is a show with characteristics of aural literature, and it is also a product of cultural hybridization. Nestor García Canclini writes in *Hybrid Cultures*, "I understand as hybridization socio-cultural processes in which discrete structures or practices, previously existing in separate forms, are combined to generate new structures, objects, and practices. In turn, it bears noting that the so-called discrete structures were a result of prior hybridizations and therefore cannot be considered pure points of origin" (xxv). *Piolín*[20] renovates the conventional notions of literature, and transforms the traditional concept of drama; it shares characteristics with "radiogenic drama" and "radio comedy." It is aural literature that belongs to radio/sound comedy, encapsulating both: a *dramatic text* and a *performance text*. *Piolín* is a born digital radio comedy that relies on the effects of dialogue, a characteristic that radio drama has in common with stage drama, and which also honors orality; this is the use of spoken words to transmit images in the imagination of people. *Piolín* is a configuration of digital storytelling, and uses timing as well as surprise as fundamental elements of radio comedy, which combined with serious, but not obvious, objectives, advise the audience with the assistance of doctors, immigration lawyers, psychologists and other experts. This amalgam of serious and comedic acts bring race, gender, social class, language, and immigration status together in order to emphasize the complexity of the program's produced community. *Piolín* is a radio comedy that allows listeners to move with the show's characters, as the actors vacillate from one performed personality state to another. In contemporary theoretical parlance, this might be called performativity;[21] however, it does not exhibit all of the linguistic activity attributed by J. L. Austin to "performative utterances." My use of the

[20] I will use *Piolín* as a short way to identify *Piolín por la Mañana*.
[21] *Touching Feeling by* Eve Sedgwick Kosofsky and Adam Frank.

term "performative" will include the way in which language performs what it states. My use is not strict to the Austinian model. However, throughout, I am cognizant of and interested in the ways that utterances make things happen. Performativity so often includes both the linguistic and the theatrical. For my purposes here, the two don't have to be strictly distinguished. Here, both the verbally performed and the linguistically proto-performed, occupy such similar spaces that their distinction would most productively happen elsewhere; and I leave that to those who follow my study.

These multiple subjectivities are characteristic of the Latino/a community, and through these different synergies, along with the significant component of comedy, people are able to theorize their Latino/a experience. Often, metafiction fogs the program's content; stories within stories are juxtaposed with realistic situations, which nonetheless appear fictional. These are expressions of radio "magical realism" where fantasy and every day experience intertwine to form new realities in the radio narrative, loaning it conventions of metafiction as practiced in the literary novel. The "novela de metaficción" addresses narratees, imagined and fictitious individuals to whom the narrator speaks; in the case of *Piolín*, the show addresses technologically mediated narratees, which are the "imagined community" of listeners at whom the show is aimed.

The fourth chapter "***Piolín por la Mañana*: a burst of oral folklore as *cantinfleadas* and *albures***," gives samples of the most popular categories of Mexican jokes, *colmos* (height of stupidity), *parecidos /diferencias* (resemblances/differences) *qué le dijo* (what did he/she say?) and *telones* (curtains), all as presented in *Picardía Mexicana* (1960) by A. Jimenez, an important and often academically neglected pioneer text in the study of Mexican oral folklore. I also transcribe representative moments of

Piolín to show the evolution and centrality of oral folklore in contemporary US Latino/a society. It is important to keep in mind that the program's content varies depending on the participation of the audience. In this section, I treat the Spanish-radio talk show as a radiogenic text, as explained below. Such a text allows the community to practice self-reflection. In "Radiovanguardia: poesía estridentista y radiofonía"[22] Rubén Gallo mentions that Andre Coeuroy divides the radio text in two: radiophonic and radiogenic. Gallo explains, "Los escritos radiofónicos se limitan a describir la radio y los aspectos de la radiodifusión mientras que los textos radiogénicos — como los radiodramas — están escritos para ser transmitidos al aire" (9). According to Gallo and Coeuroy the radiophonic text describes radio, but is not necessarily transmitted on air, while the radiogenic text is written to be transmitted. The fourth chapter shows that some components of the radio program follow a script and others require improvisation from the audience and the main characters in the show; listeners most often do not know which is which. With this oscillation between scripted material and improvisation in mind, this chapter introduces, as explained below, *cantinfleadas* and *albures* as central to the function of the program as a cultural text.

In an effort to understand the identity of people of Mexican descent, humor has been analyzed by Mexicans and Chicano/as on both sides of the border: Samuel Ramos[23] with his efforts to define the national identity of Mexicans through his understanding of the "pelado;" Octavio Paz[24] exploring the national identity with his pejorative depiction

[22] *Mexican Modernity: the Avant-Garde and Technological Revolution*.
[23] *El perfil del hombre y la cultura*.
[24] *El laberinto de la soledad*.

of Mexicans as Chingado/as wearing masks; and Roger Bartra[25] and Jorge Portilla[26] with their study about the culture of "relajo" as a "breakdown on social relations."[27] The work of these Mexican thinkers has been developed by Chicano/as in the United States. Among these US based thinkers are: José Limón[28] with his conception of humor as a unifying force among Chicano/as; Rafaela Castro's[29] exploration of women of Mexican descent confronting their portrayal in jokes and stories; Maria Herrera-Sobek's[30] identification of main themes that people of Mexican origins use in jokes; and Miguel Diaz Barriga's[31] analysis of *relajo* as "the culture of poverty." These intellectuals are major contributors in the discussion of humor related to working class people of Mexican descent on both sides of the border. My contribution to this ongoing and lively dialogue posits *Piolín* as a significant producer of oral folklore; I argue that, in the digital era, *Piolín* allows individuals to form communities of *relajo* (commotion). Although *Piolín's* audience is not only Mexican, working class people form and maintain affiliations through the recycling of Mexican humor presented in *albureadas* (often sexual and/or scatological), which are games of words with double meaning and also in *cantinfleadas*, exaggerated nonsensical verbal comedy performances.[32] In my discussion, I provide

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[25] *The Cage of Melancholy*.
[26] *La Fenomenología del Relajo*.
[27] "The culture of Poverty as Relajo" by Miguel Diaz Barriga.
[28] "Carne, Carnales, and the Carnivalesque: Bakhtinian batos, Disorder, and Narrative Discourses."
[29] "Mexican Women's Sexual Jokes."
[30] *Chicano Folklore: a handbook*.
[31] "The Culture of Poverty as Relajo."
[32] The verb "cantinflear" is defined by the Real Academia Española as "**1.** intr. *Cuba* y *Méx.* Hablar de forma disparatada e incongruente y sin decir nada. **2.** intr. *Cuba* y *Méx.* Actuar de la misma manera." It's a term attributed to Cantinflas, a Mexican comedian. See http://buscon.rae.es/draeI/SrvltConsulta?TIPO_BUS=3&LEMA=canfinfleada Bernice W. Kliman and Rick J. Santos write in *Latin American Shakespeares*, "the actual verb *cantinflear*, which strictly denotes 'speaking much without saying anything' […] is far-fetched at best—as Ilan Stavan's interpretation therein, that *cantinflear* among other things, means 'using language as a weapon.' In general, Mexicans do consider that Cantinflas employed language as a weapon, but that has not carried unto our use and understanding of the verb" (240).

representative examples of the radio text that show the employment of various categories of oral folklore as practiced by a community of listeners and producers. I argue that these techniques of the deployment of humor challenge established structures of power and counteract censure. The show uses diverse linguistic and cultural strategies to target different segments of the audience; it includes anthropological and ethnographical discourses that revolve around topics that affect the US Latino/a community. These are people who in the show use their imagination to shift between different levels of reality. Fictitious and real male characters show chauvinist attitudes, homosexuals accept their sexuality with laughter and mockery, and women talk about sex comfortably.

The fifth chapter "***Piolín por la Mañana*, a time and space for *mojarras*,"**maps "nonce taxonomies" of recognizable immigrant personalities, types of people that one might come across in everyday life; the characters fit types, recognizable but not necessarily exactly flush with any one setting or person.[33] Piolín's "types" are, that is to say, not modeled on recognized celebrities or political figures. One character, Don Casimiro, likes to drink, and when he is drunk, he becomes aggressively, but comedically--via innuendo-- interested in men. Don Poncho, another "nonce taxonomical" character from *Piolín,* is a "macho man" who often calls women "inferiors"; he frequently gets chided by callers for his misogyny, and responds

[33] Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, in *Epistemology of the Closet*, writes: "Everybody has learned this, I assume, and probably everybody who survives at all has reasonably rich, unsystematic resources of nonce taxonomy for mapping out the possibilities, dangers, and stimulations of oppression or subordination who have most *need* to know it; and I take the precious, devalued arts of gossip, immemorially associated in European thought with the refinement of necessary skills for making, testing, and using unrationalized and provisional hypotheses about what *kinds of people* there are to be found in one's world" (23). Judith Halberstam explores, with varied success, the use of nonce taxonomies of "female masculinity" in her book of the same name. She suggests that male identified female subjects require local and temporally various names for their subject positions. I will suggest that the same is true for undocumented workers in the U.S. The characters that *Piolín* invents offer consolidated "nonce taxonomical" categories with which his listeners may identify or disidentify (Muñoz, *Disidentification*, 5).

characteristically like an asshole. The comments that Don Poncho makes about women generated complaints from the radio audience, and due to their volume, his character has become less brutally misogynist. Chela Prieto, abandoned by her husband, is raising her two sons by herself, Culantro, and Chiquilín. She is helplessly and gloriously vulgar. In contradistinction to these fairly flamboyant characters, Betty appears as incredibly normal, flat and proper. She is a divorced woman in her thirties and serves as a "comic foil,"[34] for the more loose-tongued characters. She is constantly scandalized by the vulgarity of others. *La Flor Marchita del Tallo* is a homosexual character who works as a *hierbera* giving absurd advice, interpreting dreams and generally serving as the butt of homophobic jokes. Beyond these comic types, the program offers real and not "funny advice" via the personae of a lawyer, a sexologist, a psychologist, and others. While these real experts fit into comedy sketches, they nonetheless offer clearly stated, well-founded, advice to listeners.

Although there is a stable of characters that appear regularly, either comic or advice- bearing, perhaps the most important narrative element of the radio program is the input of the call-in audience. This call-in audience is a constant, while the radio talk show itself frequently changes its structure. Skits do not follow any predictable course and the show itself often ends quite abruptly. This chapter analyzes verbal interaction that takes place in *Piolín* between the main characters in the show and the participation of the audience. I identify some of the cultural tropes that originate from the *peladito/a* (rascal) figure that appear in the *Teatro de Carpa* (ambulant theater) and that have also been

[34] "The use of a character who, by contrast, brings out the comic qualities of another character (or of other characters). The comic foil is the straight man in a pair of comedians […] who allows the other to be funny, makes them funnier, without doing anything funny themselves." See: http://www.statemaster.com/encyclopedia/Comic-foil

present in comics, movies, and television. Rita Urquijo-Ruiz explains that in September 1927 *El Universal*, a newspaper in Mexico published the comic titled "Vaciladas de El Chupamirto" where characters were versions of *peladitos* (Urquijo-Ruiz 53). She suggests that Cantinflas and others like him copy the character and costume of this familiar trope. Tomás Ybarra-Frausto extrapolates in "I can Still Hear the Applause"[35] that the *carpa,* originally from Mexico and popular in the South West of the U.S., follows the tradition of the circus, and was extremely popular in that area from the late nineteenth- century to the 1940s. Ybarra-Frausto mentions that *carpas* had characteristics that range from "non-verbal forms of theatre like the carnival and *mimus* of antiquity" to the inclusion of "spectacles combining dancing, singing and acrobatics" (47). This type of entertainment was made of semi-improvised and spontaneous situations that satirized the social condition of Mexicans and Chicano/as in the Southwest. The author states that "*Carpa* performances were fluid, open, semi-structured presentational events with direct audience interaction and feedback" (47). *Carpas* used to travel from town to town targeting the *plebe*, the common people. Some of the prevailing themes in the shows were bodily functions, the process of *agringamiento*, and the cross-cultural nature of language. This humor functioned as a "chronicle of social processes." From this environment the *pelado*[36] emerges, imitating other *pelados* that had already appeared in *carpas* in Mexico City. Like the *carpa*, *Piolín* shares characteristics extrapolated by Ybarra-Frausto, and it travels through the power of radio, and the Internet, arriving at the "imagined community" of listeners identifying themselves with the *peladito/a* figure.

[35] *Hispanic Theatre in the United States*.
[36] Ybarra-Frausto uses the term *pelado* as the *peladito* that Rita Urquijo-Ruiz writes about, contrasting the *pelado* that Samuel Ramos describes as barbarian. See *Perfil del hombre y la cultura en México*.

I present the Spanish-language talk show *Piolín por la Mañana* as a successor of the traditional *carpa*; that is, instead of the ambulant theater that travels physically, the talk show travels digitally and arrives in diverse locations throughout the US. It is an "imaginary space" where *la nopalada,* interacts. I use this term to identify *la plebe* or the common people of Mexican descent. Sometime we are also called *la indiada* (the indigenous). The term is related to the aboriginal tribe of the Aztecs who departed from Aztlán and founded Tenochtitlán on a lake. The war god *Huitzilopochtli* had instructed the tribe to build the Aztec city on the place where they found an eagle posed on a *nopal* (cactus) and devouring a snake. This is the image of the Mexican flag, which is located in the center of the tricolor national emblem.[37] Being a *nopal* (noun) or *nopaludo/a* (adj) has to do with the appearance, and condition that people have of being indigenous; it is also used as a derogatory term to describe someone who is dumb or stupid. Mexicans describe the *nopal* as *baboso,* which means "drooling" because the cactus salivates like when someone is "retarded" or *menso.* Some people also call us *la tlacuachada*, which is a general noun that describes the groups of *tlacuaches* (possums). The *tlacuache* comes from the Nahuatl *tlacuatzin*, a not very good looking Mexican omnivorous creature that lives in caves. This marsupial is a survivor that often steals food from people in order to continue to live; chicken's eggs and chickens themselves are among its favorite dishes. The *tlacuaches* have big families (from one to sixteen members) that often live in the same nest. The human being is their worst enemy along with birds of prey. As a defense mechanism, the *tlacuache* pretends to be dead in order to escape predators, but when the mother has to defend her children, she attacks aggressively. The *tlacuache*'s skin is coveted and used to produce fancy leather products, and its meat and oil are wanted to

[37] The Mexican flag is divided in green, white and red.

alleviate painful diseases such as arthritis, stomachaches, and to fortify the blood. Superstitious people believe that a woman who is not fertile can procreate if she drinks an elaborated hot chocolate with a small portion of *tlacuache's* tail in it.

Some cultural figures, like the *tlacuache*, that appear in the show are *peladitos/peladitas, mojarras, valemadristas, carnales/carnalas, comadres/compadres, hocicones/ hociconas,* and *nacos/nacas*. I read this contemporary Spanish-language radio-text in relation to literary, historical, and cultural conventions by performing content analysis on the *Piolín* radio-text, and by examining the interaction of its characters and audience. The program is extremely popular with the Latino/a working class immigrant community, which both creates and consumes it.[38] It speaks to the ways that narrative tropes, inherited from literary and dramatic convention, influence subject creation and modification in U.S. society. Considering the very important, contested, and often obfuscated, role immigrant communities presently play in the U.S., my argument has broad implications; this chapter offers a new optic through which to examine the ways in which U.S. Latino/a subjects are imagined and constructed.

The sixth chapter "***Piolín*: a carnivalesque experience in radio,"** analyzes *Piolín* as a radio carnival that takes place in an era of digital communication. The program is the product of a *reproductive textual mestizaje* that unites different textual elements in combination with life experience, technology and old and new forms of cultural production; these elements invite scholars to find new modes of cultural analysis as well as new teaching methodologies and ways of playing and interpreting art. *Piolín* is a carnival in a cybernetic era where the power of technology and the Internet allow

[38] Most of the people that call the program are working class individuals.

movement in multiple directions. I used the theory of the carnival by Mikhail Bakhtin and argued that in the carnivalesque experience of the radio program, *Piolín* is a mask that covers the face of the interlocutors to make the experience annonymous. Similar to what Bakhtin proposes, *Piolín* does not make distinction between performers and spectators because the people that live in the carnival, allow 'mass action;' people have magical contact with one another. The carnival in *Piolín* also provides an extraordinary celebratory blending between diverse people, allowing the 'sacred and the profane' to come together. It provides a space where profanation brings people down to earth to the level of the body, which allows death and renewal to take place through laughter and parody. The carnivalesque experience, similar to Bakhtin's theory, also identifies diverse types of laughter, legends, unofficial histories and locations that provide the feeling of a great sense of community where the ritual spectacle is observed in a cybernetic and digital event similar to carnival pageants and comic shows that take place in markets. These spectacles include comic verbal compositions like the oral and written parodies practiced in the language of the people. The show is composed of ritualistic elements like curses, and oaths, representative of the popular speech of the working class people that listen to *Piolín*. The structure of the carnival, which includes a mixture of comic elements along with benign curses and profane oaths welcome the development of *Mojarra Aesthetics*, a cultural production of avante-garde and a medium to study the immigrant humor of the Latino/a working class community that suffers from persecution.

CHAPTER 2

PIOLÍN POR LA MAÑANA: CONNECTING COMMUNITIES THROUGH RADIO

Si te bañas en el mar

no te quites los calzones por que
la jaiba te va morder
te va morder te va morder

la jaiba te va a morder
te va morder te va morder[39]

In this chapter, I briefly outline the history of Hispanics of Mexican descent in the United States. For these populations, Spanish and English comingle; they are, as discussed below, "contact languages." Individuals use both languages, often combined, to communicate and interact. Radio intensifies this linguistic and cultural interaction. It is a powerful transborder medium with a rich history of linking geographically and nationally diverse Mexican populations. The radio talk show, further, is central to both the linguistic and cultural cross pollination that this medium permits. Interestingly, Arbitron, the company that monitors the popularity of radio stations in the US is arguably, deeply unreliable when it comes to Spanish-language radio--this, in direct contradistinction to the importance of the cultural information Arbitron's statistics might provide.

Piolín por la Mañana, by any standard, is the most popular Spanish-language radio show in the United States, and it is spectacularly popular in California, as Joel Russell points out in "Cucuy makes his exit after ratings slide: Piolín grips top of

[39] Fragment of song "La jaiba mordelona," by Los Karkiks.

Spanish scene." Russell argues that Mexicans and Central Americans dominate Los Angeles' Spanish-language radio market, while Puerto Ricans dominate the market in New York and Cubans do in Miami: "[This state of things] makes national programming a challenge. [However], Piolín currently ranks as the top Spanish-language DJ across the country, thanks in large part to marketing by Univisión. Piolín's show is syndicated in 50 U.S. markets [*i.e.*, regions]…"(Ibid).

Piolín por la Mañana maps what critic Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick calls "nonce taxonomies," recognizable immigrant personalities, types of people that one might come across in the everyday, working-class life of people of Mexican descent. That is, the multiple voices in the program allows us to notice performed categories of different types of people's behaviors even if it is for a short period of time. The program features comic segments that depend on audience participation and audience interaction with these characters. Piolín puts real people in conversation with "real" people. *Piolín* mediates a lion's share of political and technological contact with Latino/a popular culture. The program has a surprisingly, and not immediately obvious, political side and politicians attempt to use it to influence the Latino/a community, with various levels of success. I argue that the show allows, in fact, encourages, audience interaction and identification with *particular* groups of relocated migrants. For instance, a Chicana, born and raised in the US, self-identified as Mexican, moves from Los Angeles to North Carolina; she can stay in touch with the "imagined community" she identifies with, Los Angeles' Hispanics. Immigrants from Latin America experience this same identification with "imagined communities." As they move around the United States, they bring a sense of

their cultural identity with the now ubiquitous, and extremely inexpensive, technology of the radio receiver.

The focus of my analysis revolves around "Hispanics" or "Latino/as." America Rodriguez, in *Making Latino News,* argues that the terms "Hispanic" and "Latino/a" are constructions that were made to reach populations of Spanish-language consumers in the US. She maintains that: "[t]he term Hispanic began to be used with increasing frequency in the 1970s by governmental agencies to designate Spanish-surnamed or Spanish-speaking peoples. In 1980, the Census Bureau used this 'generic…homogenizing label' for the first time on its survey forms" (39). Rodriguez contends that people from Latin America not living in the US do not identify themselves as Latino/as or Hispanic; instead, they identify themselves by their nationality: Mexican, Cuban, Puerto Rican, Salvadorian, Peruvian, etc. Rodriguez writes, "The historical, specific representation of Latino/as, first as Mexicans; then as Hispanics, but also Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, and Cubans; and finally today as Hispanics of no particular origin, has been a rapidly evolving process of denationalization and then renationalization as members of a social construct called Hispanic USA" (44). The terms Hispanic and Latino/a, as explicated by Rodriguez, helps to understand the larger US culture's identification and representation of people with Latin American roots. This concept harkens back to Cuban poet José Martí's 1891 essay, "Nuestra América" where he recommends *Pan-Americanism.* By this, he means the unification of Latin America *against* US colonization. Martí's essay communicates the need to have leaders and intellectuals who are in touch with the people they represent, and who are not embarrassed about their own indigenous roots. Following Martí's idea of unity among people of Latin American descent, I will use the term "Hispanic" and

"Latino/a" interchangeably to make reference to people of Latin American origins that now live in the United States. *Hispanic* is an incredibly baggy category. However, the US census uses it. It is not precise, but it is pervasive. I use it to indicate people who presently use Spanish as one of their primary modes of communication.

Contact languages via radio

Hispanics are the largest minority in the United States.[40] Their history stretches back to the time of the Spanish conquistadors. Spaniards, such as Juan Ponce de León (1513) and Albar Nuñez Cabeza de Vaca (1528), were on the North American Continent before the Pilgrims arrived on the East Coast of North America .[41] Spanish settler populations merged, often violently, with indigenous peoples living in what is now Mexican territory, producing a *mestizaje,* a mixture of Spanish and indigenous peoples. People of Mexican origin, both Spanish and indigenous, experienced a sudden dislocation in 1848 with the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo,[42] when, under the imperative of Manifest

[40] http://www.census.gov/Press-Release/www/releases/archives/facts_for_features_special_editions/013984.html
[41] English Puritans establish the New-Plymouth Colony on November 11, 1620
[42] For details of the Treaty of Guadalupe http://avalon.law.yale.edu/19th_century/guadhida.asp
Jacob Hornberg points out that through the "Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo Mexico loses half of its national territory. The United States pays Mexico $15,000,000 in exchange of California, New Mexico, Arizona, Utah, Nevada, Wyoming and part of Colorado. Mexico renounces to Texas and the international border is established in the Rio Grande." http://laprensa-sandiego.org/archieve/march26/history2.htm

Destiny,[43] Anglos conquered the area now known as the Southwestern United States. The Mexicans north of the Río Grande became American citizens.[44]

What is considered the "second wave" of Mexican relocation to the United States happened during the Mexican Revolution (1910-1921). This group of immigrants included intellectuals such as the Flores Magón brothers, as well as Mariano Azuela, the author of *Los de abajo,* a seminal novel about the Mexican Revolution. Other important intellectuals who immigrated at this time include Antonio Díaz Soto y Gama, who "collaborated with *La Reforma Social* [an anarchist newspaper in El Paso, TX] in 1903. He was the first of the famous self-proclaimed Mexican anarchists who sought refuge in El Paso. He came to the border city in 1903 to escape death threats from Mexican officials whom he had denounced in his writings" (55).[45]

The "third wave" of Mexicans entering the United States stretches from after the fallout of the Mexican Revolution to the present day. They are documented, as well as undocumented individuals, who imagine having a better life in the United States. For

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[43] Michael Fitzgerald writes, "As a slogan, 'Indian removal' was a bit blunt. 'Manifest destiny' had a more Orwellian snap. The term was coined in 1845 by *Democratic Review* editor John L. O'Sullivan, an Irish-Catholic. O'Sullivan intended the phrase to mean the flowering of democracy, not Anglo-Saxonism. Ironically, Manifest Destiny became a metonym--and a justification--for Anglo-Saxon domination. O'Sullivan, perhaps unwittingly, spoke to the Calvinist mindset: The word 'destiny' alluded to predestination. 'Manifest' hinted at the materialization of wealth reserved for the Elect. Manifest Destiny was nothing more than 'a cluster of flimsy rationalizations for naked greed,'…" See http://www.leftcurve.org/LC29WebPages/ManifestDestiny.html

[44] For more information about the history of people of Mexican descent in the USA see *Mexican Americans, American Mexicans : from Conquistadors to Chicanos* by Matt S. Meier. He writes: "[People of Mexican descent] traces its origins to earlier settlers from central Mexico and Spain, some of whom arrived in the Southwest before the *Mayflower* reached New England and all of whom arrived before the 1846 U.S.-Mexican War." (3).

[45] "The Partido Liberal Mexicano made their first national call for an armed revolution while they were hiding in El Paso in September 1906. 'Citizens in legitimate defense of liberties treaded upon by the criminal despotism of the usurper Porfirio Díaz…we rebel against the dictator,' the proclamation began. The PLM appealed to federal officers who sympathized with the revolutionary cause, offering an immediate promotion of two ranks as well as corresponding wages to those who joined the rebel forces. One peso per day was promised to all others who joined the insurrecto army" (Romo 55).

example, "The Bracero Program," 1942 to 1964,[46] brought documented agricultural workers from Mexico to work on US agricultural fields. However, the need for cheap labor and agricultural workers in the United States as well as the increase in Mexican poverty provoked and continues to provoke more documented and undocumented immigration. Currently, there are about 12 million undocumented workers in the United States and the majority of them are Mexicans.[47]

US Spanish is deeply intertwined with immigration flows of Hispanics arriving in the United States. In regard to Mexico, Rosaura Sanchez, in *Chicano Discourse: Socio-historic Perspectives*, argues that the US Mexican population is a heterogeneous minority distinguished by important differentiation in nativity, generation, occupation, residency, education, income, and language choice. Sanchez maintains that "the effects of particular social and historical factors on the Mexican-origin population, its culture and language, can be appreciated and crystallized through a historical approach, which traces the population's initial and subsequent movements or migration from Mexico to the United States" (6). She contends that agriculture, railroading, mining and ranching as well as manufacturing, urbanization, mechanization of agriculture, urban-industry, and, more recently, agri-business with corporate interests, have controlled the economy of the Southwest. This economy has increased the presence of Spanish in the US due to three factors. The first factor in the proliferation of Spanish in the US is continuing, and increasing, Mexican immigration; the second is the need for cheap labor; and the third, related to the second, is the use of "temporary labor." According to Sanchez, "These factors have inevitably reinforced the maintenance of the Spanish language by creating

[46] *Why immigrants come to America: braceros, indocumentados, and the migra* by Robert Joe Stout.
[47] http://pewhispanic.org/

propitious social conditions" (11). Along the same lines, Carmen Silva-Corvalán, in *Sociolingüística y pragmática del español*, argues that although the majority of Hispanics in the US are of Mexican-origin, the *Spanish Borderlands*[48] are presently being more densely hispanized by waves of immigrants from Central America, South America and Spain. This state of affairs affects the ways in which people speak Spanish in the United States; it makes Spanish into a "contact language." Spanish of various varieties from diverse geographical areas is intermingling with equally diverse varieties of English. Silva-Corvalán argues that two or more languages are in contact when utilized in the same geographical location by the same, bilingual or multilingual, people. When two or more languages are in contact with one another, they create unique effects on all the languages involved. These effects include "simplificación, la hipergeneralización, la transferencia, el análisis, la convergencia y el intercambio de códigos" (272). That is, speakers whose languages intersect may experience, as defined by linguists: simplification, hypergeneralization, transference, analysis, convergence, and code switching.[49] Pidgin is "una variedad intralingüística, una lengua mixta o mezclada, que no es adquirida como lengua materna por ningún grupo social" (290). It is a mixed language that cannot be acquired as a mother tongue. When pidgin develops into a linguistic system rich in vocabulary and complex in morphology and syntax and is acquired as a mother tongue by a group of speakers, it becomes a *lengua criolla*.

[48] In *Bolton and the Spanish Borderlands* John Francis Bannon compares different versions of American history and writes, "Of course, if what happened in the Borderlands—along the Gulf of Mexico, in the Southwest, and on the shore of the Pacific—prior to the days of Manifest Destiny has only a minor importance in the American story, then the man who is so largely responsible for those chapters of the American epic is proportionately inconsequential among American historians" (19).
[49] For a better understanding of these linguistic concepts see Silva-Corvalán.

Expanding the study of languages in contact, Ilán Stavans argues that *Spanglish* is the manifestation of a linguistic *mestizaje* that Latino/as in the United States experience. Stavans presents *Spanglish* in the following terms:

> Spanglish también is often an intra ethnic vehicle of communication, through only en los Unaited Esteits. It is used by Hispanics to establish a form of empathy between one another [… .] Spanglish, for one thing, is a result of the evident clash between two full-fledged, perfectly discernible lenguas, and it is not defined by class. (*Spanglish* 43)

Piolín, the program, is a linguistic petri dish. The concepts of both contact languages and Spanglish are central to understanding its cultural and linguistic context and content. Further, the program serves as an excellent site where we can see these theories in living color.

Radio as a transborder medium

Historically, radio has been a powerful transborder medium with a rich history of linking geographically and nationally diverse populations. It stretches back to its origins; on December 12, 1901, Marconi sent a message from England to St John's, Newfoundland via Morse code. This was the launch of transatlantic wireless communication.[50] The innovation enabled David Sarnoff to receive the names of the

[50] "Marconi's success- and let us not for a one moment belittle his achievement- was largely due to the fact that his work was based upon the very sure foundations which had been laid in earlier years by some of the leading scientists and mathematicians of the nineteenth century. Outstanding among them are the names of Faraday, Maxwell, Lodge and Hertz." (Garratt 1) See *The early history of radio: from Faraday to Marconi.*

survivors of the Titanic disaster on April 14, 1912,[51] and allowed the results of the presidential contest between John Calvin and Warren Harding to be broadcast on November 2, 1920. These were only a few of the historic events of the so called "Golden Age"[52] of radio. Other important novelties, such as the founding of NBC[53] (National Broadcasting Company) by Sarnoff and the founding of CBS[54] (Columbia Phonogram Broadcasting System) by William S. Peiley, started the battle of the networks. Both companies competed in the business of making and producing radio programs and in the process making radio stars. *Amos 'n' Andy*[55] was the first comedy program on radio, and was continuously broadcast by NBC for 37 years. Comedy, one of the most popular forms of entertainment on radio, turned into good therapy during the depression of the 1930s; laughter softened severe economic hardships. In the mid 1930s swing reached radio-- important figures like Benny Goodman[56] achieved fame. Radio soap-operas became popular among housewives and evangelical religious programs like Billy Sunday's[57] reached the masses. Suspense, drama, news, and politics were some of the important areas revolutionized by radio. For example, Franklin Roosevelt[58] was

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[51] *Communities of the air, radio century, radio culture* by Susan Merrill Squier. She writes, "Still, Marconi's invention did make possible the rescue of nearly nine hundred lives by the *Carpathia*, the only ship to receive the Titanic's signals […] The radio act of 1912 responded to the tragedy of the Titanic by giving distress calls priority over all other wireless transmissions, requiring all wireless operators to be licensed, and relegating amateurs to the shortwave part of the radio spectrum" (11).

[52] The "radio golden age" is the period of time when radio was popular due to the absence of television. Dolores Casillas identifies this period from 1920s to 1950s. She writes in *Sounds of belonging*: "Not only do romanticized accounts of the golden days of early radio ignore the masses of non-English-language radio listeners, they symbolically marginalize Mexicans and fellow U.S. Latinos from that era's on mass and popular culture" (57). She explains that due to the lack of information about Spanish-language radio in this period of time, she had to investigate in newspaper articles, radio schedules, listings from the epoch.

[53] The NBC was created in November 15, 1926.

[54] Born in 1927. See: Albert Auster "Columbia Broadcasting System." http://www.museum.tv/eotvsection.php?entrycode=columbiabroa

[55] http://www.midcoast.com/~lizmcl/aa.html

[56] *When swing was the thing: Personality profiles of a big band* era by John R. Tumpak.

[57] *Preacher: Billy Sunday and Big-Time American Evangelism* by Roger A. Bruns.

[58] "Franklin Roosevelt first inaugural address" http://www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/USArooseveltF.htm

particularly successful in using the medium of radio to reach the masses, and his success on radio contributed to his election to four terms as President. Michael C. Keith, in *Radio Cultures/ The Sound Medium in American Life*, writes, "When the Depression placed the nation in the quicksand of financial despair, President Roosevelt turned to radio to galvanize people behind his administration's plans to reverse the harrowing descent. On some 30 occasions, FDR spoke directly to America's citizens over the airwaves" (1). Keith contends that people's awareness of civil rights was increased in the late 1950s and through the 1960s as radio was used to give voice to marginalized groups. "By the late 1960s, the nation's indigenous community had been watching the Black Power movement with keen interest and decided to emulate its strategy for addressing social wrongs" (2). The gay and lesbian community started to be heard mainly in non-commercial radio and, conversely, hate broadcasts blossomed in the 1980s and 1990s denigrating women, gays and lesbians, and other minority communities. Parallel the use of radio as a medium of social change, historical and international events such as the Spanish Civil War, and World War II, were reported by radio. This technology revolutionized communication across the face of the globe and connected Mexicans across the US-Mexican border.

Radio has intensified the linguistic and cultural interaction of Mexicans. It is a powerful transborder medium linking geographically and nationally diverse Mexican populations. Patricia Ortega Ramirez, in "La Industria de la Radio y la Televisión Mexicana,"[59] argues that radio in Mexico has always been linked to the commercial growth of national and international corporations. She reports that commercial radio in

[59] *Los trabajadores de la radio y la televisión en México: los sindicatos STIRT y SITATYR* by Carmen Patricia Ortega Ramírez.

Mexico first appeared in 1923; the first licenses were given to commercial radio stations like XEB, which belonged to a French cigarette company,[60]and CYL owned by Raul Azcárraga. Azcárraga, owner of a great deal of Mexican media, developed XEW known as "La Voz de América Latina,"[61] a commercial radio station that was affiliated with NBC (National Broadcasting Corporation), and provided Mexican programming for a radio station in Los Angeles. In *Making Latino News,* America Rodrigues writes, *"*Azcárraga owned five radio stations along the U.S.-Mexico border that transmitted directly into the United States […] Mexican artists under contract to Azcárraga would perform in Azcárraga-owned theaters and broadcast stations in Mexico, and subsequently on radio stations in the United States" (31). This magnate developed chains of commercial radio stations all over Mexico in the 1940s and made television fashionable in the 1950s.[62] Television expanded nationally in the 1960s and gave birth to *Televisa* in the 1970s; this was the television corporation that dominated most of the country's programming in the 1980s and 1990s. Historically, Televisa has provided a great deal of content for radio and television in the United States, including celebrity gossip, comedy, and *telenovelas.* There is much overlap and influence between Televisa, *Piolín* and Univisión.

The radio talk show is central to both the linguistic and cultural cross pollination that this medium permits. Dolores Casillas, in *Voices of Belonging*, argues that the radio talk show became popular in the 1960s when radio sets were made in the form of pocket transmitters, taking the place of traditional town hall forums, where people gathered to

[60] El Buen Tono was a French cigarette company that owned XEB.
[61] XEW was born on September 18, 1930.
[62] Patricia Ortega Ramirez explains that the beginning of television attracted workers who had experience in radio as well as cinema stars, who helped made television attractive to the public. XEW Canal 2 in 1951was the beginning of a television era in Mexico.

discuss social and political events. On radio talk shows listeners could participate from home via telephone. Casillas holds that the talk format appeals to Latino/as because of the accessibility of the media; often the working class audience takes their radios to their work place. Casillas also suggests that the invisibility of Latino/a workers absents them from political decisions and "radio makes up for this 'invisibility' with 'voice,' a type of 'disembodied presence' made possible by callers who make their own voices audible" (194). Along the same lines, Susan J. Douglas, in "Letting the Boys Be Boys," argues that diverse sorts of masculinities helped make the genre successful. Douglas writes that:

> …a new gender hybrid, the male hysteric, emerged on talk radio as a deft if sometimes desperate fusion of the desire to thwart feminism with the reality of having to live with and accommodate it … . [T]alk radio began to make national headlines in the mid-1980s, when Howard Stern gained increasing notoriety and earned the moniker 'shock jock,' and Alan Berg, an especially combative talk show host in Denver, was murdered- - presumably, it was thought, by one of his infuriated listeners. (*Radio Reader* 486)

Throughout time radio talk shows have been particularly important for people of Mexican origin in the United States. For instance, America Rodriguez explains, in *Making Latino News,* that during the twenties and early thirties immigration of Mexicans in the United States was circular, and Mexican workers used to go back and forth between the US and Mexico. This was "a period that preceded widely available recordings[;] radio drama and musical performances were broadcast live by immigrant artists" (29). Pedro Gonzalez and his radio program, "Los Madrugadores" (The Early

Risers), "began broadcasting from KELW, Burbank, California (just north of Los Angeles), in 1927" (29). Rodriguez contends that because of the mass deportations in the 1930s, the district attorney and other government authorities tried to ban Spanish-language programming from the airwaves and as a consequence many stations moved to the Mexican side to stay on the air. There were also other political pressures, which manifested themselves in political scandal; most notably, Pedro Gonzalez, a musician and performing artist became a well-recognized radical figure in Mexican American politics. In 1934, he was charged with rape. This was widely understood to be a trumped-up charge; regardless, he was sentenced to 50 years in jail. Due to protests by the immigrant community, however, he was released from prison after six years and deported in 1940. Political pressure around Gonzalez's arrest caused the radio station where he worked to stop all programming in Spanish.

Despite the challenges, Spanish-language radio has been relevant in the development of the Latino/a community as Mari Castañeda suggests in her article, "The Importance of Spanish-Language and Latino Media."[63] Castañeda studies the Spanish-language media and writes that "it is very important within the larger cultural and political landscape, especially when English-language media continues to misrepresent and/or erase Latina/o experiences in the United States" (64). Spanish language media contributes to the dynamic relationship between "immigration flows, global media in the U.S. communication infrastructure" (51) and offers new ways of "encounter, empowerment, and representation" (52). The Latino population is growing fast, and it is becoming a "Latin goldmine" for marketers, which is reflected in the "cross –ownership

[63] *Latino/a Communication Studies Today* by Anghard N. Valdivia (ed.)

in Spanish-language media and the ways in which the politics of ownership [are] shaping the contours and growth across the broader industry" (54). Radio has accrued significant cultural, social, and political centrality because of its popularity and consumption. Castañeda writes:

> Spanish-language and Latino media often position themselves as mediators in the acculturation and assimilation processes of Latinos in the United States and as a result, tend to emphasize a social service orientation to journalism and entertainment that provides relevant news and information. (59)

Castañeda recognizes that Spanish-language and Latino/a media in the United States tends to historically serve the political and practical needs of the Latino/a community.

Growth of Spanish-language media in the US

US Spanish-language media has grown with the US Latino population. San Antonio, Texas, in 1946 gave birth to KCOR-AM, a radio station that later developed into a television station with the same name in 1955.[64] Raúl Cortez, owner of these television and radio station, sold this package to a business group in 1961. Emilio Azcárraga was a partner in this group and although he did not legally own any of the broadcast outlets, he became very influential in the development of Hispanic media in the US. Azcárraga could not have total control of channels because "[f]oreign ownership of broadcast outlets violates a key provision of the U.S. Communications Act of 1934" (Rodriguez 44). After transferring ownership, the KCOR television station became the UHF (currently under the name KWEX), considered the first commercial Spanish-language station in the US.

Major international events, like the 1970 World Cup, were broadcast in Spanish by the Spanish International Network that was created in 1962. The creation of this network inspired the growth of others, like the Spanish-language cable Galavisión Network in 1979;[65] these associations continued to grow robustly. For example, in 1981 the Spanish International Network received authorization to obtain foreign programming

[64] "History of Univision" http://corporate.univision.com/corp/en/history.jsp
[65] *Blue skies: a history of cable television* by Patrick R. Parson.

through satellite, Univisión is born in 1987,[66] and the Latin American chains Televisa (Mexico) and Venevisión (Venezuela) buy Univisión from Hallmark Card Inc in 1992.[67]

Univisión gradually became the largest US Spanish-language media: it went public on the New York Stock Exchange in 1996, appeared online in 2000, and acquired the largest Spanish-language radio broadcasting company (Hispanic Broadcasting Corporation) in 2003. Univisión expanded in different directions, for example, it launched Univisión Movil in 2003.[68] In 2005, it merged with Nielsen Television Index and, then, in 2006 with Telefutura. This national and international expansion made Univisión the key medium to reach Hispanics. For example, in 2007, US Hispanics experienced the first historical two Spanish-language broadcast forums with Democratic and Republican candidates. Currently, Univisión provides--on radio, television, and the web--Spanish-language coverage of social, political, economic, and cultural events that are relevant to the Hispanic community.

Arbitron

Spanish-language radio has traditionally been neglected by Arbitron, the largest radio ratings company in the U.S. This neglect occurs in direct contradistinction to the importance of the cultural information Arbitron's statistics might provide. Dolores Casillas, in *Sounds of Belonging*, notes that "Although radio listening measurements have been critiqued for their unreliability, they are still regarded as 'objective' and quantitative

[66]According to America Rodriguez, "In 1986, after an investigation by the Federal Communication, SIN was found to be in violation of the Communications Act and was ordered sold. Hallmark Cards of Kansas City, Missouri, assumed ownership and changed the network's name to *Univisión*" (*Making Latino News* 44).
[67] "In 1997, the founder's grandson, Emilio Azcarraga Jean, inherited the principal ownership of Televisa" (*Making Latino News* 45).
[68] "Streaming Radio." http://streamingradioguide.com/blogradio/?page_id=709

representations of the attentive U. S. radio listenership" (261). Casillas studies how Arbitron, in business since 1965, tabulates and classifies Hispanic or Latino/a radio listeners, and presents two methodologies used: one is listener diaries and the other is the new Portable People Meter (PPM). Since 1992 Arbitron has functioned without a rival; in the 1930s and 1940s it relied on telephone surveys, audiometers, and personal/household listener diaries to tabulate data. However, the Portable People Meter (PPM),[69] created to make rating tabulations more precise, lost its credibility. Further, Arbitron's ratings are doubtful due to disparate ownership of home phone lines by Hispanics and measurement practices that do not account for factors of race and language.

The above-outlined history shows the important transborder, cross-linguistic, and cross-cultural function radio has played for the US Latino/a population. One can easily see how radio increases the surface area of Spanish and English as "contact languages." In a way, for US Latino/as in relation to radio, the medium is the message and vice versa; radio makes a peculiar audience and that audience shapes the content of radio. This volatile cultural terrain is peopled by "characters," which I will map via "nonce taxonomies," familiar from other media. Pre-radio media, such as theater, literature, and the common joke lend their tropes to radio even as they are transformed by its spatial, temporal, and national expansiveness.

[69] "The PPM resembles a pager, a device worn by participants who are randomly selected through phone calls. It functions as an electronic ear, detecting inaudible signals embedded in the audio portion of media and entertainment content delivered by broadcasters, content providers and distributors. The use of these inaudible codes depends on the cooperation and subscription of radio stations" (Ibid 247).

Piolín por la Mañana

Piolín por la Mañana,[70] a Spanish-language radio talk show broadcast by Los Angeles-based radio station, La Nueva 101.9 FM,[71] is created and directed by Eduardo Piolín Sotelo,[72] a Mexican immigrant. He entered the United States as "undocumented,"[73] and through a long process, including a close brush with deportation, he achieved "legal" status after an interview with the immigration judge who was slated to order his deportation: "Le dije al juez, 'yo no le pido que me dé la residencia ni la ciudadanía, solo una oportunidad de demostrarle que yo soy una de las miles de personas que vinimos a buscar una mejor vida y que usted haría lo mismo si estuviera en mi posición, la buscaría en cualquier parte del mundo.'"[74] Sotelo told the judge that he did not ask for a green card nor American citizenship, but instead, only the opportunity to show that he, like thousands of other people, came to the United States willing to work toward a better life; if the judge were in his position, Sotelo proposed, he might well have done the same thing. This argument was so effective that the judge gave Sotelo a work permit; thus, he was granted the opportunity to become a legal resident, and eventually,

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[70] Previous to *Piolín por la Mañana*, the Spanish-language radio talk show that dominated the mornings in Southern California was *El Cucuy de la Mañana* by Renan Almendarez Coello. Media Week published in 2004: "Renan Almendarez Coello, known to his fans as El Cucuy, left Univision Radio for rival Spanish Broadcasting System. Univision execs had suspended Coello in mid-February after he walked out of the studios of KSCA-FM Los Angeles in protest of management […] Last week, Univision released Coello from his contract and he immediately signed with SBS." See: Katy Bachman, "Radio: El Cucuy Jumps to SBS."

[71] Univisión, www.univision.com, streams the program live.

[72] "Piolín" is the Spanish version of Tweety Bird, the yellow canary in Warner Brother's animated cartoons.

[73] I will use the term undocumented worker to refer an individual entering the United States without authorization. The term "illegal immigrant" is less accurate because it indicates that the immigrant him or herself is only negatively defined by his/her juridical status in the United States. It implies that one must ask for permission to be a fully fledged human being.

[74] *Nuevo Siglo Newspaper*. http://www.nuevosiglonews.com/moxie/vida_y_hogar/4_7/el-pioln-de-indocumentado.shtml

in 2008, an American citizen.[75] His work as a radio announcer, as well as his commitment to the legal and cultural issues of undocumented immigrants, has made him a major figure in the Latino/a community[76] in the U.S. The program is an *alboroto*, a rambunctious comedy mash up, and features gossipy characters embodying representative, contemporary aspects of the immigrant experience in the U.S.[77]

"Nonce taxonomies"

Piolín maps "nonce taxonomies" of immigrant personalities, types of people that one might come across in everyday life; the characters fit tropes, recognizable but not necessarily exactly flush with any one setting or person. Segments of the program offer diverse voices that flash recognizable personalities. These flashes can happen in minutes or even seconds, and they change accordingly with audience participation and the use of special effects. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, in *Epistemology of the Closet*, writes:

> Everybody has learned this, I assume, and probably everybody who survives at all has reasonably rich, unsystematic resources of nonce taxonomy for mapping out the possibilities, dangers, and stimulations of oppression or subordination who have most need to know it; and I take the precious, devalued arts of gossip, immemorially associated in European thought with the refinement of necessary skills for making, testing, and using unrationalized and provisional hypotheses about what kinds of people there are to be found in one's world. (23)

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[75] The Orange County Beta Register. http://immigration.freedomblogging.com/2008/05/23/piolin-becomes-a-us-citizen-as-18000-take-oath/710/

[76] Piolín broadcasts Monday through Friday from 5:00 am to 11:00 am and Saturdays from 6:00 am to 10:00 am.

[77] The show started in L.A. as an L.A. themed program, but now, with an audience across the United States it includes the representations of the experience of immigrants throughout the United States.

In other words, accepted types that are already named do not account for an enormous swath of the variety of personalities, situations, and oddities we encounter at the "ground" level. Standard language and accepted types do not give us the tools we need to describe what we come across in everyday life. Judith Halberstam explores, with varied success, the use of nonce taxonomies of "female masculinity" in her book of the same name. She suggests that male identified female subjects require local and temporally various names for their subject positions. I will suggest that the same is true for undocumented workers in the U.S. The characters that *Piolín* invents offer consolidated "nonce taxonomical" categories with which his listeners may identify or disidentify; that is how minority groups negotiate the mainstream culture and transform it for their own cultural purposes (Muñoz 5).

Piolín's "types" are, that is to say, not modeled on recognized celebrities or political figures. One character, Don Casimiro, likes to drink, and when he is drunk, he becomes aggressively, but comedically--via innuendo-- interested in men. Don Poncho, another "nonce taxonomical" character from *Piolín,* is a "macho man" who often calls women "inferiors"; he frequently gets chided by callers for his misogyny, and responds characteristically like a jerk.[78] The comments that Don Poncho makes about women generated complaints from the radio audience, and due to their volume, his character has become less brutally misogynist. Chela Prieto, abandoned by her husband, is raising her two sons by herself, Culantro and Chiquilín. She is helplessly and gloriously vulgar. In contradistinction to these fairly flamboyant characters, Betty appears as incredibly normal, flat and proper. She is a divorced woman in her thirties and serves as a "comic

[78] See my previous observation when I quote Susan J. Douglas and her description of talk show as a "male hysteric genre."

foil,"[79] for the more loose-tongued characters; she is constantly scandalized by the vulgarity of others. *La Flor Marchita del Tallo* is a homosexual character who works as a *hierbera* giving absurd advice, interpreting dreams and generally serving as the butt of homophobic jokes. Beyond these comic types, the program offers real and not "funny" advice via the personae of a lawyer, a sexologist, a psychologist, and others. While these real experts fit into comedy sketches, they nonetheless offer clearly stated, well-founded, advice to listeners. Although there is a stable of characters that appear regularly, either comic or advice- bearing, perhaps the most important narrative element of the radio program is the input of the call-in audience. This call-in audience is a constant, while the radio talk show itself frequently changes its structure. Skits do not follow any predictable course and the show itself often ends quite abruptly.

Piolín, as mentioned, often features comic segments that depend on audience participation and audience interaction with characters. For example, for the "wakeup call Mexican Alarm," a caller requests that a joke wakeup call be made to an intimate in the voice of Speedy Gonzalez.[80] "Good morning, señorita," a rapid fire voice screeches, "I was informed that you requested to be awakened [gun shots and screams]. Arriba, arriba. Time to wake up, señorita!" The butt of the joke generally hangs up, only to have "Speedy" speedily call back and continue with a machine gun spray of high pitched patter. This often results in a startled person's yelling insults and fuming against the rude caller--all to the amusement of listeners, only to end with everyone in the radio studio cracking up. These are national and international jokes, as the calls are often to countries

[79] "The use of a character who, by contrast, brings out the comic qualities of another character (or of other characters). The comic foil is the straight man in a pair of comedians […] who allows the other to be funny, makes them funnier, without doing anything funny themselves." See: http://www.statemaster.com/encyclopedia/Comic-foil

[80] Speedy Gonzalez is the "Fastest Mouse in all Mexico" character from the Warner Brothers.

outside the US, reaching places as far as India, London, and Iraq. Another notable, and recurrent, feature of the program are *bombas*, competitions to come up with clever rhymes, often centering on sexual innuendo, where the actors compete with audience members. For instance, the sexually charged pun, "tu hermana pa' la cama" or "te entierro el fierro" are fairly representative winners. Victory is decided by consensus of both the in-studio group and the listening public.

Apart from the jokes, *Piolín* has a serious political side. Issues related to the immigrant community are identified, discussed, tossed around, and even argued about in a serious way. The show sensitizes its audience to particular issues, offering them a vocabulary with which to discuss them. Sometimes, this includes overt political action. In 2007, for example, Piolín collected a million letters and took them to the White House in support of immigration reform for undocumented immigrants.[81] With diverse components, spanning humor, social commentary and political calls to specific forms of activism, Piolín and his program have earned distinction as culturally central to the U.S. Latino/a "imagined community."[82]

Piolín is a medium that politicians use to reach the diverse Latino/a community. The program's political import can be seen in how the candidates in the 2008 presidential campaign used the show in their efforts to obtain the Latino/a vote. Candidates used the

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[81]"Piolín began his letter writing campaign on Univision Radio's 'Piolín por La Mañana' and on Univision.com just six weeks ago. Five days ago, he left from Los Angeles, beginning his cross-country caravan journey and making stops in Albuquerque, Dallas and Chicago to collect letters from U.S. citizens and legal residents in a united quest for immigration reform." See: Hispanic Tips. http://www.hispanictips.com/2007/06/14/eddie-piolin-sotelo-delivers-over-million-letters-support-immigration-reform-congress/

[82] Benedict Anderson, in *Imagined Communities*, defines the nation in the following terms, "it is an imagined political community- and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign […] It is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion"(6). As this definition suggests such communities can be broadly geographically dispersed. Piolín touches US immigrants, but it also touches other imagined communities of people like U.S. Latino/as, Hispanics, Mexicans, Central Americans, Chicanos, etc.

theme of immigration to approach the Latino/a community; Hillary Clinton promised in the show to change the immigration law within the first 100 days of her presidency, while Barack Obama agreed to have an immigration reform within the first year of his.[83] Obama won, and after his election, he continued to communicate with the Latino/a immigrant community through the program. Obama promised the Hispanic immigrant community that once he became President of the United States he would personally visit the show. He did not visit the show, but he invited Piolín Sotelo to visit the White House, where Sotelo interviewed him. In that interview, President Obama confirmed his commitment to the Latino/a community and his determination to continue pursuing an immigration reform that could legalize the near 12 million undocumented individuals in the country.[84] Prior to Obama's nomination as candidate for President of the United States, Senator Ted Kennedy from Massachusetts participated in the show to promote Obama as the ideal candidate. The interview mixed humor and seriousness to approach Hispanic audiences. Piolín had Senator Ted Kennedy sing "Jalisco, Jalisco/ tu tienes tu novia/ Mi Guadalajara." With his accented Spanish, Senator Kennedy graciously sang the song. Jokes and laughter accessed the community and approached the immigration reform the Latino/a population so much wanted. In the program, Senator Kennedy explained that he felt identified with the immigrant community because his ancestors had also immigrated to the United States from Ireland. He related to immigrants in this manner: "These people work hard, go by the rules, [are] devoted to their families, [and

[83] He took office in 2009. It's April 1, 2011 and there hasn't been any immigration reform to legalize undocumented immigrants; on the contrary, anti-immigrant laws continue to emerge in various states.
[84] Obama's current actions on immigration have caused the discomfort of Latino/a groups who think that the President has not been acting according to what he promised in his campaign.

are] devoted to their children. They want to make America a better country."[85] After relating to the immigrant community, Kennedy explained that singing in the show, on a previous appearance, got him in trouble because people made fun of his singing. Among other jokes, Senator Kennedy proposed to arm wrestle Arnold Schwarzenegger (Republican Governor of California) and said that the winner could decide who the next president of the United States would be. Kennedy was convinced that Barack Obama would be victorious in the contest. In contrast to Ted Kennedy, when former President Clinton participated in the program to promote Hillary Clinton as President of the United States, his answers to the questions asked by Piolín were very serious; there were no jokes or laughter involved, and the interview developed into something dry and unmotivating. Interestingly, Barack Obama's mediation, via Ted Kennedy, with Latino/as in the program was the most successful.

Piolín is a medium where cultural mediation happens. The program mediates among diverse peoples, locations, nationalities, habits, and nonce taxonomies in the Latino/a popular culture. The accessibility of the program through the Internet allows audiences to listen to the show from all over the country and around the world. "Processes of popular cultural mediation contain the capacity to resist and transform dominant cultures in ways undreamed of by simple theories of domination" (xiii).[86] Martín Barbero invites scholars to change focus from ways of study that concentrate on "ownership and control of media structures… to modes of reception in the context of wider social relations" (xvii). Following Barbero's invitation, I see *Piolín* as a vortex of social relations that politicians, artists, marketers, and listeners use to connect; this

[85] http://www.univision.com/content/channel.jhtml?chid=9450&schid=23519&secid=0
[86]Philip Schlesinger's epilogue of *From Media to Mediations* by Martin Barbero.

connection allows the audience to mirror the need of unity to which the community aspires. A cultural product that unites Mexicans on both sides of the border is *Regional Mexicana* music, which also happens to be the genre of the radio station that houses *Piolín*.[87] This musical genre creates an environment where the Spanish-language itself provides a space of cultural belonging among Mexicans, Central Americans and other Latino/as. Dolores Casillas, along these lines, argues, in *Sounds of Belonging*, that Spanish-language radio brings together a dislocated group of US Latino listeners:

> …radio listening transports labors of belonging to a larger displaced U.S. Latino community through Spanish-language radio. Listeners tune into Spanish-language broadcast news and musical programming in the imagined company of fellow Latino radio listeners…[Spanish–language radio] serves as more than a leisure activity or mere window to "home" countries: it functions as a tool for political and cultural belonging. (1)

The Spanish-language radio talk show provides a space of belonging to a community of individuals that share a common language and culture.

"Community" as often as not means a community of consumers. Business, especially broadcasters and advertisers, realize the commercial potential of untapped audiences. While not only a business enterprise (read, commercial) and not only something free of business concerns (read, political), *Piolín* mediates between marketers and Latino/a audiences. For example, the program promotes items from Lowe's, emphasizing the good prices that their stores offer the community. In this manner, the

[87] *Narco corrido* is a genre within the Regional Mexicana music; this genre is currently causing great controversy because of its cultural content, which includes drug dealing, murder, drinking, and other related topics. This, according to social analysts, could be promoting more of such behavior in the community.

program treats the Latino/a community as consumers. Theodore Adorno, in *History of Freedom*, sees mass media solely as a means to sell goods to the masses, and he is not entirely wrong. However, that is not the whole story in this case. The cultural remainder, especially in US/Mexican border politics, is exceptionally important to those subject to exploitation, deportation, marginalization, taxation without representation, and ghettoization. *Piolín,* indeed, has a commercial side. The show sells merchandise and promotes popular culture as a commodity, where singers, actors, and actresses mingle, and use the show to sell products.

While commercial interests make the program possible, political interests make it compelling. Relocated immigrants see not only their culture, but also, their interests represented. *Piolín* allows, in fact, encourages, audience identification with *particular* groups of relocated migrants. For instance, as in the earlier example, a Chicana, born and raised in the US, self-identified as Mexican, moving from Los Angeles to North Carolina can stay in touch with the "imagined community" she identifies with, Los Angeles' Hispanics. Immigrants from Latin America experience this same identification with "imagined communities." As they move around the United States, they bring a sense of their cultural identity with the now extremely inexpensive technology of the radio receiver. Calafell argues that diasporas, "imagined communities" of migrants who form groups after relocating, can also happen within a country; that is, when for instance Hispanics move from their place of origin to locations where their language and culture is less accessible; however they develop strategies to find commonalities which produce groups in order to create a feeling of belonging in a hostile and possibly chaotic new environment. She tells the story of her experience after moving from Los Angeles to

North Carolina: two Chicano/a graduate students meet at the University of North Carolina and have the need to create what she identifies as "A Case of Diasporic Intimacy." Calafell writes, "through our imagined past, renegotiated memories, and spaces of identification, we created a sense of community in the space. Together we created Aztlán…even in North Carolina" (30).[88] Calafell suggests that when Latino/as go outside their communities and enter a territory where their language and culture are less common, they forge ways to feel at home. In this sense, the Spanish-language talk show has the power to transform "'spaces into places and places into spaces'" (Calafell 31), because it connects Latino/as as a virtual community. Whether it is in California, Texas, Chicago, or New York City, Latino/as manage to enjoy each other's company by listening to *Piolín,* an experience that provides the feeling of "diasporic intimacy."

[88] *Latino/a Communication Studies/Theorizing Performance.*

CHAPTER 3

PIOLÍN POR LA MAÑANA: REVOLUTIONIZING LITERATURE AND THE PERFORMING ARTS

_ ¿Porqué a Piolín le dicen el aqua man?

_ ¿Porque nada por debajo del agua?

_ No, porque es el líder de las mojarras.

Piolín takes place during the age of the Internet and the World Wide Web; these technologies have revolutionized the ways of making and studying literature. *Piolín* is a Spanish-language talk show with characteristics of aural literature; it is a product of cultural hybridization. Nestor García Canclini writes in *Hybrid Cultures*, "I understand as hybridization socio-cultural processes in which discrete structures or practices, previously existing in separate form, are combined to generate new structures, objects, and practices. In turn, it bears noting that the so-called discrete structures were a result of prior hybridizations and therefore cannot be considered pure points of origin" (xxv). The show, as I will discuss, transforms the conventional notions of literature, and changes the traditional concept of drama; it shares characteristics with "radiogenic drama" and "radio comedy." It is aural literature that belongs to radio/sound comedy, encapsulating both: a *dramatic text* and a *performance text*. This radio comedy relies on the effects of dialogue, a characteristic that radio drama shares with stage drama, and which also honors orality, the use of spoken words to transmit images in the imagination of people. In poetics, this would be called eidetic, which is the creation of a visual image via verbal means, or more broadly, the production of one mode of mental imagining by using

another. *Piolín* is a form of digital storytelling, and uses timing as well as surprise as essential elements of radio comedy, which combined with serious, but not obvious objectives, instructs the audience with the participation of doctors, immigration lawyers, psychologists and other experts. These combinations of serious and comedic acts bring race, gender, social class, language, and immigration status together in order to highlight the complexity of the program's produced community. *Piolín* is a radio comedy that allows listeners to move in tandem with the show's characters, as the actors shift from one performed personality state to another. In contemporary theoretical parlance, this might be called performativity;[89] however, it does not exhibit all of the linguistic activity attributed by J. L. Austin to "performative utterances." My use of the term "performative" will include the way in which language performs what it states, but also the frank fact that language is *used*. Language flashes multiple subjectivities that are representative of the Latino/a community, and through these diverse interactions, along with the significant component of comedy, people are able to theorize their Latino/a experience. Often, metafiction blurs the program's reality; stories within stories are juxtaposed with realistic situations which nonetheless appear fictional. These are expressions of radio "magical realism" where fantasy and every day experience intertwine to form new realities in the radio narrative, lending it conventions of metafiction as practiced in the literary novel. The "novela de metaficción" addresses narratees, imagined and fictitious individuals to whom the narrator speaks; in the case of *Piolín*, the show addresses technologically mediated narratees, which are the "imagined community" of listeners to whom the show speaks.

[89] *Touching Feeling* by Eve Sedgwick Kosofsky.

Piolín and the performing arts

Piolín is audio drama, traditionally delivered by radio. However, this audio drama happens to occur during a historical period when the Internet, digital technologies and connectivity dominate the world. Radio scholar, Tim Crook, in "The six ages of audio drama and the Internet epoch" [90]argues that there are six ages of audio drama. The first age is impossible to determine: "Oral culture or single voice narratives spring from the earliest beginning of human storytelling. They have been rooted in the onomatopoetic reliance of rhyme and metrical speech rhythms to preserve storytelling cultures before the development of literature" (22). Oral culture, along with the translation of auditory into visual terms in 1450 revolutionized the world with the perfection of printing technology by Johannes Gutenberg. The second age for Crook is from 1878 onwards when "The phonograph made possible the first experience of recording and playing human sound and the sound of natural phenomena, synthesized sound and sound symbolism" (22). Following the phonogram, came the third age, which happened from 1902 onwards, when "The telephone or cable had become a carrier of broadcast and downloadable sound services" (23). After the telephone, the world experienced the fourth age, which occurred from 1908 onward, with the invention of radio or wireless, allowing the delivery of sound programming to a mass audience. Crook identifies this age as "the development of a style of performance and writing, which engages with the human ear and imagination" (23). After radio, came the fifth age, which is a symbiosis of film and television from 1926 onwards. Crooks identifies this age as "The advent of optical recording techniques [that] led to talking pictures and

[90] *Radio drama: theory and practice* by Tim Crook.

the crosspollination of the artistic experience of sound communication with visual image" (25). Finally, after the age of television and film, came the age of internet and digital communications, which happened from 1994 onwards. "The Internet and World Wide Web began to deliver sound services to a mass audience when the multimedia PC became a mass marketed product" (26). It is during this age of the Internet and World Wide Web when *Piolín* develops and becomes popular among the Latino/a working class people, who regardless of their location, gather together to enjoy the show via radio or the web.

Performance arts, for people of Mexican origins, goes back to the Pre-Columbian time of the Mayas, the Aztecs, and the Pueblo tribes as Felicia Hardison Londre and Daniel J. Watermeier argue in *The History of North American Theater*. These historians indicate that "the origin of theater generally falls into three broad categories: dance, shamanism, and ritual enactments to propitiate the forces of nature" (15). What is now known as Guatemala, the Yucatan peninsula, and highland of Mexico are places with the earliest evidence of Native American performances. The Mayas and the Aztecs included human sacrifices in their performances while the Pueblo peoples in the Southwest of what is now known as the US, did not practice this type of performance. Hardison Londre and Watermeier write: "Although the ritual purpose is paramount in the Pueblo dance, most ethnographers do not hesitate to call them ritual dramas or prayer dramas" (31). Moreover, these historians indicate that "it was New Spain that boasted the earliest, most abundant, and most varied theatrical undertakings" (39). Theatrical performance functioned as a technique of "acculturation" that the conquistadors used to control and oppressed the indigenous populations. Differing from this view, people of

Mexican descent in the US have historically used theater to combat oppression; they have seen it as a choice to educate others, and understand it as a "new Chicana/o humanism" (Broyles-Gonzalez) that helped to inform farm workers about their rights. This was the purpose of El Teatro Campesino in the 60s and 70s where *Rascuachi Aesthetics*[91] were used to reach the working class people. Yolanda Broyles-Gonzalez writes:

> Under the wing of the United Farm Workers Union based in Delano, California, El Teatro Campesino (The Farm Workers' Theater) emerged in 1965, conceived as a union tool for organizing, fund-raising, and politicizing. In its beginnings El Teatro Campesino performed numerous highly improvisational skits (called actos), which expressed the exploitative living and working conditions of farmworkers in boldly satirical words and actions. (xii)

Short plays were performed on the backs of trucks to alert field workers about the diverse means by which corporations and contractors exploited them. This type of activism through performance, developed in the 60s and 70s, lives on in *Piolín*.

Piolín uses techniques of theater to entertain and educate the working class community. Alicia Arrizón, in *Latina Performance: Traversing the Stage,* argues that, "Indeed, the various shifts evident around the terms 'theater' and 'performance' reside in the configurations of the 'body' and 'embodiment,' which are in constant negotiation" (xxii), and function as a "mirror" where individuals see themselves reflected. Although the configurations of the body are dissimilar from staged theater and performance, Radio

[91] *Ibid*. Yolanda Broyles-Gonzalez explains: "Rasquachi Aesthetic refers to the creation of artistic beauty from the motley assemblage of elements momentarily seized" (36).

Theater allows the embodiment to take place through sound. Aural embodiment, humor and laughter are mechanisms of socio-political and cultural defense as well as strategies of survival that revolutionize the experience of the US Latino/a working class community.

Piolín: drama and comedy

Piolín challenges the traditional boundaries of literature. Richard Hughes, in "The Second Revolution: literature and radio,"[92] writes that the effect of radio on contemporary life is profound—he even suggests that radio has fulminated a "revolution,"[93] in relation to literature especially. He argues that nowadays writers write for the ear as much as for the eye, and he suggests that "this would certainly be the outcome of most advantage to radio, since in this way all literature would become fit material for broadcasting" (398). In relation to radio and drama, from another angle, reception, Frances Gray, in "The nature of radio drama,"[94] argues that "the stage of radio is darkness and silence, the darkness [I would say lightness] of the listener's skull" (49) and states that when a person experiences radio "he [or she] carries the stage around with him [or her]" (49). She argues that there are two major characteristics of the radio medium. The first one is the "flexibility of sound stage," a quality that transports people across borders of time and space. The second major aspect of radio, for her, is "intimacy;" this creates audience enthusiasm to participate. Gray holds that radio allows the listener to produce a theater proscenium inside of his or her head, where "the listener creates not just the flesh of the play but the whole world-system in which it takes shape" (Gray 76). The listener, in other words, is creative. He or she fleshes out the narrative, while also performatively and invisibly constructing an imaginary world in which that narrative can happen.

Piolín, further, challenges the traditional notion of drama. Andrew Crisell, in "Better than Magritte: how drama on the radio became radio drama,"[95] placing radio in the history of drama, argues that radio has changed the traditional notion of what dramatic narrative is. He mentions that "theater of the absurd" has greatly influenced radio, making it into what he calls "radiogenic drama." He assigns three characteristics to what he argues is a new and unique genre of theater:

> 1. The substitution of an inner landscape for the outer world and the adoption of a flexible attitude to time and space, which can expand or contract according to the subjective requirements of the characters. 2.

[92] *Radio* edited by Andrew Crisell.
[93] *Ibid*. Hughes argues, "…I do believe that the effect of radio on literature generally will be as profound, if almost as slow, as the effect of the printing press. There will be a second revolution. Writers will come once again to write as much for the ear as for the eye, as a matter of general habit" (247).
[94] *Radio Drama* edited by Peter Lewis.
[95] *Radio* edited by Andrew Crisell.

> The creation of fluid, indeterminate environments in which the distinctions between fact and fantasy are often blurred. 3. The use of precise, terse language as a kind of weapon against the overwhelmingly problematic and disorderly nature of experience. (304)

In other words, radio provides an "outer space" where temporality and physical space expand, combining reality with fantasy, using spoken language to organize lived experience. Crisell, in "Extract from 'Comedy and light entertainment',"[96] argues that radio comedy shares these characteristics with radio drama; he forwards that both genres always coexist, in order to create a rich and diverse production. Radio comedy, for him, transcends the conventions of the traditional theater because it no longer relies on the visual qualities of the physical characters; instead, it uses the "blindness of the medium"(332) to free the imagination of the audience.

Piolín shares characteristics with the "radiogenic drama" and the "radio comedy" that Crisell presents. For example, the live nature of the ongoing action, as per Gray, allows listeners to compress time and to transform space, reaching very different geographical locations, allowing a varied and scattered audience to hear stories that seem *specific* to them in their *immediate* present. This is the "revolution" that Hughes describes in his work. The text is "being written" contemporaneously with its performance, including the audience's unpredictable contributions. This aspect is different from other genres like the novel, film, or recorded song, where the message has already been fixed as the text, and the reader only experiences it *after* it has been created. Similar to what happens in theater, action occurs at the time that the audience gathers;

[96] *Ibid*.

nonetheless, radio text is different from traditional theater because the audience does not congregate in a specific place and is wholly and solely aurally attached.

***Piolín,* radio/sound comedy and drama**

Piolín is aural literature that belongs to the genre of "radio/sound comedy." Dermot Rattigan, in *Theatre of Sound: radio and the dramatic imagination*, understands "the concept of radio/sound drama in its performed medium as being an inclusive form of aural performance literature" (3). He describes the experience of radio drama as having three main stages. The first one is the playwright or adaptation process. The second is the production process; and the third is the reception by the listening audience. This set of steps is applicable to *Piolín.* The first step is the creation of the script; the second one is the performance of the show, and the third one is the audience reaction. Rattigan describes the performance of radio drama as a combination of two *inter-dependent* processes. The first one is the performance process which includes words, voices, utterances, silences/ pauses, music, etc., and the second is the technical process which includes acoustics, aural distancing, fades and electronic processing. In *Piolín*, the first process is the actual "acting" of both the characters and the audience while the second is a combination of special effects. For instance, Piolín Sotelo uses three different voices to develop a conversation between Chela Prieto, don Casimiro and don Poncho; while these characters carry a conversation, the audience can hear a sound effect which mimics Chela's children running around and playing. Rattigan argues that "Voice and words are considered to be the primary aural agents in radio drama; that is, both are mutually dependent upon each other" (2). Radio drama is aural literature because listeners hear the sonic elements organized in the radio production; they receive audio as performance text:

"The production's performance text becomes *de facto* the sonic dramatic text for the listener as he/she aurally 'reads' it as an aural form of literature" (3). In the same way, the audience "reads" *Piolín* through the different components of sound images such as silences, pauses, voices, words, utterances, sound effects, music, technical effects, as well as the script, and people's improvisations, which together form the radio text.

Piolín is both a *dramatic text* and a *performance text*. Dermott Rattigan argues that every performed text whether audio-visually on the stage or aurally on radio, becomes a new rendition of that work after it is performed, transforming its source text into a new reality. He contends that: "unlike other artistic practices, theater is not comprised of a single signifying system but, rather, a multitude of signifying systems and that each has a dual function: as a literary practice and as a performance practice …with both literary and a performance dimensions" (218) that can be related to any dramatic artistic form including radio drama. For example, *Piolín* is a *dramatic text* because it has a written script and it is a *performed text*, because actors translate this script sometimes more exactly than other times into dialogue.

Rattigan presents stage drama as dependant on structures that rely on sound and vision while radio plays like *Piolín* encapsulate dramatic structures based in sound, a compound of "words, voices, sounds and music" (219). The realization of radio drama as aural literature starts with a literary inception, which is the dramatic text. Then the radio drama itself takes place with the interaction of "sound (complex/simple), balance, fades, microphone distances, equalization, acoustic setting, electronic processing, music, functional roles [of characters], language (words/verbal), language (vocal acting), interior monologues, utterances (breath), silence(s)/pause(s) and time frame" (222). Piolín Sotelo

tricks callers with prefabricated (scripted and sometimes prerecorded) dialogues that often provoke the laughter of the audience; for instance, in 2007 don Casimiro, a fictitious character in the show, calls Barack Obama on behalf of Piolín Sotelo; Sotelo is caught by surprise and gets trapped in Casimiro's game. With much hesitation Sotelo greets the President and thanks him for the help he has provided to the Latino/a community. The conversation, which is a made up dialogue with Obama's voice, ends abruptly and some members of the audience end up believing that such a conversation legitimately occurred. This action developed into larger dialogues: some people called the program to complain about such poor behavior and others called to praise Casimiro. These made-up dialogues, leave the audience hanging and often listeners do not understand what is true or not; only when listeners pay close attention to what happens in the show they realize that what they hear is pure fiction.

Piolín **and orality**

Piolín honors orality as an important element of Latin American culture; one which produces images for its audience. Jesus Martín-Barbero and German Rey, in "Oralidad cultural e imaginería popular,"[97] argue that Latin America is entering modernity without leaving behind its oral culture. These authors believe that it is important to examine "la complicidad y complejidad de relaciones—que hoy se producen en América Latina entre la oralidad que perdura como experiencia cultural primaria de las mayorías y la visualidad tecnológica, esa forma de 'oralidad secundaria' que tejen y organizan las gramáticas tecnoperceptivas de la radio y el cine, del video y la televisión" (34). In other words, the authors contend that the new technologies like radio, cinema

[97] *Los ejercicios del ver/ Hegemonía audiovisual y ficción televisiva by*Jesús Martín-Barbero, Germán Rey.

and television are important types of media in the modern Latin American societies because they honor orality and have the capacity to communicate images in the imagination of people. In the same way, *Piolín* uses oral elements with technological effects of sound to create imaginary tableaus for its audience. Martín-Barbero and Rey write, "Debemos dar entonces el salto de la ciudad letrada a la *ciudad comunicacional* […] la ciudad informatizada no necesita cuerpos reunidos sino interconectados. Ahora bien, lo que constituye la fuerza y la eficacia de la *ciudad virtual*, que entretejen los flujos informáticos y las imágenes…" (39). Explained differently, according to these two thinkers, technology is changing the way we conceive literacy because besides being able to read traditional written texts we now need to read new texts where communication is digital. Bodies no longer need to be gathered, but interconnected, a quality that digital and Internet technologies offer by webbing information and images. *Piolín* offers these qualities to its listeners by connecting them in a virtual world through the power of radio and the Internet. Along the same line of producing images in the imagination of people, Vincent McInerney, in *Writing for radio,* argues that "The object of all radio writing, all talk radio, whether it be prose, drama or verse, is to produce an image, or set of images, in the mind of the listener [described above as an eidetic activity]. These images can be separate, or causally continuous, but should be vivid and precisely defined" (2). McInerney indicates that the manipulation of sound with the use of narration and dialogue as well as the audio effects will determine what the audience mentally sees.

Piolín provokes a constant and various production of "imagined" images. Cuban poet Lezama Lima[98]argues that images create the history of culture, a fictitious vision of

[98] *La expresión Americana*.

the subject and not an objective representation of a fact. He contends that the individual perceives reality through the filter of the "image," which happens in a Gnostic space when the spirit and nature have contact. According to Lezama Lima this process is infinite because an image linked to other images produces a "web of images" and this progression generates "eras of images." That is, the process produces eras worth of images, that is, a whole lot, as well as producing images of eras. The first uses temporality spatially; the second spatializes temporality. *Piolín* revolves around the creation of radio images that connected to new ones form infinite webs of images, which, processed in the imagination, can be assembled to constitute narratives.

Piolín and digital storytelling

Piolín is a form of digital storytelling. John Hartley and Kelly McWilliam, in *Story Circle/ Digital Storytelling Around the World*, contend that digital storytelling "puts the universal human delight in narrative and self-expression into the hands of everyone. It brings a timeless form into the digital age, to give a voice to the myriad tales of everyday life as experienced by ordinary people in their own terms" (3). *Piolín,* as digital storytelling, allows listeners to use modern technology to share individual experiences, which together reflect sections of the broader Latin American experience in the United States. According to John Hartley, in "TV Stories/ From Representation to Productivity,"[99] storytelling can be seen as "a form of schooling in the capabilities of language. It teaches us how to think (plot), what to think about (narrative), the moral universe of choice (character), and the calculation of risk (action), motivated by desire for immortality (fear of death)" (26). Along the same lines, *Piolín* illustrates, through the multiple stories told in and nonce taxonomies offered by the show, the communal experience of the Latin American people that listen to the show, as well as the behaviors and attitudes that characterize this community. Those forms of storytelling can be imagined as radio vignettes that gathered together tell a larger, comedic story about the world in which US Latino/as live.

Robert L. Mott, in *The Audio Theater Guide,* points out that two of the most essential audio comedic demands are timing and the element of surprise, both of which feature prominently in *Piolín*. Mott indicates that "Timing is that particular instant when all conditions are working together to bring about the most desired results […] Audiences

[99] *Story circle: digital storytelling around the world* edited by John Hartley, Kelly McWilliam

don't just watch and listen. They also think and even try and outthink what the comedians are saying" (136). The listeners of *Piolín* also try to outthink what the comedians are about to say in the program, an action reflected in the participation of the listeners; for example, in their use of the *albur* and/or the *cantinfleada*, which I explain in detail in my next chapter. In broad strokes, an *albur*, for Hispanics of Mexican descent, is a game of words that is often sexual and/or scatological, and a *cantinfleada* is, honoring the comedian Cantinflas, a bunch of fast spoken nonsense. Mott explains that the comedian has to be one step ahead of the audience, understanding the audience expectations, only to thwart it to realize a comedic effect. *Piolín* is full of expected and unexpected comic segments that are effective at times and ineffective at others. That is, some jokes do not succeed. Sometimes when a joke is unsuccessful, the mockery of characters and/or the audience make it fun, and people often end up transforming disastrous segments into something laughable. Mott contends that for an action to be effective in audio comedy the set up is very important because "the audience must know what is expected of them…The setup is a joke's foundation. It gets the audience's mind thinking in a specific direction and then suddenly (timing)…tricking those expectations with the element of surprise, that justifies a comedic action" (137).

In *Piolín*, the setup often is related to the Latin American immigrant experience like working class settings and bilingual and bicultural incidents, such as crossing the border and/or moving in with relatives. Mott recognizes that when a comedy line is improperly said such that it slows down the flow of the words, it may kill a laugh and also it can destroy an audience's desire to have fun. When something like this happens in *Piolín* and there is evidence that humor is being killed, the characters in the show or the

public ridicule one another to make it less obvious. Mott affirms that in order for the audience to laugh it is important for them to feel playful and for their playfulness to be encouraged.

Piolín's comedy has an instructional and pedagogical side; doctors, immigration lawyers and psychologists help individuals in the community to achieve success. For example, there is a female doctor that gives sexual advice to listeners; the show also has immigration attorneys that give advice, and *la Flor Marchita*, the homosexual character in the show gives advice about personal care and homemade remedies. Piolín Sotelo frequently encourages listeners to go to school, to think positively, and to achieve greater freedom through success. In this respect, Paulo Freire, in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, mentions that there are two steps in the emancipation of the oppressed. The first one is to have awareness of the conditions of oppression under which the individual lives. The second one is the project that the oppressed individuals implement to reach freedom. In the interaction with the doctor, the psychologist, and the immigration attorney, the audience realizes more of the different types of oppression that members of the community experience. Freire argues that to achieve freedom among oppressed people, education should be given by the members of the community itself who know their situation and reality and not by those in power.

Piolín uses the experience of members of the community as a way to teach the community itself about its living conditions. Freire argues that dialogue should be a tool in the liberation process in order for the individual to be in touch with the world; such communication must be a back and forth interaction. The communication should be mutual between oppressors and oppressed. *Piolín's* important element of dialogue

facilitates this type of communication within the community where oppressed individuals carry on a conversation with "the oppressor," someone within the community, to exemplify the need for freedom and explore ways to achieve it. Freire's idea of education is one where the individual educates and forms himself/herself to pursue the well being of the community, an idea that Piolín Sotelo constantly mentions with his saying "Venimos a triunfar;" he reminds listeners that despite our social situation, we came to the United States to succeed.

Piolín is a space where social conditions, like race, gender, social class, sexuality, language, and immigration status, intersect to show the complexity of factors that form the community of listeners; it is a crossroads that allows the study of discriminatory practices that happen inside and outside the Latino/a community. Daniel Solorzano and Tara Yosso, in "Critical Race and LatCrit theory and method: counter-storytelling," pursue social justice in education and argue that Critical Race Theory is the intersection of race, gender, social class, language, and immigration status that allows the study of discrimination toward people of color. The purpose of Critical Race Theory is to seek social justice for marginalized and underrepresented groups. Solorzano and Yosso explain that teachers who want to use Critical Race Theory in their classroom to promote social change for people of color should be able to define, identify and give examples of racial discrimination.

Piolín looks for ways to teach the community to achieve success in the US society and exemplifies elements that are important to change in order to accomplish it within the community. For example, within the interaction and performance of characters like the machista don Poncho, the improper Chela Prieto and the drunken Casimiro, diverse levels

of prejudice are shown. Don Poncho exemplifies misogyny. Chela Prieto vulgarizes situations and people, and Casimiro evades any responsibility with alcohol. Solorzano and Yosso write that educators could use media to exemplify diverse aspects of discrimination, as well as to identify racial stereotypes in professional settings. *Piolín* strengthens *and* weakens stereotypes by showing the attitude of the characters in the show. Solorzano and Yosso write: "As educators, we need to identify the resources and strengths of students of color and place them at the center of our research, curriculum, and teaching […] CRT challenges us to look for the many strengths within students and communities of color in order to combat and eliminate negative racial stereotypes"(6) . *Piolín* advocates improvement and success in the Latino/a community.

Piolín: **theorizing life through metafiction, magical realism, and narratees**

Piolín allows listeners to transition between different levels of reality, a quality that Octavio Paz attributes to poetry. Paz argues that poetry allows the individual to give "*El Salto a la Otra Orilla;"* which is the capacity to jump to the Other Realm, a sacred and almost magical place where the impossible becomes very possible. According to Paz, the phases of separation and reunion with the Other are a period of solitude and affinity with our own selves. He believes that the person who truly is able to be alone with himself/herself and finds satisfaction in this practice, is not alone at all, because he/she has the power to be with the Other that lives within. According to this premise, laughter provides a mysterious feeling for people and becomes a consecrated moment where the individual jumps from a physical reality to the Other Realm, a sacred space where the person loses resistance and allows the forces of the universe to control the

moment.[100] In other words, laughter is a vehicle that connects the individual with the universe and through the path of least resistance he/she experiences an instant of joy, a burst of energy that he/she lets go. Paz, in *The bow and the lyre (El arco y la lira),* writes the following regarding the jump to the Other Realm:

> The experience of the Other culminates in the experience of Unity. The two opposite movements are intermingled. In the drawing back the leap forward is already latent. The downward plunge into the Other presents itself as a return to something from which we were previously uprooted. Duality ceases, we are on the other shore. We have taken the mortal leap. We have become reconciled with ourselves. (116)

Explained differently, when the individual is able to jump from one level of reality to another there are two important forces in the process of expansion, one pulls inward and the other outward. When the individual is able to cease resisting and jumps to the other side of himself/herself, he/she realizes that is a part of the whole. Laughter is a rupture and in terms of social change, it offers a vision of a quite different social reality.[101] Laughter allows the individual to break out of lexical and psychical limits. It insists that there is a place outside everyday speech and experience. As such, laughter offers its practitioners a glimpse of empathy. If something exists outside of what we expect, or know, perhaps also someone, or many people, does, or do, as well. And their needs and

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[100] Also see George Bataille's version of laughter as animalistic violence and rupture in *Reading Bataille Now* edited by Shannon Winnubst, and Helene Cixous' account on the "laughter of medusa," in *Helene Cixous: writing the feminine* by Verena Andermatt Conley, as an ambivalent but anti hegemonic gesture that "bring women to life and movement" (Conley 56). See John Morreal's versions of laughter as superiority, incongruity, relief, and as a result of pleasant psychological shifts in "A New Theory of Laughter."

[101] See the social laughter in, *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression* by Peter Stallybrass and Allon White.

interiors may, just may, resemble our own. Often in the show, in the midst of laughter, characters realize that they can be empathetic with one another, and this surprises them pleasantly. It is a reduction of tension and, therefore, pleasurable.

Piolín's characters perform very different, in fact, mostly conflicting, personalities. This allows a *frisson*, which constantly requires the characters to adjust to one another and in the process exhibit performativity— based on the necessity to obviously adjust and as obviously readjust to one another's expectations. Judith Butler argues that her view of *performativity*[102] has changed over time, and she presents it as a practice that is carried out, with or against, what is expected, and also as a repetition of acts, having effects manifested in what is considered natural in the body. Piolín Sotelo, the main character in the show performs *at least* three other personalities: Chela Prieto, Don Poncho and Casimiro. This means that Sotelo uses different voices to represent each one of these characters. For example, when Sotelo wants to personify Chela, he changes his voice to speak like what is socially expected from a woman with Chela's age, education, and social status. Sotelo uses the same tactics with the other two characters that behave according to what is expected from them in their station in society.

Gloria Anzaldúa, in *Borderlands: la frontera/ the New Mestiza*, identifies her capacity to interact among her multiple identities. Anzaldúa contends that her ability to speak different varieties of a language or languages allows her to mediate between her different identities and the different communities to which she belongs. For example,

[102] Judith Butler argues in *Gender Trouble*: "In the first instance, then, the performativity of gender revolves around this metalepsis, the way in which the anticipation of a gendered essence produces that which it posits as outside itself. Secondly, performativity is not a singular act, but a repetition and a ritual, which achieves its effects through its naturalization in the context of a body, understood, in part, as a culturally sustained temporal duration" (xv).

because she can speak Standard English, working class English, standard Spanish, Chicano Spanish, Caló, etc., she can move around her multiple social subject positions, a capacity that gives her the ability to identify herself with individuals from a number of different communities. When she speaks Chicano Spanish, she can relate to the Chicano community; when she uses working class English she can relate to the working class community that uses this type of language to communicate. This sort of mechanism happens in *Piolín* when Sotelo, through the different voices that he performs, is able to identify these personalities with diverse aspects of the community. Anzaldúa argues that the act of living in linguistic, cultural, and/or gender borders puts the individual in *las encruncijadas*, a place of multiple intersections of the state of being.

Piolín, through the multiple interactions of diverse people representative of the Latino/a community, allows listeners to theorize about the Latino/a experience through laughter. Cherrie Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa, in *This Bridge called my back*, argue that marginalized groups carry a "theory in the flesh;" that is their capacity to embrace the self and the multiple identities that people have as a valid source of knowledge. In other words, the experience of what marginalized people have lived gives them a particular understanding of the world that should be taken into account when theorizing about life. Moraga writes, "A theory in the flesh means one where the physical realities of our lives--our skin color, the land or concrete we grew up on, our sexual longings--all fuse to create a politics born out of necessity"(23). This "theory in the flesh" is reflected in *Piolín*'s characters as well as in its audience formed mostly by working class Latino/as who share their life experience through laughter. For example, in one episode of the program, Chela Prieto tells her story about crossing the border and although it is a

difficult experience that makes her cry, her narration of the events makes people laugh. Laughter becomes a survival motif, and a necessity that the marginalized groups that listen to *Piolín* use to navigate life. Theorizing lived experience through laughter, *Piolín* provides landscapes where reality and fiction mingle.

Piolín is aural literature with characteristics of the novel of metafiction,[103] allowing listeners to share a common reality where laughter is a means to survive a Latino/a working class life. Laughter allows individuals to be themselves and temporarily escape the difficulties of life. It is a refuge that the community inhabits. The audience, daring to view life as a joke, uses its imagination to deliberately make life enjoyable through laughter. Ana M. Dotras argues:

> la novela de metaficción es aquélla que se vuelve hacia sí misma y, a través de diversos recursos y estrategias, llama la atención sobre su condición de obra de ficción y pone al descubierto las estrategias de la literatura en el proceso de creación. En esa autodenuncia de su propia ficcionalidad, al destruir el efecto de ilusión de realidad, se plantean cuestiones en torno a la naturaleza del arte y las relaciones entre el arte y la vida, la ficción y la realidad. (228)

In other words, the novel of metafiction, through its own artifices, addresses its own status as fiction and reveals its strategies in the creation process. According to Dotras the novel self- accuses itself about its own fiction when it destroys the illusion of reality. It, then, puts in perspective the nature of art as well as the interactions among art and life,

[103] In *Narcissistic Narrative* Linda Hutcheon defines metafiction in the following terms: "is fiction about fiction—that is, fiction that includes within itself a commentary about its own narrative and/ or linguistic identity" (1).

fiction and reality. *Piolín* explores this very relation between reality and fiction. An example of this testing and exploration is the fictitious existence of three of its characters: Chela Prieto, don Poncho and Casimiro--a fictitious existence not obvious to the common listener. They all emanate from the same person. Sotelo, through the manipulation of his voice, together with sound tricks, and technical devices, convinces his listeners that these three characters legitimately exist. It is when listeners become critics of the artistic performance of the show that they realize its patent fictional nature. This type of obvious fictionality and performativety make *Piolín* an instrument of self-criticism and self-reflexivity. In this process, there is a social and cultural self-consciousness that parodies reality with playful and imaginative humor. However, this self-criticism requires the work of an active reader/listener who realizes that he or she is a co-creator of the text. Linda Hutcheon, in *Narcissistic Narrative*, argues, "metafiction has two major focuses; the first is on its linguistic and narrative structures and the second is on the role of the reader" (22). The active listeners/readers of *Piolín* are responsible for their own realization about the comingling forces of fiction and "reality" that constitute the show. This combination of strategies, of what often seems magical and realistic, is frequently blurred, and taken as legitimate in the development of the program.

Piolín is a space with aural "magical realism"[104] where fantasy and everyday experience intertwine. Luis Leal[105] argues that magical realism is "an attitude toward

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[104] Alejo Carpentier writes, "the marvelous begins to be unmistakably marvelous when it arises from an unexpected alteration of reality (the miracle), from a privileged revelation of reality, an anaccustomed insight that is singularly favored by the unexpected richness of reality or an amplification of the scale and categories of reality, perceived with particular intensity by virtue of an exaltation of the spirit that leads it to a kind of extreme state [estado limite]" (Translated by Tanya Huntington and Lois Parkinson Zamora, in *Magical Realism* by Ed. Zamora and Faris 86)

[105] *Ibid*. "Magical Realism in Spanish American Literature" (119-123). Gabriel García Márquez's is an important exponent of magical realism. Ilan Stavans states, "Before 1967, when *One Hundred Years of*

reality that can be expressed in popular or cultured forms, in elaborate or rustic styles, in closed or open structures. In magical realism the writer confronts reality and tries to untangle it, to discover what is mysterious in things, in life, in human acts" (121). Leal contends that magical realism does not pretend to create imaginary worlds; its purpose is to explore the discovery of the mystery that exists in the relationships between humans and their living circumstances, which often are events that have no logical or psychological interpretation. In *Piolín,* laughter erases the boundary between magical and "real" experience. Leal writes, "The magical realist does not try to copy the surrounding reality (as the realists did) or to wound it (as the Surrealist did) but to seize the mystery that breathes behind things" (123). Similar to what Leal suggests, the participants in the radio program are magical realists that erase the mysterious aspects of their life experience, including daily regular life, and the magical effect of humor. The following conversation exemplifies the moments in the show where reality and magic are taken as valid levels of co-existence:

> _Yo escucho a *Piolín por la Mañana*, ¿qué onda papuchón?
>
> _Oye carnal, aquí estamos a gusto. Oye carnal tú crees que esos aviones que vuelan así que dejan una línea así blanca, crees que están provocando que cambie el clima y que haga que llueva, que según eso es un químico que avientan a las nubes.
>
> _Piolín Sotelo, yo creo que tiene razón ahí el Beto. Yo creo que Chris el único medio de transporte que conoce es un burro mal amaestrado Piolín. (Risas) Y viene a hablar aquí de aviones.

Solitude appeared, the former Spanish colonies on this side of the Atlantic were perceived as backward, undeveloped, and unworthy of high-caliber literature. After the novel's publication, the same views acquired an altogether different tone. Latin America was still primitive but it held itself closely to its ancestral mythology, a fact that García Márquez vindicated with his portrait of Macondo" (590) in "A mode of truth: a conversation on biography between Ilán Stavans and Donald Yates."

_No manche. Que deje de estar hablando y quitando el tiempo e informando así a la gente.

_Tiene sentido lo que dice porque allá en las olimpiadas de China dicen que hacían algo similar pa que lloviera. Va.

_Hoy ta hablando el experto en sumo. (risas)

_Ora si, el Naranjito es acá meteorólogo.

_No, es mentiorologo.

_No, es meteodologo porque le mete a todo. (risas)[106]

In the previous text, members of the audience discuss the fact that planes, leaving behind a white line in the sky, are aircrafts that make rain. Reality, fantasy, and ridicule, get mixed to erase the boundaries that divide legitimate and illegitimate information. At the end of the conversation no one knows the truth; finding the right answer becomes irrelevant and unnecessary, while many different misprisions are allowed to remain hanging in the air. Much like the exhaust of the planes in question.

Piolín is addressed to narratees. Geral Prince, in "Introduction to the study of the narrattee," argues that all types of oral and written narrations require at least one narrator that tells the story and also at least one narratee, "someone whom the narrator addresses" (7). In the case of *Piolín*, the narratee is the "imagined community" of fellow listeners to whom the show is addressed. Prince contends that the reader [or listener] of prose or verse fiction should not be mistaken for the narratee because the reader or listener is real and the narratee is fictive. *Piolín* imagines a group of listeners and addresses the show to these individuals, while the listeners themselves can be a different group of people.

[106] From February 26, 2009

Prince also states that the narratee should not be confused with the "virtual reader"[107] [or listener] who, is an individual to whom the author attributes certain qualities, characteristics, and faculties. These two figures, the narratee and the virtual reader, can be similar but are not necessarily the same. This virtual reader/listener is the "imagined community" of listeners to whom *Piolín* attributes certain characteristics and qualities. It can be observed in the different groups the show targets; for instance, the immigrant community who is the object of ridicule and criticism. Inside this umbrella of immigrants are the documented and the undocumented workers, including women, gays, and children. Furthermore, Prince argues that the narratee should not be mistaken with the "ideal reader"[108] [or listener] even when they are very alike. That is, the peculiarly fictitious existence of the narratee differs from that of the fictitiousness of the ideal reader; they are simply different fictions. Prince, riffing on Roland Barthes and expanding his explanation of the narratee, attributes certain characteristics to the zero-degree narratee, and writes:

> […] the zero-degree narratee knows the tongue (langue) and the language (s) (*language[s])* of the narrator. In his [her] case to know a tongue is to know the meanings (*dénotations*)—the signifieds as such and, if applicable, the referents—of all the signs that constitute it; this does not include knowledge of the connotations (the subjective values that have been attached to them). It also involves a perfect mastery of grammar but

[107] Gerald Prince writes, "Every author, provided he [she] is writing for someone other than himself, develops his [her] narrative as a function of a certain type of reader whom he bestows with certain qualities, faculties, and inclinations according to his opinion of men [and women] in general" (9).
[108] Prince states, "For a writer, an ideal reader would be one who would understand perfectly and would approve entirely the least of his words, the most subtle of his intentions" (9 Ibid.).

> not of the (infinite) paragrammatical possibilities. It is the ability to note semantic and/ or syntactic ambiguities … . (10)

Piolín's zero-degree narratee is an imagined group of listeners that understands the language of the program. It is a Spanish-language talk show that because of its location in the United States revolves around English and Spanish; however, the language aspect of the program goes deeper into cultural aspects of joking, a combination that makes humor a language by itself that the zero-degree narrate is expected to decipher. Furthermore, Prince argues that the narratee has the following functions:

> he [she] constitutes a relay between the narrator and the reader, he [she] helps establish the narrative framework, he serves to characterize the narrator, he [she] emphasizes certain themes, he [she] contributes to the development of the plot, he [she] becomes the spokesman [or spokeswoman] for the moral of the work. (23)

The narratee performs essential functions in the production of the narration, and these functions apply to *Piolín* when it speaks to the group of people that it targets. This practice is reflected in the different components of the radio text, including jokes, gossip, wakeup calls, celebrity mimicry, *albures*, *cantinfleadas*, among many others. Each one of these components targets a special group of narratees, which is the imagined community of people that the show addresses.

In conclusion, *Piolín* has come of age during the era of the Internet and World Wide Web, which drastically alter the way we produce and study literature. This Spanish-language talk show transforms conventional notions of literature, and changes

the traditional concept of "drama." The program, "radiogenic drama," as well as "radio comedy," belongs to radio/sound comedy-- it encompasses *both*. It is a *dramatic text* and a *performance text*. It entrusts the outcomes of dialogue, a peculiarity that radio drama and stage drama have in common. *Piolín* pays tribute to orality, the use of spoken words to convey images in the imagination of people. *Piolín*, as well, is digital storytelling because technologically it is available on the Internet or the radio set. *Piolín's* comedic elements, along with serious but not always evident components, instruct the audience about how to be successful in US society. Serious and comedic components intersect at potent social nexes such as race, gender, social class, language, and immigration status, which mixed together make visible the complexity of the program's created, or "imagined," community. *Piolín* enables listeners and characters to travel from one personality state to another, blending the multiple subjectivities that are representative of the Latino/a community. These diverse interactions, along with the substantial ingredients of comedy, enable people to theorize their Latino/a experience through laughter, which often results in the narration of metafictional stories. When metafiction alters the program's "reality," stories within stories confront realistic situations which nonetheless appear fictional. These experiences develop into radio "magical realism" where fantasy and everyday life come together to create new realities in the radio narrative.

CHAPTER 4

PIOLÍN POR LA MAÑANA: A BURST OF ORAL FOLKLORE AS *CANTINFLEADAS* AND *ALBURES*

> The Mother Superior and her six nuns visit various ranches in rural Texas to teach catechism and to pray with the people. At one ranch they are offered drinks but they refuse them. At a second ranch they are again offered drinks and they accept. When they return to the convent they are asked, "¿Quién es?," to which the Mother Superior answers, "La Madre Superior y las monjas." On the following night of teaching and praying they are again offered drinks and this time they cannot refuse. They have more than one and return to the convent at 2 a.m. When asked, "¿Quién es" They respond, "¡Chona y las muchachas!"[109]

This epigraph illustrates the difficulty of translating Latino/a jokes that depend heavily on Spanish and/or specific idioms. The previous misogynistic joke suggests that Mother Superior and the nuns, after drinking the second night, forget about their religious function and become whores: Mother Superior is the Madame and the nuns are her prostitutes. The difficulty in translating jokes arises due to shades of meaning bound by the rules of Spanish-language idioms that are not shared in English usage. Throughout this chapter, I will be exploring jokes that maintain little of their humorous content upon translation into English. I have no trouble understanding this joke in English or Spanish, but someone who does not know cultural Mexican idiomatic expressions will find these jokes stupid and not funny. In the categories of jokes that follow, I try to communicate the idea of the joke either by translating it literally and/or by explaining its content. Eugene Albert Nida, and Charles R. Taber write in *The Theory and Practice of Translation*:

[109] From "Mexican Women Sexual Jokes" by Rafaela Castro.

> …to produce texts which will approximate the goal of equivalent response, translators often need to change their view of the languages in which they are working. This includes not merely a shift in some of the attitudes which tend to place the source languages on a theological pedestal and to bow down before them in blind submission, but it often requires quite a radical rethinking of one's attitude toward the receptor language, even when it is one's own mother tongue. (3)

The purpose of my translations in this chapter will be to communicate the substance of jokes rather than to find equivalencies in English to make the joke funny. I give samples of the most popular categories of Mexican jokes, *colmos* (height of stupidity), *parecidos /diferencias* (resemblances/differences), *qué le dijo* (what did he/she say?) and *telones* (curtains), all as presented in *Picardía Mexicana* (1960) by A. Jimenez, an important and often neglected pioneer text in the study of Mexican oral folklore. I also transcribe representative moments of *Piolín* to show the evolution and centrality of oral folklore in a contemporary US Latino/a society. It is important to keep in mind that the program's content varies depending on the participation of the audience. In this section, I treat the Spanish-radio talk show as a radiogenic text, as explained below. Such a text allows the community to practice self-reflection. In "Radiovanguardia: poesía estridentista y radiofonía,"[110] Rubén Gallo mentions that Andre Coeuroy divides the radio text in two: radiophonic and radiogenic. Gallo explains, "Los escritos radiofónicos se limitan a describir la radio y los aspectos de la radiodifusión mientras que los textos radiogénicos — como los radiodramas — están escritos para ser transmitidos al aire" (9). According

[110] *Mexican Modernity: the Avant-Garde and Technological Revolution*.

to Gallo and Coeuroy the radiophonic text describes radio, but is not necessarily transmitted on air, while the radiogenic text is written to be transmitted. My second chapter shows that some components of the radio program follow a script and others require improvisation from the audience and the main characters in the show; listeners most often do not know which is which. With this oscillation between scripted material and improvisation in mind, this chapter introduces, as explained below, *cantinfleadas* and *albures* as central to the function of the program as a cultural text.

In an effort to understand the identity of people of Mexican descent, humor has been analyzed by Mexicans and Chicano/as on both sides of the border: Samuel Ramos with his efforts to define the national identity of Mexicans through his understanding of the "pelado," in *El perfil del hombre y la cultura*; Octavio Paz exploring the national identity with his pejorative depiction of Mexicans as Chingado/as wearing masks in *El laberinto de la soledad*; and Roger Bartra in *The Cage of Melancholy*, and Jorge Portilla in *La Fenomenología del Relajo* with their study about the culture of "relajo" as a "breakdown on social relations."[111] The work of these Mexican thinkers has been developed by Chicano/as in the United States. Among these US based thinkers are: José Limón with his conception of humor as a unifying force among Chicano/as in "Carne, Carnales, and the Carnivalesque: Bakhtinian batos, Disorder, and Narrative Discourses;" Rafaela Castro's exploration of women of Mexican descent confronting their portrayal in jokes and stories in "Mexican Women's Sexual Jokes;" Maria Herrera-Sobek's identification of main themes that people of Mexican origins use in jokes, in *Chicano Folklore: a Handbook*; and Miguel Diaz Barriga's analysis of *relajo* as "the culture of

[111] "The culture of Poverty as Relajo" by Miguel Diaz Barriga.

poverty."[112] These intellectuals are major contributors in the discussion of humor related to working class people of Mexican descent on both sides of the border. My contribution to this ongoing and lively dialogue posits *Piolín* as a significant producer of oral folklore; I argue that, in this digital era, *Piolín* allows individuals to form communities of *relajo* (commotion). Although *Piolín's* audience is not only Mexican, working class people form and maintain affiliations through the recycling of Mexican humor presented in *albureadas,* which are games of words with double meaning and also in *cantinfleadas,* exaggerated nonsensical verbal comedy performances.[113] In my discussion, I will provide representative examples of the radio text that show the employment of various categories of oral folklore as practiced by a community of listeners. I argue that these techniques of the deployment of humor challenge established structures of power and counteract censure. The show uses diverse linguistic and cultural strategies to target different segments of the audience; it includes anthropological and ethnographical discourses that revolve around topics that affect the US Latino/a community. These are people who use their imagination in the show to transition between different levels of reality. Fictitious and real male characters show chauvinist attitudes, homosexuals accept their sexuality with laughter and mockery, and women talk about sex comfortably.

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[112] *Ibid.*

[113] The verb "cantinflear" is defined by the Real Academia Española as "**1.** intr. *Cuba* y *Méx.* Hablar de forma disparatada e incongruente y sin decir nada. **2.** intr. *Cuba* y *Méx.* Actuar de la misma manera." It's a term attributed to Cantinflas, a Mexican comedian. Bernice W. Kliman and Rick J. Santos write in *Latin American Shakespeares*, "the actual verb *cantinflear*, which strictly denotes 'speaking much without saying anything' […] is far-fetched at best—as Ilan Stavan's interpretation therein, that *cantinflear* among other things, means 'using language as a weapon.' In general, Mexicans do consider that Cantinflas employed language as a weapon, but that has not carried unto our use and understanding of the verb" (240).

Piolín is an important source of popular culture and oral folklore.[114] Christopher D. Geist and Jack Nachbar, in *The Popular Culture Reader*, argue that popular culture is all around us, and that it irritates many critics because it is art and entertainment that forthrightly revolves around money. However, these authors state that popular culture shapes the sensitivities of individuals, and that it is a type of art that can reflect the way people think; popular culture mirrors the values of the multitude and reveals "their fears, fantasies, dreams and dominant mythologies" (3). Geist and Nachbar write that popular culture "is best thought of as mainstream culture—the arts, artifacts, entertainments, fads, beliefs and values shared by large segments of the society" (4). *Piolín* is mainstream culture in the world of US Latino/as; the scope of Univisión, the largest Spanish-language media that houses most of the Hispanic television and radio production in the United States, ensures *Piolin's* wide dissemination.

Geist and Nachbar use the figure of a house[115] to portray the components of popular culture. On the first level of the structure is the basement; it is a physically unseen part that they call "popular mythologies" and includes popular beliefs, values, superstitions and movements of thought. This group of popular mythologies happens in the imagination. The second level of the house, above people's popular mythologies, is the visible images of objects and people; this includes stereotypes, and heroes. The authors explain that icons are objects that have individual and collective meanings; they "are often surrounded by folk beliefs" (5) while heroes and celebrities function as role

[114] It is important to note that in Mexico, *cultura popular* refers to the culture of the working class people.
[115] The figure of a house has also been used by Chicano/a scholars to represent Chicano/a art. See *Chicano Art Inside/Outside the Master's House: Cultural Politics and the CARA Exhibition* by Alicia Gaspar de Alba.

models for individuals to imitate. The third, visible, level of the house is above the first floor, and has two wings: one is popular arts and the second is popular events. The popular arts "include everything from popular fiction and poetry to popular theater, popular music and the products of the mass media—movies, radio programming and the content of television" (7). The authors argue that the popular arts reveal and outline popular taste as well as popular ideas while popular events are rituals that "serve a number of social purposes—to commemorate a link with the past, to affirm a sense of group solidarity, to show off one's products or, perhaps, just to have fun" (8). The combination of elements from each level in the metaphorical structure of the house of popular culture allows individuals to make sense of the contemporary world.

An important component of Latino/a popular culture, *Piolín* is a ritual of laughter where the community maintains, reinforces, and transmits images of objects and people. This imagery reveals the beliefs, values, and myths of the community itself; it presents important components of the oral folklore that people of Mexican descent practice, and reveals the importance of humor in the maintenance of culture. Martha C. Sims and Martine Stephens, in *Living Folklore: An Introduction to the Study of People and Their Traditions,* define folklore in the following terms:

> Folklore is informally learned, unofficial knowledge about the world, ourselves, our communities, our beliefs, our cultures and our traditions, that is expressed creatively through words, music, customs, actions, behaviors and materials. It is also the interactive, dynamic process of creating, communicating, and performing as we share that knowledge with other people. (12)

Following Sims and Stephens' premise, *Piolín* allows people to share oral folklore through their interactions in the show. It is an informal site of communication where the working class community reflects their beliefs, traditions, cultures, and views of the world through jokes and laughter. It is a binational and bicultural community of working class people that use humor to coexist in a society that has neglected and undervalued their existence. The oral folklore practiced in the program functions as a renovation of the spirit and as a restoration and re-presentation of those who have been erased from the history of culture. In *Piolín* the dead awaken laughing.

Adivinanzas

In "When We Dead Awaken: Writing as Re-vision" Adrienne Rich defines re-vision as: "--the act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, of entering an old text from a new critical direction—[…] for women [this is] more than a chapter in cultural history: it is an act of survival" (512). This same awakening happens with the working class people who resist being buried alive by structures of power that refuse to take them into account as important contributors of culture and knowledge in society. Latino/a working class people rebel against invisibility and make noise through their improper behaviors: *choteo, relajo, cuachafita, albureo,* that are different noisy varieties of humor practiced by Latino/a working class people to make themselves audible and/or visible.

Efrain Barradas, in "Cursi, Choteo, Cuachafita: Propuesta para una historia del humor caribeño," describes that *choteo* is a term used in Cuba to designate a type of humor that some thinkers, such as Jorge Mañach, in *Indagación del Choteo,* define as a social disease which troubles civil Cuban society. Mañach writes: "El choteo es un

prurito de independencia que se exterioriza en una burla de toda forma no imperativa de autoridad" (41). It is an iconoclastic type of humor that allows people to not take anything seriously; it mocks and attacks all sorts of authorities and, in his view, is an obstacle in the progress of Cuba. Mañach's point of view about the Cuban *choteo* is marked, according to Barradas, with an elitist perspective that denies the positive effects that this type of humor might have. The Cuban *choteo* is brother of the Caribbean's *guachafita* and *bachata*. These types of humor differ from the Dominican *chercha,* which does not have the same political combativeness. The Dominican humor manifests in what is called "dar cuerda" (to wind up); which happens when humor is targeted at a positionally inferior victim; in contrast, the *choteo* and *cuachafita* attack everyone, powerful and disempowered alike.

Similar to the Caribbean's *choteo* and *cuachafita,* people of Mexican origins practice a type of humor that revolves around *relajo,* a cultural form of commotion that forms part of Mexican folklore. Maestro Armando Jimenez is author of *Picardía Mexicana,* a pioneer and often neglected text that collected samples of oral and written folklore as practiced by working class people. Ermilo Abreu Gomez writes: "El lenguaje popular del medio más bajo de las clases humildes, maleducadas y hasta descastadas de México, constituye valioso caudal idiomático [and cultural] que reclama un detenido estudio." [116] In other words, the language and culture of the rude, improper, and dislocated lower classes, like *Piolín*, is an important phenomenon that requires attention. On the program, a group uses humor and language in their crudest and roughest form to interact and communicate; this is a combination of cultural humoristic elements that

[116] See blurb of *Picardía Mexicana*.

repeat over and over, making humor a recycling process. That is, language is processed and reprocessed. This, in combination with new situations, circumstances, and experiences, continues to evolve in time and space provoking newly inflected bursts of laughter.

The evolution of Mexican folklore, which has crossed borders of time and space and has arrived at *Piolín*, is traced in the taxonomy of Mexican folklore that Armando Jimenez[117] gathered in 1960. He identifies four types of *adivinanzas*, or guessing riddles that evolved from the use of jokes in *carpas* (ambulant theaters) and magazines. Jimenez writes:

> Dos orígenes tuvieron estos rompecabezas, allá en los veintes: uno, el Conde Boby, ventrílocuo de carpa, el mejor que ha producido nuestro solar patrio; el otro, un escritor que con el seudónimo de 'Maraber' publicaba cada semana un acertijo en la revista *El Malora.* (61)

That is, *adivinanzas* or guessing riddles became popular in the 20s when a ventriloquist, named Conde Boby, used them in ambulant theaters, and when the writer of *El Malora* magazine, with the nickname of Maraber, published them as puzzles.

The four categories of jokes that Jimenez suggests are: the ***colmos*** (height of stupidity), which were popular in the 1930s, the ***parecidos /diferencias*** (resemblances/differences) fashionable in 1935, the ***qué le dijo*** (what did he/she say?)

[117] *Ibid*.

famous in 1942 and the ***telones*** (curtains) trendy in 1955.[118] Jimenez argues that the *colmos* were born when radio became popular; here is an example:

_ ¿Cuál es el colmo de un forzudo?

_ Doblar la esquina de una calle (48).

My translation:

_What is the height of stupidity in a bodybuilder?

_To bend the corner on the street.

The playfulness in this joke is in the meaning of the word "doblar," which is to bend and/or to turn.

Jimenez explains that among the most popular of the *parecidos* or *diferencias* were the jokes about women. They became famous when women in Mexico started to claim equal rights, and men used to make fun of them through dirty jokes. These pejorative jokes attacked Mexican women despite their importance in the transformation of Mexico as a country; participation that stretches back to the times of the Mexican Revolution and continues to present days.[119] Jimenez shows three levels of innocence in the development of the *parecidos/diferencias*. Here is an innocent one:

_ ¿En qué se parece la viruta al timbre?

_ En que la viruta es aserrín y el timbre hace ¡rin! (50)

My translation:

[118] "En el año de 1930 tuvieron auge los *colmos*, en 1935 los *parecidos*, en 1942 los *qué le dijo* y en 1955 los *telones*" (47-48).
[119] *Las mujeres en la Revolución Mexicana 1884-1920.*

_How is the wood chip similar to the bell?

_The chip is sawdust and the bell makes ring.

The humor in the joke is the sound of the Spanish words *aserrín* and *rin*, which together make a rhyme and a pun. In contrast to the innocence of the first example, the second one is relatively offensive:

_ ¿En qué se parecen (o se diferencian) la mujer y el radio?

_En que éste se enchufa, se calienta y toca, y la mujer se toca, se calienta y enchufa. (52)

My translation:

_What's the similarity (or difference) between a woman and a radio?

_A radio needs to be plugged in, warms up and then plays while a woman plays,[120] warms up and then needs to be plugged in.

This joke is self-explanatory and the humor could be in the way the woman and the radio are compared and contrasted. The joke utilizes pejorative and possibly violent, misogynist sexual innuendo.

The third example, as presented by Jimenez, is aggressive and mordant. It incorporates *albur*[121]and shows the "differential spirit of the Mexican joke" (Jimenez 54). This example shows the prankishness of Mexican humor, which revolves around language that has particular sexual connotations:

_ ¿En qué se parece un ferrocarril al limón?

_En que el ferrocarril tiene pito, y el limón, zumo. (54)

[120] Tocar is "to play" and also "to touch."
[121] Game of words with sexual connotation.

My translation:

_What is the similarity between a train and a lemon?

_ A train has a horn, and a lemon has juice.

The humor of the joke is in the comparison of the train and the lemon, but also, in the sexual innuendo that the word *zumo* communicates. In Mexican Spanish, *zumo* is the juice of the lemon's skin, and *sumo* means "to sink." Both of these words are pronounced similarly. After posing the question "What is the similarity between a train and a lemon?" the interlocutor understands, "A train has a horn, and I sink the horn in you."[122]

The third category that Jimenez suggests is the *qué le dijo* jokes that were practiced in 1942 at the beginning of World War II. Jimenez shows three examples to demonstrate the evolution of those jokes. The first one is very innocent:

_ ¿Qué le dijo la luna al sol?

_ ¿Tan grandote y nunca sales de noche? (56)

My translation:

_What did the moon say to the sun?

_So big and never go out at night?

This is a childish joke where the moon mocks the sun implying that he is afraid of the dark.

The second example of the *qué le dijo* joke is risqué:

_ ¿Qué le dijo una asentadera a la otra?

_ Entre tú y yo se interpone un abismo. (56)

[122] More than three people have told me they don't understand this joke. This shows that a reader, in order to understand certain jokes, has to have some "street training and/or experience" otherwise, the content of the jokes is irrelevant.

My translation:

_What did a cheek tell the other cheek?

_Between you and I there is a big chasm.

This joke personifies the buttocks as all *qué le dijo* jokes personify something or other. A third example of a *qué le dijo* joke that Jimenez presents exhibits particularly Mexican characteristics:

_ ¿Qué le dijo la cucaracha a la gelatina?

_ ¿Por qué tiemblas cuando te cojo? (56)

My translation:

_What did the cockroach tell the gelatin?

_Why do you tremble when I grab/fuck you?

The humor in this joke is a combination of the meaning of the verb "coger," which in Mexican Spanish means "to grab" and/or "to fuck," along with the nature of gelatin.

Jimenez explains that radio and television spread the huge variety of jokes throughout Mexico. The fourth type of *adivinanza* is the *telón* (curtain), which is a narrated riddle where the narrator describes the action as if he or she were in the theater. That is, the joke-teller presents the joke in acts or scenes. Again, Jimenez explains that this joke has three types. The first example is innocent:

> Primer acto. Se levanta el telón. Aparece un árabe abonero. Cae el telón. Segundo acto. Se levanta el telón. El abonero lleva la medicina a la boca y la traga. Cae el telón. ¿Cómo se llama la obra?

_La toma de la bastilla (58).

My translation:

First Act. The curtain opens. There is an Arab dependant. The curtain closes.

Second Act. The curtain opens. The dependant takes a pill to his mouth and swallows it. The curtain closes. What's the name of the play?

_Bastille Day/La toma de la bastilla.

The joke makes fun of how a native speaker of Arabic pronounces the phrase "la toma de la pastilla," which means "taking a pill," and mispronounces it as "la toma de la bastilla," which means Bastille Day.

The second example of the *telones* (curtains) uses pictures instead of acts to segment its parts.

1er cuadro. Sale a escena un ex-gobernante cuyo nombre es obvio mencionar, acompañado de sus parientes.

2º cuadro. El mismo, con sus compadres y compañeros.

3er cuadro. Otra vez el propio mandatario, rodeado de sus colaboradores. ¿Nombre de la obra?

_Alí Babá y los cuarenta ladrones (58).

My translation:

1st picture. A governor whose name is not worth mentioning appears on scene with his relatives.

2nd picture. The same governor appears with his mates.

3rd picture. Again the same governor appears surrounded by his campaign workers. What's the name of the play?

_Alibaba and the Forty Thieves.

This joke implies that all the people around the politicians and all of their relatives, friends and co-workers are corrupt. The uniqueness of this example, as *telones*, is the presentation of the joke in "cuadros" or pictures instead of *telones* (theater scenes). The third example of the *telones* utilizes sexual innuendo:

> Se abre el telón, aparece un yucateco con una antorcha y le quema la cara a María Félix. Se cierra el telón.
>
> Se abre el telón, el mismo yucateco con su antorcha prende fuego a María Conesa. Se cierra el telón.
>
> Se abre el telón, el pirómano la toma esta vez contra María Victoria. Se cierra el telón. ¿Título de este incendiario drama?
>
> El cabezón quema-Marías.

My translation:

> The curtain opens and there is a Yucatecan who burns Maria Felix's face [an actress in the Golden Age of Mexican Cinema] with a torch. The curtain closes.
>
> The curtain opens and the same Yucatecan sets fire to Maria Conesa [actress in the time of the Mexican Revolution] with his torch. The curtain closes.
>
> The curtain opens and the pyromaniac sets fire to Maria Victoria [singer, film and television actress]. The curtain closes. What's the title of the incendiary drama?
>
> The stupid stubborn burns-Marías.

The humor of the joke is in the last part with the Spanish phrase, "El cabezón quema-Marías,"[123] which implies two meanings. One suggests, "the idiot burns Marías," but

[123] Using the stereotype that Yucatecans have big heads.

when articulated in Spanish, it sounds like "el cabezón que mamarías," which means "you would suck this big head."

The previous catalogue of jokes, *parecidos* or *diferencias*, *que le dijo*, *telones*, and *colmos* as presented by Jimenez, is important to my analysis of Latino/a humor in *Piolín*. These illustrations provide an understanding of how the jokes performed in the show continue to recycle the same themes and techniques; this, in combination with new conditions and situations that people experience in contemporary US Latino/a communities.

Cantinfladas

Piolín's Latino/a audience is not only Mexican; however, the jokes revolve around an obviously Mexican type of humor. Rafael Barajas, in *Sólo me rio cuando me duele*, argues that Mexican humor has developed two types of language, characterizing the Mexican culture of humor: the *cantinfleada* and the *albur*. The first one is attributed to Mario Moreno Cantinflas who according to Barajas represents the urban vagabond pícaro (rascal). The *cantinfleada* is "una construcción fantasiosa y sin sentido. Usa la verborrea para no decir nada" (213). In other words, this comedic mode is a game of words where the speaker goes round and round using words to communicate nonsense; foolishness that, instead of communicating coherent ideas, causes confusion. The following sketch illustrates a combination of *cantinfladas*:

> "La escuelita"[124]
>
> LA MAESTRA.[125] Ya niños, buenos días. ¿Cómo están los niños?

[124] From February 21, 2009. La escuelita is a Mexican televisión show by Jorge Ortiz de Pinedo.
[125] Chela Prieto, a fictitious female character in the show interprets "la maestra"

LOS NIÑOS.[126] Bien.

LA MAESTRA. A ver vamos a empezar con la clase. Lucas, puedes decirme ¿porqué llegas tarde otra vez…?

LUCAS. Porque en mi casa se fue la luz maestra y por eso llegué tarde y el electricista dijo que tenía un corto pero se tardó tanto que yo pienso que tenía un largo.

LA MAESTRA. Ay no, cállate mejor la boca. (La maestra le pega al niño y el niño dice ay) Ay ya basta. A ver, hoy vamos a hablar de la lógica.

LUCAS. Ay pues ya nos van a decir chismosos.

LA MAESTRA. ¿Por qué nos van a decir chismosos?

LUCAS. Porque vamos a hablar de la lógica. Y mi mamá así le dice a la vecina.

LA MAESTRA. A ver vamos a hablar de la lógica y la lógica es muy sencilla. A ver a ti Naranjito. ¿Te gusta el mar?

NARANJITO. Sí.

LA MAESTRA. Sí a ti te gusta el mar, entonces por lógica te gustan los bikinis y te gustan las mujeres. A pues esa es la lógica. ¿Entienden?

LOS NIÑOS. Sí.

LUCAS. Oye Changapiedras. ¿Te gusta el mar?

CHANGAPIEDRAS. No.

LUCAS. A pues por lógica eres gay.

OTRO ESTUDIANTE. No. Él es un juego electrónico. El es un gayboy.

LA MAESTRA. ¡Qué barbaridad! A ver…también les dije que íbamos a hablar de zoología. Y quiero que me digan porqué a los osos se les dice ‘plantigrados’.

UNA NIÑA. Se les dice plantígrados porque si se nos caen en cima, nos dejan plantados.

[126] Different voices interpret “los niños.”

LA MAESTRA. Oí nomás. No mensa. A los osos se les dice plantígrados porque tragan plantas de primer grado. Eh, por eso. Bueno, dejémonos de estupideces. El oso es un animal plantígrado porque cuando camina lo hace apoyando toda la planta del pie.

ESTUDIANTES. Ahhhhhhhh.

LUCAS. A ya le entendí. Yo tengo una prima que es plantígrada.

LA MAESTRA. ¿Y eso porqué?

LUCAS. Porque trabaja en una fábrica y xxx[127] con todos los de la planta.

LA MAESTRA. (Le pega a los estudiantes) Cállense mejor. (Siguen golpes y termina la broma)

_Somos el show de *Piolín por la Mañana*.

LA MAESTRA. Good morning kids. How are you doing?

LOS NIÑOS. Good.

LA MAESTRA. Let's start the class. Lucas, can you tell me, why are you late again?

LUCAS. Because the light went off in my house, teacher; that's why I'm late. The electrician said that there was a short circuit, but it took such a long time that I think it was a long one.

LA MAESTRA. Oh, no, shut your mouth. (The teacher hits the kid and the kid says "ay!") Enough! Let's see, today we are going to talk about logic.

LUCAS. Oh, people will call us gossipy.

LA MAESTRA. Why are they going to call us gossipy?

LUCAS. Because we're going to talk about Logic and that's what my mother calls the neighbor.

LA MAESTRA. Let's talk about logic; logic is very simple. Let's see, Naranjito, do you like the sea?

[127] Se asume que la palabra escondida es "putea."

NARANJITO. Yes.

LA MAESTRA. If you like the sea, you logically, like bikinis and women. Well, that is logic. Do you kids understand?

LOS NIÑOS. Yes.

LUCAS. Hey, Changapiedras, do you like the sea?

CHANGAPIEDRAS. No.

LUCAS. Oh, well, then, logically, you are gay.

OTRO ESTUDIANTE. No. He is a video game. He is a gay boy [game boy].

LA MAESTRA. Good lord! Let's see, I also told you that we were going to talk about zoology. I want you to tell me why are bears called plantigrades?

UNA NIÑA. They are called plantigrades because if they fall on us they leave us planted on the floor.

LA MAESTRA. What nonsense! No, you fool, bears are called plantigrades because they eat first grade plants. That's why. Ok, let's not be stupid. The bear is a plantigrade animal because he supports himself with the entire sole of his feet.

ESTUDIANTES. Ahhhhhhhh.

LUCAS. Oh, I understood. I have a cousin that is plantigrade.

LA MAESTRA. Why's that?

LUCAS. Because she works in a factory and she xxx (fucks) everyone in the plant.

LA MAESTRA. (Hits the student) Shut up! (continues to hit the kid and the joke ends)

_ [musically inflected];We are the show--*Piolín por la Mañana*.

The previous example shows a particular escalation of *cantinfleadas,* where interlocutors confuse one another with the twists of meaning that they give to words. The deformation

of meaning starts with the variation of the word *corto,* meaning short circuit explain the middle of the joke and ends with stupid conclusions caused by the misunderstanding of *lógica,* which is a nickname for a certain woman. The effect of the joke is a confusion of meanings, which is the function of the *cantinfleada*, and although the correct definition of the word *plantigrado* is explained by the teacher, the meaning gets blurred by the irrelevancies exchanged by the characters. This joke is characterized by misprision following misprision in staccato.

Albures

Besides the nonsense of the *cantinfleadas, Piolín* is a place where humor revolves around *albures*. Patrick Johansson, in "*Cuecuechcuicatl*, 'Canto travieso': un antecedente prehispanico del albur," argues that the *Cuecuechcuicatl* or "Canto travieso" is a prehispanic ritual that precedes the *albur*. Johansson writes:

> El carácter agonístico del canto que se percibe en las réplicas, el probable margen de improvisación que implica la necesidad vital de provocar la risa, las alusiones sexuales verbalmente configuradas, y una omnipresente ambigüedad, hacen del género un precursor de lo que sería un día, en un ámbito ya profano, el albur. (1)

In other words, the *albur* has historical precedents in the *Cuecuechcuicatl,* which is a naughty song and dance that provoked sexual playfulness of its participants in the Aztec culture. Barajas, on the other hand, describes the *albur* in the following terms*:*

> Uno de los mecanismos humorísticos del albur es un juego de palabras difícil y sofisticado, el calambur, un juego de homofonías [que] consiste

> en encontrar sílabas, palabras y frases que suenan igual, pero que, según la separación, la puntuación o la acentuación, producen equívocos y ambigüedades, dándole a la palabra o a la frase un significado diferente. (206)

That is, the *calambur* is a game of homophonies, which attempts to find syllables, words and phrases that have the same sound and that according to the punctuation or accentuation produce ambiguities and false assumptions;[128] this changes the meaning of words and/or phrases. According to Barajas the *albur* is "un juego de palabras de doble sentido," (213) a game of words with double meaning (double entendre) where metaphors, literary images, homophonies, and other tricks of language. The *albur* functions as a way to liberate the most forbidden thoughts. Along the same lines, Victor Hernandez writes in *Antología del Albur*: "El *albur* es un juego de palabras con un doble sentido. Este doble sentido es por lo general sexual o escatológico. La intención del albur es hacer una zancadilla verbal que implique burla o que comunique una afrenta" (302). Hernandez contends that the *albur* is a game of words with double meaning and such *double entendre* is sexual and/or scatological; he argues that the purpose of the *albur* is to lure the interlocutor into a trap. Hernandez writes:

> lo que nos ha permitido a los mexicanos defendernos de los embates de la globalización y de la colonización cultural americana ha sido el desarrollo de sistemas de resistencia cultural como el rock en español, el arte naco, la

[128] Lee Edelmen's homographesis: "on one hand, a normalizing practice of cultural discrimination (generating, as a response, the self-nominalization that eventuates in the affirmative politics of a minoritized gay community) and on the other, a strategy resistance to that reification of sexual difference" (Homographesis 10).

> historieta 'sensacional', y el albur [al igual que] lo naco, lo corriente, lo chafa, el chacoteo […] y la peladez. (325)

Hernandez argues that the *albur* along with other forms of cultural resistance such as Spanish-language rock, ghetto art, and comics, in combination with obscene language are weapons that have allowed Mexicans to defend themselves from globalization and cultural American colonization. Hernandez contends that the *albur* consists of two verbal elements. The first one is the association of harmless words with scatological/sexual meanings, and the second one is the deconstruction of harmless words to create new words and expressions that imply sexual and/or scatological significance.

Further, to understand the *albur*, Alberto Sladogna argues, in the epilogue of *El libro de los albures*, that this linguistic game of words shows the way in which individuals erotize the body, words, language, sexual identities, and sexual acts. His notions of all of these categories are psychoanalytically inflected. Sladogna writes:

> los de arriba, los del medio y los de abajo nacen a través de un agujero y culminan sus vidas en un agujero; los diversos sectores sociales, culturales y económicos para vivir hacen frente al desamparo que los conduce a la vida erótica y del amor. Allí es donde el albur toma y tiene un trazo único que comparte con el taco, el chile y el tequila. (144)

Sladogna suggests that everyone starts life coming out of a hole, and ends it going into another hole; the feeling of love in an erotic life binds people in their attempt to not feel abandoned. In this coming together, the *albur* occupies the volatile territory of food and drink. They enter the body through one hole and say good bye through another. It seems

almost too obvious to note, but, it turns out, that everyone eats and everyone shits. The albur situtates itself in contradistinction to any particular gustatorial repression. Language exposes the body as full of holes. Through words, language creates "a rainbow" of identity (141). Sexual identities reveal their plasticity when language plays dirty tricks on itself; men speak like women, and women like men, just by changing accents and tones of voice. This game shows the impermanent nature of identity and allows participants to not be bothered by any linguistic elasticity. While hygiene rejects and throws to the garbage the anal components of the body, the *albur* transforms the asshole and its products into something hot, spicy and perfumed, humanizing and making them part of the human condition and perfectly suitable to talk about in company. Sladogna points out that the *albur* acts seriously in a playful way to challenge power:

> El albur juega en serio de manera lúdica con el poder; ese momento fugaz el albur mediante el 'flatus fugaz' de su enunciación se pitorrea y/o se pedorrea del poder absoluto, ya no importa que le pase al poder sino que cada quien albureando se ríe, gozando por el gran placer de reírse del poderoso, aunque él [ella] no lo crea. (144)

According to Sladogna, the *albur* allows its authors and participants to mock power and those in positions of power. It is a playful artifice enunciated and thrown out of the body in the form of "flatus leakage;" an excretory spout or dirty fart over the supremely pure statuary of absolute power.

Bombas

Albures are a common mode of communication in *Piolín*; they mix into ordinary conversations and create a humorous backdrop for the program. *Bombas*, for example--a *bomba yucateca* is a festive and playful saying that rhymes; it is particular to the Yucatán Peninsula in Mexico, and it often produces a transition between music and *jarana,* a traditional regional dance. The *bombas* are dares. Traditionally, they have been compliments or forms of adulation that a male dance partner recites to the woman with whom he dances. They appear as improvised verses and happen in different segments of the dance when the music stops. These verses of various measurement (generally quatrains but also longer stanzaic forms, of eight syllables)[129] can be romantic, humorous or mellow; that is not bawdy or rude. During the action of the dance the movement is interrupted by a voice shouting "BOMBA!" upon which the male dancer recites the quatrain to his partner; people applaud, laugh or scream "BRAVO!" After the *bomba* is finished, the music continues or sometimes the woman responds with another *bomba,* which attempts to outdo the audacity of first one. The following is an example of a romantic bomba: "Del cielo cayó un pañuelo bordado con mil colores y en la puntita decía mestiza de mis amores" "¡Bomba!," which translated into English would mean something like this, "A handkerchief fell from the sky, embroidered in the brightest colors, upon it was written, 'you are the *mestiza* of my love' *Bomba*!" However, time has changed the traditional "proper" form of the *bomba* and has made it offensive and/or vulgar. Defenders of the proper *bomba* like Maestra Manuelita Pavia de Coronado, in

[129] Javier Covo Torres writes in *La Bomba Yucateca*: "La bomba ha de ser de carácter breve, conciso, por lo general, expresado en una cuarteta, aunque nosotros hemos constatado la práctica de bombas de diversos metros (de seis versos, de ocho, etc.) y aún décimas" (11).

"Llamado para rescatar la 'bomba yucateca' respetuosa," try to maintain the original innocent, decent, form of this rhyming trope. She defines it "como un halago o un piropo que el 'improvisado[r]' obsequia a su compañera de baile en la vaquería (baile tradicional de Yucatán)". That is, according to Pavia de Coronado, the *bomba* is a compliment to a woman in a *vaqueria*, a traditional festivity of Yucatán. Javier Covo Torres, in *Bomba Yucateca/ Las mejores bombas del folclor yucateco,* defines the *bomba* as a variant of the Spanish *copla* (verse) and identifies its origins with the time of the Spanish colonization. The first antecedent of Yucatecan humor stretches back to the 16th century when "Duende de Valladolid" appeared in *Informe contra Idolorum Cultores* by Sanchez de Aquilar. Duende was, according to Covo, a trouble maker character who mocked citizens in the Colonial Valladolid in Yucatán. Some of the Duende's mischievous acts were to throw rocks and rotten eggs at the houses of landlords, and to anoint the priest's food with excrement and urine. Mayans also mocked the Spaniards by mimicking their behavior in small plays. *Reconstrucción de hechos* by Dr. Eduardo Urzáiz Rodríguez rescues some comic verses that antecede the *bomba*; for example, Father Lorenzo Mateo Caldera wrote his testament entirely in lines of ten syllables. In this testament he gave his fortune to Antonina, a black slave woman who he had set free. *Don Bullebulle* was a magazine born when the press arrived in Yucatán in 1813; in this magazine Gabriel Vicente Gahona alias Picheta drew caricatures about popular humor as practiced by the common people. The *bomba*, in *Piolín*, developed into something inventive where humor surpasses innocence and sweetness; it becomes daring, and often vulgar, when combined with *albures,* and sexual innuendo gets mixed with humor and laughter. *Piolín* uses the

bomba as a competition between interlocutors who show their superiority by the inventiveness of their insults:

> REINA. Desde lejos he venido, cruzando el río, cruzando el cerro, solo pa venirte a ver esa cara de perro.
>
> [BOMBA]
>
> PIOLIN. Tendré la cara de perro y hasta los ojos de buey, pero la verdad es que yo soy tu rey.
>
> [BOMBA]
>
> PIOLIN. El pepino que me pediste es de mi amiga Manuela, se lo di a tu hermana para funda de su tachuela.
>
> [BOMBA]
>
> RODOLFO. Pal Naranjito: ayer pasé por el parque y miré a un ser humano. Me pregunté quién es ese con cara de marrano.
>
> [BOMBA]
>
> NARANJITO. Rodolfo, con esa maldita recesión es difícil ganar dinero, pero en la lista de tu vieja, yo fui el primero.
>
> [BOMBA]
>
> RODOLFO. Dicen que el naranjito esta gordo y panzón pero antes de que se muera, quiero que le dé besitos, a este grande cabezón.
>
> _¡BOMBA! [130]
>
> REINA. I've come from far away, crossing the river, crossing the hill, only to see your ugly dog face.
>
> [Accompanied by a little music that says "BOMBA!" but very gently]
>
> PIOLIN. I might have a dog's face and perhaps bull's eyes, but the truth is that I am your King.
>
> "BOMBA!"—[The purpose of the internal bomba is to create a pause. Sometimes this pause is marked by a musical trill. Sometimes it is

[130] This *piolibomba* was taken from youtube on December 29, 2009.

very muted. In this case, the interstitial bomba is quiet, but it marks the pause between call and response.]

PIOLIN. The cucumber that you requested belongs to my friend Manuela (hand) I gave it to your sister to cover her crotch.

[BOMBA]

RODOLFO. To Naranjito: Yesterday, I passed by the park and saw a human being. I wondered who that pig's face was.

["BOMBA!"]

NARANJITO. Rodolfo, with this damn recession it is hard to make money, but in the list of people making your wife, I was the first one.

[BOMBA]

RODOLFO. They say that Naranjito is fat and chubby but before I die, I want him to kiss this great big head.

_¡BOMBA!

This *bomba* performs a verbal duel that escalates from one tint of humor to another, seamlessly. It starts between Reina and Piolín and ends between Naranjito and Rodolfo. Reina (Queen) denigrates Piolín by telling him that he has a dog's face, and Piolín's response is that he is Reina's king. Listeners often address Piolín Sotelo as "cara de perro," which means dog's face, and he also calls his male listeners *dog face*. As the *bombas* evolve, Piolín throws a rhyme directed to anyone in the audience, and says that he gave his cucumber to someone's sister. The *bomba* continues and Rodolfo tells Naranjito that he, Naranjito, has a pig's face, and Naranjito responds by saying that he was the first one to take Rodolfo wife's virginity. Rodolfo responds by saying that he wants Naranjito to kiss Rodolfo's big head; Rodolfo does not use the word "dick," but uses "big head" to tell Naranjito to kiss his dick. These dialogues are an escalation of male chauvinist superior behavior where interlocutors attempt to put one another down.

The conversation starts as an exchange of simple insults between Reina and Piolín Sotelo, and ends up with an imagined sexual threesome with comedic, same-sex male interaction.

Beside the sexual innuendo made by characters (and the audience, of course), *Piolín* uses different linguistic and cultural strategies to reach its diverse audience. Manuel Martín Rodríguez, in "Querido Reader: Linguistic and Marketing Strategies for Addressing a Multicultural Readership,"[131] analyzes linguistic and literary strategies utilized by Chicano/a authors "in order to evaluate the diverse ways their texts succeed in addressing their monolingual and/ or multilingual/ multicultural readers" (107). Among those strategies are the extratextual techniques of marketing and distribution that authors use to expand their audience. *Piolín* gives a new language to the working class Hispanic immigrants that listen to and participate in the show. The use of diverse varieties of Spanish, English and some intermixed Caló reflect the talking patterns of the working class Latino/a community of Mexican descent in real life. Martin Rodriguez uses Angel Rama's concept of "transcultural authors" to explain how Chicano/a writers connect audience members of various linguistic and cultural groups. Similarly, *Piolín's* characters mediate language and culture for the diverse people that interact in the radio text of the show. The following joke in English and Spanish[132] illustrates some of the linguistic strategies deployed in the program:

> [Nine people live in the same house. Characters: Anita is the daughter and Rosita is the mother.]

[131] *Life in Search of Readers: reading (in) Chicano/a Literature* by Manuel Martín Rodríguez.
[132] This joke was taken from Youtube.com on May 28, 2009.

PIOLIN. ¿Entonces que le vas a decir a tu mamá en la broma de la hora belleza?

ANITA. Que me habló mi cuñada, Mari a quejarse de que ya se habían acabado la leche de mi hermano y que estaba enojada porque le estamos agarrando su leche y que no se qué.

PIOLIN. Mami pero que también el champú.

ANITA. Sí, el champú, el jabón, el papel, todo le voy a decir.

PIOLIN. Sí mami que el champú lo está vaciando con un embudo hija, con el que usa tu carnal para hacerle el cambio de aceite al carro. ¿Órale? Márcale Lucas Plutarco…

COMMENTARIO DE PIOLIN. Si es que viven como nueve personas en una casa de tres recamaras. Que bronconón han de tener ustedes viviendo en la misma casa.

ANITA. Es que yo apenas me moví Piolín. Yo vivía en el Paso y como me divorcié y todo, pues ellos me están echando la mano porque yo me vine para acá. Por eso estoy allí, pero yo realmente voy a agarrar mi propio lugar, pero por mientras ahí estoy porque aquí en Colorado todo está bien caro.

DON PONCHO. Así dicen todos Piolín Sotelo: "Nomás en lo que me aliviano…Pasan cuatro años y no se alivianan nunca los desgraciados." (Risas)

El teléfono suena.

ROSITA. What happened?

ANITA. What are you doing?

ROSITA. Nothing, I just got in.

ANITA. ¿Y Mari?

ROSITA. She's at work. Why?

ANITA. Porque me habló.

ROSITA. ¿Y luego?

ANITA. Me habló quejándose de la leche. Que ya nos habíamos acabado la leche de Jagui.

ROSITA. I don't think so.

ANITA. Pues me habló bien enojada diciéndome que ya estaba cansada que nos estábamos acabando la leche de Julian y que no se qué, que ella había comprado…

ROSITA. Es más, the little gallon that you left, I poured it into Jagui's gallon. (Risas) I poured it into his gallon because I had bought a gallon for the boys. They still have half a gallon and when you said you didn't need your little gallon I put the little gallon in there. She hasn't bought milk for Jagui.

ANITA. Ay amá (enojada) pero para qué…yo te dije…también lo del papel del baño ¿no te dije cuando fuimos a la tienda? Y fui y agarré y se enojó, que ella lo había comprado y que no se qué. Le dije es que mi amá me dijo que uste ahí tenia. "No pos es mío. Yo lo compré." Y ahora…yo te dije.

ROSITA. Argh…I was just there at the store with her right now. Okay then. I guess we are going to start buying our own XXX (sound). If that's how she's going to start; every time she gets upset with what Jaqui does he comes and take it out on us. Why didn't she say anything before? She even told me "Do you have toilet paper?" and she goes "I still have some here. When you run out, there are some in the closet" I said "Yeah I know. I saw you brought some in" I go "just give me some rolls." She's the one that gave me the rolls. And she's the one that told me she had bought. I've seen her buy a bag. When she bought it she asked me "do you guys have toilet paper" and I go "we still do" and she said "Okay I'm going to guardar it in the closet" and I said "Okay".

ANITA. Es que se estaba quejando y me estaba diciendo que estabas usando mucho papel del baño.

ROSITA. (enojada) Ah. Okay, we'll just get our own refrigerator then.

ANITA. Ay amá.

ROSITA. I'm telling you every time she gets upset at him she brings it over here. Already!

ANITA. Y luego también me estaba diciendo que del champú, que tuvo que usar el embudo porque nos lo habíamos agarrado de abajo del sink y que ya estaba cansada de que le estuviéramos agarrando todas sus cosas de su cuarto. Que ya nomás faltaba que nos fueramos a su cuarto y que te fueras a dormir allí.

ROSITA. That's what she told you? (sorprendida)

ANITA. Y agarrar su cama.

ROSITA. When did she tell you that?

ANITA. Today.

ROSITA. This morning?

ANITA. Yes.

ANITA. Is it true that you are watching more TV than her?

ROSITA. She mentioned that too?

ANITA. Ajá

ROSITA. Don't we pay half of the bill? I mean, she's the one who calls to Mexico most of the time.

ANITA. Pos sí, pero dice que le estás gastando los colores a la tele.

ROSITA. I don't watch her T.V. in the sala.

ANITA. Y que ya ahí te mantienes nomás viendo la tele y que el sillón ya está todo hundido y que no sé qué.

ROSITA. She came up with that XXX too?

ANITA. Ajá. Y dice que ella gasta cuatro litros de agua y que tú gastas diez cuando te bañas.

ROSITA. She's counting my gallons! (dice sorprendida)

ANITA. I guess.

ROSITA. Okay, we need to straighten this now, in front of your brother.

ANITA. Y luego también me estaba diciendo, "qué me están agarrando mis calzones, las tangas, quién se las pone, usted o su mamá…o qué?" Yo le digo, "cómo le vamos a agarrar las tangas?"

ROSITA. Who the hell wears tangas?

ANITA. I guess her. Y luego también me estaba diciendo que si tú se las habías agarrado.

ROSITA. What?...si de milagro compro calzones. (risas) And what did you tell her?

ANITA. Pos nada, yo me enojé. Yo le dije que estaba loca y que …ay y luego también me estaba diciendo de la luz. Que estabas gastando mucha luz porque tú eras la que te estabas ahí en la casa y que como estabas ahí te mantenías abriendo y cerrando la hielera y que quién sabe qué.

ROSITA. This woman is mentally ill. (dice enojada) (risas)

ANITA. ¿Pues cuántas veces abres la hielera?

ROSITA. It doesn't matter how many times I open the refrigerator. If I have to cook I have to open it. If I have to do stuff I have to open it. What does she want me to do? Have things appear and disappear without opening la hielera?

ANITA. ¿Pues cuántas veces la abres?

ROSITA. I don't know Anita. (enojada)

ANITA. Más o menos.

ROSITA. ¡¿Más o menos?! I don't keep track.

ANITA. Y luego también me estaba diciendo que roncas mucho, mi cuñada.

ROSITA. Anita, are you lying to me? What the hell is this?

ANITA. ¡Mom, te la comiste…! ¡Estás en Piolín! (Risas)

PIOLIN. ¡Te la comiste Anita!

ROSITA. Anita caxxx,[133] te voy a matar y a ese xxx[134] cara de perro. (risas burlándose) I swear on God. I was just there with your sister in law and she didn't say anything.

PIOLIN. ¡Te la comiste Rosita!

ROSITA. ¡No me hables! ¡Dientes de burro! (risas)

PIOLIN. ¡Se está robando el champú de la cuñada!

ROSITA. ¡Me estoy robando el champú de la nuera güey! (risas)

PIOLIN. ¡Se está robando las tangas de la nuera!

ROSITA. Si no uso ni calzones.

PIOLIN. ¡Con que razón traen caspa los zapatos!

ROSITA. Ay no. Vas a ver Anita, vas a ver.

ANITA. ¡Ay! (se ríe y carcajea)

ROSITA. No, si ya le iba a colgar y le iba a hablar a la pobre loca de mi nuera.

NARANJITO. Ya paga el galón de leche.

ROSITA. Le acabo de apagar al pinche radio.

PIOLIN. Paqué lo anda apagando. Siempre tiene que estar escuchando el show de Piolín.

ROSITA. Ya cuando empezó a decirme que si de las tangas, que si de roncar, yo dije, ah no…este es un xxx juego no sé de qué, pero nunca se me prendió que iba a ser el xxx del Piolín.

DON PONCHO. ¡Vieja libidinosa!

ROSITA. Ay, igual de borracha que mi viejo. (Rosita's way to twist the insult is to identify herself as don Poncho's wife)

DON PONCHO. Póngase a dieta. Ya sumió el sillón.

ROSITA. Pues si no me has visto güey. Tengo buen cuerpo, pos qué, con patas de pollo, pero… (risas).

---

[133] We hear the "ca" of "cabrona," which means bitch.
[134] We hear the "pi" of pinche, which means bastard.

PIOLIN. ¡Te la comiste Rosita!

ROSITA. Toda. Toda. Así me gusta. (Albureando a Piolín)

DON CASIMIRO. Yeah baby! (risas)

ANITA. I did it mom. I got on *Piolín*.

ROSITA. You shut up!

DON PONCHO. Pura cultura Rosita. Nueve viviendo en una casa.

ROSITA. Pura cultura. I swear.

PIOLIN. Oye Rosa, y ¿es verdad que tú usas más el papel higiénico?

ROSITA. ¡Pues tengo el horno más grande!

(Risas y más risas)

ANUNCIO. Piolín está para cargarse[135] de risa.

The joke in English and Spanish explains that there are nine people living in a house with three rooms. Anita plays a joke on her mother Rosita explaining that Mari, her sister-in-law, called her to complain about the discomfort of having them in her house. According to Anita, Mari thinks that Anita and Rosita are drinking her milk, and that Rosita is using too much toilet paper. The joke escalates, when Anita tells her mom that Mari does not only think that they are a burden in the house, but that they are taking advantage, especially Rosita, who is wasting the television colors and sinking the sofa with her weight. She is also using too much water when she showers and she uses Mari's thongs. Furthermore, she opens the refrigerator too much and snores loudly. Finally, Rosita realizes that it is a joke from *Piolín*, and she calls him donkey's teeth. Don Poncho (Piolín's voice), one of the fictitious characters shows his chauvinism and calls Rosita a "lustful bitch." Rosita responds, by identifying herself as his wife, and says that indeed

[135] The common vernacular is "cagarse de risa," which means "to shit with laughter."

she is as much of a drunk as her husband is. In this instant, as a defense mechanism against mockery, Rosita implies that she is married to Don Poncho, but he continues with his pejorative comments and orders her to get on a diet because she is sinking the sofa. Rosita calls him a bastard and explains that he has never seen her, and thus has no reason to say that she is fat. She argues that in reality she has a good body, with chicken legs and all, but still good. Piolín tells Rosita that she "ate it all," and she responds proudly expressing that that is the way she likes it. Don Casimiro (Piolín's voice), another fictitious character in the program, answers "Yeah baby!" as if having sex with Rosita. Don Poncho interrupts Rosita by saying that she is "full of culture" implying exactly the opposite and reproaching her for the fact that nine people live in a house of three rooms. Piolín closes the joke by asking Rosita if it is true that she wastes most of the toilet paper in the house. Rosita responds that it is obviously true because she has the "biggest oven."

This joke depends on quotidian details of crowded living space, common to the migrant working class Latino/a population. For example, it is not uncommon for recently arrived relatives to "crash" for sometimes extended periods, inevitably causing certain household discomforts and complaints. Also, due to a lack of money, many migrant workers live in extraordinarily crowded domiciles. As in the joke above, very "private" subjects, often considered vulgar, serve as major conduits for interpersonal relations. This joke ennobles what otherwise might seem humiliations of poverty and disadvantage. While poverty and disadvantage are not unique to the migrant Latino/a community, there are some peculiarities, illustrated above, to the cultural imaginary of everyday domestic life. The switch between Spanish and English as well as the shared cultural landscape

make this joke particular to a border community, where a unique brand of vulgarity is considered funny.

Piolín does not only offer a shared cultural imaginary landscape, but he peoples it with unique recognizable types--characters. His use of diverse characters is a means to reach larger segments of the Latino/a community. Specifically the use of characters or narrators that are children is a strategy implemented by Chicano/a authors,[136] like Sandra Cisneros, and Rodolfo Anaya, a technique that *Piolín* also uses when he incorporates children in the program and calls them *piolitubbies.* This is a Spanglish joke on the deeply weird PBS program, Teletubbies. Note that *Piolín* in his neologism equates his show with the genre of television, a funny touch of grandiosity, but also a real indication of his investment in creating his own media genre, while situating his show firmly in the landscape of show business. While, it is important to note, he is infantilizing himself and his program at the same time. The following example, which was often broadcast in 2009, has a little girl asking her mother to turn on the radio to listen to *Piolín* :

> _ [with a little girl's voice] ¡Amá, prende el radio!
>
> _ [upset] Deja de dar lata.
>
> _¡Amá que prendas el radio!
>
> _ [very irritated]¡Qué dejes de dar lata o voy y te quito los juguetes!
>
> _Pero cuando vengas por los juguetes préndele al radio para escuchar a *Piolín*.

In this example, the little girl insists on having the radio turned on in order that she may listen to *Piolín*. Her mother, in an upset tone, tells her to be quiet or she will take her

[136] "Querido/a Reader" by Martín Rodríguez.

toys away. The little girl tells her mother that on her way to take the toys away, to turn the radio on so that she can listen to *Piolín*.

On the other hand, without kids, Martin Rodriguez argues that "when no child character or narrator is present, transcultural Chicano/a literature often includes what could be defined as an anthropological or ethnographic discourse that becomes a cultural explanation of sorts for the benefit of the distant readers" (116). *Piolín* incorporates representative people of different ethnic groups from the Hispanic world: Mexicans, Central Americans, South Americans, US Latino/as. Rodriguez identifies the use of magical realism as another popular technique that writers use to connect with audiences; this strategy appears in *Piolín* when the magic of the imagination gets blurred with the reality of daily life, as when "Flor" interprets dreams and tells people how to live a better life. The following example shows the performance of Flor as a *hierbera* or healer. Between *albures*, *cantinfleadas*, and laughter, Flor tolerates mockery and accepts her (she is female-identified) homosexuality with humor to give homemade remedies and alleviate symptoms of malaise. Flor's segment is introduced by a song that mocks homosexuals:

> Ay mariposa,
> Tienes una mirada
> De lo más delicada
> Y misteriosa
>
> Ay mariposa
> Tú que siempre caminas
> Como las bailarinas
> Mira que cosa
> (Fragmento de canción)
>
> ESTER. Durante los días de mi menstruación se me inflama el vientre y quiero saber qué puedo hacer.
>
> PIOLIN. ¿A ti no te pasa eso Flor?

FLOR. No, Piolín. A mí lo que me pasa es que [cuando] se me baja, a mí me da mucha comezón.

DON PONCHO. Se te baja pero la clase cuando hablas.

(risas)

FLOR. Ya ves como eres don Poncho.

PIOLIN. A ver qué tiene que hacer Ester Flor. A muchas mujeres les pasa lo mismo, cuando tienen su periodo se inflaman.

FLOR. Claro que sí. Esto es para todas las mujeres que se les inflama. A muchas les dan cólicos. Para muchas es muy natural que no sientan nada. Tú dices que se te inflama y no sé si te da dolor.

ESTER. No.

FLOR. Mira mija, puedes tomarte un tecito de albacar. Todo mundo conoce el albacar.

NARANJITO. Las que le hacen "muuuu."

FLOR. No, esas son las vacas.

FLOR. No mija. Mira, hazte un tecito de albacar y eso es para que se te baje lo inflamado. Y mira mija, una vez que te hagas el tecito ponte las hojitas en tu vientre y eso es para que también te ayude a desinflamar. Esa es como una cataplasma. Después que te tomes tu té, te acuestas y te pones las hojas que te sobraron del té. Y eso es para todas las personas, para que se desinflamen del estomago.

PIOLIN. Muchas felicidades Estercita. Que Dios te colme de bendiciones en tu cumpleaños.

FLOR. Piolín, quiero mandar un saludo a todos los traileros. (pita un traile) que tú sabes que traen el tú sabes[137] bien listo, en especial para Pedro Camacho que cada que pasa yo me agacho. (Risas)

Flor's participation starts with a song that makes fun of a homosexual boy by relating him to a butterfly. Later on, Flor starts her segment giving homeopathic, note the pun, treatments to members of the audience. In this case, Ester calls the program to ask Flor for advice because she suffers from inflammation of the stomach when she is menstruating. Flor tells her to drink an *albacar* (albahaca) tea and to put the *albacar*

[137] *El pito*, the horn, the penis.

leaves on her belly to get rid of the inflammation. Flor understands the suffering of women when menstruating, and she knows that it is different for everyone; in her case, she (Flor) says that she experiences lots of itching while in her period. Flor ends her segment by sending greetings to all the truck drivers who have it ready, especially to Pedro Camacho who makes her bend over when he passes by. This is spoken in a funny Spanish rhyme. Flor's segment in the show is the product of ethnographic tactics to reach diverse populations of the Hispanic audience. By addressing homosexuality in the show, the community sees how Latino/as portray this group; it is a portrayal where pejorative insinuations get blurred with jokes, laughter and some sympathy. The representation of homosexuality both creates a persona and also a stigmatized category. It is not clear which is dominant; however, it is clear that Flor as a character on Piolín opens up a large area of cultural possibility. This could be supremely homophobic or, more optimistically, sympathetically representative.[138]

Piolín's jokes revolve around relevant themes that affect the Hispanic immigrant community; even the most painful and drastic incidents become moments of laughter. Jose R. Reyna and Maria Herrera-Sobek, in "Jokelore, Cultural Differences, and Linguistic Dexterity"[139] study a collection of jokes from people of Mexican descent that live in the United States, like Chicano/as, and Mexican immigrants. They find that "The American Dream, The Crossing, Initial Contacts, Cultural Clash, and The land of Equal Opportunity"(204) dominate their humor. The authors identify jokes as in-group jokes and out-group jokes. The first one is when Mexicans and/or Chicano/as make fun of

[138] See *History of Sexuality Volume 1* by Michael Foucault, "Homosexuality appeared as one of the forms of sexuality when it was transposed from the practice of sodomy onto a kind of interior androgyny, a hermaphrodism of the soul. The sodomite had been a temporary aberration; the homosexual was now a species" (43).
[139] *Culture Across Borders* by David R. Maciel and María Herrera-Sobek.

themselves, and the second one is when Mexicans and/or Chicano/as make fun of other groups or vice versa. Similar to Reyna and Herrera-Sobek's observation, *Piolín*'s characters and audience perform both in-group and out-group jokes; this double practice does not seem to offend the show's participants. On the contrary, people expect to insult one another and are not aggravated by such ordinary offenses.[140] In fact, the repetition of quotidian insults helps both to produce a kind of scarified relation to stigma as well as producing surface area where stigmatized or insulted individuals might begin to "think" about their social and political position as one shared by many others. Reyna and Herrera-Sobek contend that since the jokes practiced by people of Mexican descent are bilingual and bicultural, their performance needs specific performers and audiences, a peculiarity that is present in *Piolín* at the time of addressing a particular audience-participant interlocutor. For example, when jokes are directed to English speakers, the jokes are delivered by a native English speaker, and when the jokes are directed to bilingual speakers, the interlocutor straddles both languages. Language becomes elastic and plastic when the same person is able to address diverse segments of the audience just by changing pitch, intonation, and/or accent. Reyna and Herrera-Sobek argue that jokes "can be understood in terms of their social context and performance" (222). *Piolín* as a multicultural and bilingual program and performance fits into the dual category of jokes that Reyna and Herrera-Sobek present as folklore performance and as a communicative events that have a prescriptive and cathartic function. The first category of performance is a type of humorous advice and the second one is a "public forum for the release of feelings of anxiety…" (223). *Piolín* presents *albureadas* and *cantinfleadas* as simple

[140] See *Queer Optimism* by Michael Snediker, "Queer optimism doesn't aspire toward happiness, but instead finds happiness *interesting*. Queer optimism […] can be considered a form of meta-optimism: it wants to think about feeling good, to make disparate aspects of feeling good thinkable" (3).

moments of laughter that often have didactic purposes where people educate themselves about the place they occupy in the Hispanic community and in the broader US society. The following sketch talks about the time when Chela Prieto[141] crossed the border. Chela is a fictitious character impersonated by Piolín Sotelo; when pronounced in Spanish, her name sounds like "se la aprieto," which conveys "I squeeze it to him/her." People do not know at first that she is fictional and interact with her as a legitimate existing person, which also happens with Don Casimiro and Don Poncho. Her participation in the show tends to portray the strength and power of Hispanic women:

> PIOLIN. Oye Chela, ¿tú tienes papeles mija?
>
> CHELA. ¿Mande?
>
> PIOLIN. ¿Qué si tú tienes papeles?
>
> DON PONCHO. Piolín Sotelo. Que va a tener esta vieja. No tiene ni certificado de vacunación.
>
> (risas)
>
> CHELA. Mira…No tengo papeles, pero ¿a qué viene tu pregunta Piolín Sotelo?
>
> PIOLIN. A pues nomás, porque acá estamos cotorreando y diciendo que hay muchas personas que se están convirtiendo en ciudadanas americanas.
>
> NARANJITO. Y aquí la compañía también anda sacando a los que no tienen papeles también Chelita. [risas]
>
> CHELA. Pues no, fíjate que a mí me pasó un coyote. Sí, me pasó un coyote.
>
> PIOLIN. ¿Y cómo se llamaba el coyote que la pasó p'acá pa Estados Unidos?
>
> CHELA. Cruz Arrios. Cruz Arrios.

[141] This dialogue was taken from youtube on June 03, 2009.

(risas)

CHELA. Le decían Cruz Arrios ven…y allá iba yo corriendo con todo y metate.

PIOLIN. Ay Chelita, ¡qué voy a hacer contigo!

CHELA. Nombre, los pies, cuando yo venía cruzando por Arizona, por el desierto. Como traía guaraches cuando venía corriendo por el desierto, traía los dedos que parecían de elefante comadre. Nomás vieras.

BETTY. ¿Hinchados?

CHELA. Nombre. Parecían tunas los desgraciados dedos. Morados y punzándome. Es que yo pensé que íbamos a estar cruzando por el free way. Me rompí el dedo gordo con una piedra. Nombre, parecía jícama con chile.

BETTY. ¿Se lo quebró comadre?

NARANJITO. Eso no le creo Chela. Usted rompió la piedra, no el dedo.

CHELA. No, de verás. Hasta fotos tengo fíjate. Tengo hasta fotos. Y cuando andaba arriba del burro y que la gente me miraba, decían: "miren a esa, se siente que está en la Placita Olvera en el burro." Mensos, si estaba en el desierto, qué burros. Ya ven que en la Placita Olvera hay un burro, ahí donde toman fotos.

PIOLIN. Ya Chelita por favor mija. Ya por favor gelatina mal cuajada. (diciéndole al Naranjito que se está burlando de Chela)

CHELA. Ay, no te lleves así con mi comadre.

[risas]

CHELA. No, es que deverás es bien difícil cuando uno cruza la frontera. Terminé bien rosada yo cuando venía corriendo comadre. Es que traía calzones de manta, comadre. [risas y burlas] D'esos que parecen como gorritos de chef de cocina.

PIOLIN. Ay ¿de verás mija?

CHELA. El oficial de inmigración me grita y me dice "usted your mexican" y yo le pregunté, "¿cómo te diste cuenta? Y él me responde, "por la playera de las Chivas que traes puesta."

BETTY. Nomás por eso seguro. (Risas y burlas)

CHELA. Nombre. Es bien difícil cuando uno cruza la frontera de verás.

BETTY. Ay. Debería escribir su libro.

CHELA. ¿Eh?

BETTY. Debería escribir su libro.

CHELA. Pos sí comadre, pero ya ves que ni escribir sé, comadre.

[risas y más risas]

CHELA. [Queriendo llorar] No pero vean que feo se siente.

TODOS. Ay pobrecita.

BETTY. Ha sufrido mucho, la verdad. [Con compasión] Se le nota en sus ojos. [Y echa un suspiro de tristeza]

CHELA. Nombre. Si cuando crucé un gringo me tiró balazos en la pata izquierda, por eso tengo agujeros en los guaraches. [Risas] Decía, "get out of here you Mexican curious."

BETTY. Ay pobrecita. ¿Y esa cicatriz que tiene debajo de su ombligo de qué es Chelita?

CHELA. Esta es la cesárea comadre. [Risas y carcajadas]

NARANJITO. La de abajo del ombligo no es la cesárea. La de arriba sí.

[Risas, carcajadas y ruido de alboroto]

CHELA. Mira comadre.

BETTY. Ay que fea está. Está muy grande. Guau. No se burlen de ella que está enorme.

PIOLIN. No se burlen de ella que se está poniendo sentimental.

CHELA. Esta otra cicatriz fue cuando venía corriendo por la frontera y me quedé atorada patas p'arriba, en un alambre de púas. Ya hasta parecía carne de cecina. [Risas]

BETTY. Ay, ya bájese de ahí porque parece que tiene un freeway, lleno de caminos su panza.

CHELA. Nombre. Luego que me sigue la migra en su carrito cuatro por cuatro, ahí por el desierto. Y que yo salgo como la India María cuando la iban siguiendo por Los Ángeles y nombre que me brinco el muro como los perros cuando los andan siguiendo pa marcarlos. [Risas y sonidos de vacas y de trotes corriendo] Como cuando levantan a un torero comadre. [¡Chela! Risas] Nombre, que me subo en el primer camión que venía pasando por el freeway. No lo vas a creer, que venía lleno de puercos vivos. [Risas] Ay no comadre, bien feo. Lleno de puercos vivos. Ahí fue donde conocí al Naranjito.

[Risas, alboroto, ruido]

Chela. Ay, ya. Otro día les cuento otra historia que tengo de la cruzada.

In the previous dialogue Piolín starts by asking Chela Prieto if she has papers. Don Poncho interrupts and comments that it is obvious that Chela does not have anything, not even vaccination certificates. Chela explains that she does not have papers and that she crossed the border with the help of a *coyote* (human smuggler) whose name was Cruz Arrios (Cross Rivers). The humor develops in the process of Chela's storytelling as she describes the adversity that she suffered crossing the dessert. She crossed the border carrying a *metate* (flat stone that indigenous people use for grinding)[142] and wearing *guaraches* (sandals), which caused inflammation of her feet to a degree that they looked like *tunas* (cactus pears) and *jicama* (edible root) with hot red sauce. According to her narration, Chela was running on the freeway and she broke her big toe with a rock, and got a butt rash due to her *manta* (cotton fabric) underwear. While crossing, the immigration officer realized she was Mexican because she was wearing a *Chivas* t-shirt (Mexican soccer team). Betty recommends that Chela write a book, and Chela responds that she would indeed like to write a book, but that she does not know how to write. Chela continues the story and says that while crossing, a gringo

[142] Indigenous groups are often the target of jokes in the radio program. See my identification of immigrants as *itzaes* as in the *Popol Vuh*.

shot at her feet, which made holes in her *guaraches*. Betty inquires about a scar that Chela has on her belly, but according to Chela that is only a Cesarean. Chela shows another scar caused by the time she got trapped upside down in barbed wire. Then, the *migra* started to follow her in a 4x4 truck and she started to jump like a dog about to be branded [with red hot iron]. Finally she hopped inside a truck full of pigs and that is where she met Naranjito.[143] This made-up story exemplifies a type of humor where harsh and adverse experiences transform into excessive commotion and explosive laughter.

Piolín is addressed to a community of *relajo* (commotion). Jorge Portilla, in *Fenomenología del relajo,* argues that *relajo* is a behavior with three different states: the first one consists of a displacement of attention. Second, the individual consciously decides not to give value to a particular object, person or situation. Third, the individual expresses his/her carelessness with gestures or words and invites others to participate with him/her. Portilla contends that *relajo* needs a community in order to be successful; in this community people rebel against norms and behaviors that have been established as "proper" ways of living. This type of *relajo* can be observed in the talk show's sketches. Jorge Megia Prieto, in *Albures y Refranes de México,* argues that *los sketches* are those acted pieces where the arguments are trivial and made through gestures and words. Such acted parts are representative of the Mexican *carpa*, the ambulant theater where actors and actresses are able to mix their talent, grace and sudden cleverness. Megia writes, "se puede ser un memorista y hacer acoplo de palabras y frases de doble sentido; pero si no se posee sentido de la oportunidad y rapidez mental, no se hará buen papel" (35). In other words, Megia thinks that in order to do a good job the humorist needs to have

[143] People often mock Naranjito because he is fat and call him pig.

mental quickness to make puns. In the case of *Piolín* **everyone is expected to become a humorist**, the characters in the show as well as the members of the audience. The following dialogue reflects the mental nimbleness and cleverness that speakers need to initiate laughter:

> [Characters: two homosexual characters, la Pepa y la Chuntis.][144]
>
> LA PEPA: Chuntis ya me dijeron que en el barrio te dicen el águila de la bandera mexicana.
>
> LA CHUNTIS. Ay mana, ¿por qué me dicen el águila de la bandera mexicana en el barrio?
>
> LA PEPA: Que porque siempre traes la víbora en la boca.
>
> [risas y más risas]

In the previous conversation, Chuntis tells Pepa that she is been told that people in the barrio call Pepa the eagle of the Mexican flag. Pepa wonders why and Chuntis responds that because she always has the snake in her mouth. The humor of the joke is addressed to individuals who know that the Mexican flag portrays an eagle standing on a cactus eating a serpent.

Challenging any easy notion of identity, *Piolín* interrupts "real" daily life with explosive laughter. His "wakeup call Mexican Alarm," with its high pitched aural abuse, for example, highlights the randomness of the 9-5 temporal straight jacket, while also, by its intrusiveness, critiquing it. Who wants to wake up to an unpleasant surprise; further, who wants to wake up to an unpleasant surprise at an ungodly hour, that is, always before 7 am. Sometimes as early as 5:30 am. Randomness itself allows for all manner of subject formation. This happens when a caller requests that a joke wakeup call be made

[144] From October 16, 2009.

to an intimate in the voice of Speedy Gonzalez.[145] "Good morning señorita," a rapid fire voice screeches, "I was informed that you requested to be awakened [gun shots and screams]. Arriba, arriba. Time to wake up, señorita!" The butt of the joke generally hangs up, only to have "Speedy" speedily call back and continue with a machine gun spray of high pitched patter. This often results in a startled person yelling insults and fighting with the rude caller--all to the amusement of listeners, only to end when everyone in the radio studio is cracking up. These are national and international jokes, as the calls are often to countries outside the U.S., reaching places as far as India, London, and Iraq. The following wakeup call was requested by a guy who wanted to wake up a girl to let her know that he was romantically interested in her, when suddenly the girl starts to flirt with Speedy Gonzalez alias el Chile.[146]

> CHILE. Good morning señorita. This is chile relleno. Can you hear me?
>
> SEÑORITA. Hello? Yes what do you want?
>
> CHILE. You know señorita, when I called you last time and I listened to the music you have in your phone, [it] turned me on.
>
> [romantic music playing]
>
> SEÑORITA. Oh yeah? What's your name?
>
> CHILE. Chile Relleno. What's your name?
>
> SEÑORITA. Who cares about my name. I care about your name!
>
> CHILE. Your name is on the list, but I don't want to *meter las patas* (screw this up) you know.
>
> SEÑORITA. You should know my name…well, tell me about your chile [penies].
>
> CHILE. You have a sexy voice señorita. [Chile referring to his chile] It is the most espicy [Mexican accent] chile in the barrio señorita.

[145] Speedy Gonzalez is the "Fastest Mouse in all Mexico" character from the Warner Brothers.
[146] From 02/25/2010

SEÑORITA. Oh I like that!

CHILE. What are you doing tonight?

SEÑORITA. I don't know. What are YOU doing tonight?

CHILE. I'm not doing nothing. Can we do it together?

SEÑORITA. Are you single?

CHILE. Of course I am a singer. Listen "Oh sol míoooo [in opera style]." You see I am a singer.

SEÑORITA. I said if you are single.

CHILE. Ah single like no wife?

SEÑORITA. Yeah single. No wife.

CHILE. Yeah I have no wife. Do you have a wife?

SEÑORITA. No. I don't have a wife. How do you look like?

CHILE. I'm six feet, blue eyes, dark skin, a hundred and twenty pounds.

SEÑORITA. Ah. That's sexy. Why are you waking me up so early?

CHILE. I don't know señorita. I don't know if your voice is turning me on or if it's the music, but oh my gatos señorita! [Mexican version of Oh my god, which also means Oh my cats!]

SEÑORITA. Your voice is turning ME on!

CHILE. My voice is turning you on? How do I sound like?

SEÑORITA. You sound like a Mexican.

CHILE. Oh my God! I'm half Mexican, half Italian.

SEÑORITA. Are you?

CHILE. Yeah. I'm half Tepito, [Sonidera music from D.F. starts to play] and half Palermo. [Italian music in the background]

SEÑORITA. Do you want to come to my place? I'm all cozy on my bed.

CHILE. Cozy on your bed!!! Señorita!!! Hey listen. My real name is Tomás.

SEÑORITA. Tomás?[the girl sounds very surprised]

CHILE. Yeah. I work for a radio station.

SEÑORITA. Oh you do?

CHILE. You can turn on the radio station if you want and listen to yourself.

SEÑORITA. I don't believe you. Are you serious? What radio station?

CHILE. *Piolín por la mañana*. I'm a very popular guy:101.9. Check it out.

SEÑORITA. Oh my God! [she's listening to herself talking with Chile]

CHILE. You heard it?

SEÑORITA. Oh God!

CHILE. I told you! [Sounds the echo of their voice talking]

SEÑORITA. Oh shit! [Sounds all embarrassed]

CHILE. So what's up? Do you want to come to a concert?

[the joke continues despite the embarrassment of the señorita]

SEÑORITA. If you come to my house...

CHILE. I will. What's your address?

SEÑORITA. 1894 Los Angeles. Ok baby. I'll be waiting for you! [going with the flow of the joke]

CHILE. Blow me a kiss!

SEÑORITA. Mwah!

This previous Mexican wakeup call turns into a big disappointment for Tomás, the requester of the joke. Tomás imagined that the joke would be a good opportunity to declare his love for la Señorita, but he is no longer interested in her when he sees that she starts to flirt with a stranger, and is almost ready to go to bed with him.[147]

Piolín is a world of imagination. The working class people choose this mode of distraction because it allows them to transition between two worlds: one of physicality,

[147] See Sor Juana's poem "Hombres necios" where she affirms that men are never satisfied with women because they (women) are either too *castas* or too *putas,* conditions that men themselves have created. "Arguye de inconsecuentes el gusto y la censura de los hombres que en las mujeres acusan lo que causan" in *Sor Juana love's poems.*

flesh and bone, and another where the power of the mind allows them to fly in a world of imagination. Choosing to use the imagination to distract from any hardship, helps make life bearable and understandable. People washing dishes in the back of restaurants, picking vegetables in the fields, taking care of the elderly, the street sweepers, the construction workers among many other hard working individuals, while listening to the show, opt to enter *Piolín's* reality and are able to laugh about their living conditions. They choose to interact in a community of fellow listeners where it is okay to laugh about one's own abjection, as well as that of one another. The moment of laughter alchemizes individuals' life experiences. Sor Juana, in *Poemas*, justifies her mode of amusement in the lines of this poem:

> Yo no estimo tesoros ni riquezas,
> y así, siempre me causa más contento
> poner riquezas en mi entendimiento
> que no mi entendimiento en las riquezas […]
> teniendo por mejor en mis verdades
> consumir vanidades de la vida
> que consumir la vida en vanidades. (Quejase de la Suerte)

Sor Juana indicates that it gives her more satisfaction to invest in her intellect rather than investing in worldly things. In the same way, listeners of *Piolín* look for internal and external richness. People in financial need get support by playing tricks like when Piolín gives money away to the caller number sixteen and makes trivial requests like: "In ten seconds name five vegetables" or "name five cities in your country of origin" or "What is the country's President?" The moment becomes magical when dreams can be interpreted

like when Flor tells María to take care of her heart because she is being too harsh on herself about some type of love relationship; or when a listener recently awakened from a coma tells her story and suggests that life is too short to take it seriously. Dreams are achievable, and everything is possible with faith, self-belief and determination as the continuous repetition of the Piolín's positive affirmation that reminds people that we came to this country to succeed, "Venimos a triunfar," no matter the circumstances and the conditions of current living situations. In the show, people are *chingones*[148](fuckers) and/or *chingado/as* (fucked ones) because they either fuck others through humor or they get fucked by the challenger. Life develops into a circus where the imagination gives listeners the power to be, do, or have anything they want. People become clowns, acrobats, and animals. The seriousness of life changes into something laughable and all of a sudden people become powerful, self-conscious about their capacity to imagine a world where dreams are achievable and success is very possible.

Piolín allows immigrants to use their imagination to reclaim psychical control. That is the reason why people on the show use all kinds of maneuvers to laugh about the unfunny and to make fun about the otherwise dolorous. In fact, that effort to find joy in everything that life provides is an attempt to connect with the inner self. The sexual, the scatological, the adverse, and the problematic dissolve through laughter, and transmute into a *re-medio*, which is both a remedy and a new medium that channels different levels of reality. In other words, the program makes laughter the cure for the discomfort that life offers; it is a means to repair, with the power of the imagination, that which is damaged or broken. However, more than a therapy to amend or correct the parts of life

[148] I allude to Octavio Paz and his concept of "la chingada," which is the fucked woman. In the show, men and women try to fuck one another with words and laughter.

that are disharmonious, the *re-medio* is also a new medium in which the immigrant is able to exorcise his/her physical and psychological stigmas by a shift in perception. This shift happens in the program when Latino/a immigrants, through laughter, self-reflect about the ways in which they live, and share their desire for a better tomorrow. Latino/a immigrants are nomads that carry on, like everyone else, a constant search for happiness. I call it *la búsqueda de Quetzalcoatl;* that is the search for that ideal element of life that will make people happy. It can be translated into the desire for freedom, which can be financial, social, political, religious, gender related, among many others. The search for *Quetzalcoatl* goes back to the Spanish conquest, when the Aztecs expected divine redemption with the arrival of Quetzalcoatl, the feathered serpent god. Mistaking Hernán Cortez for the coming god, suddenly, the blessings expected were divinely transformed into *chingadazos*, beatings and humiliation by the colonizers. When the *dzules*[149] came to what we call now America (the continent not the US), the *itzaes* fled to the mountains to preserve their way of life. *Cagados de miedo* (scared shitless) they run away to survive violence and the oppressed became nomads in their own land; they looked for refuge in faraway places and trying to find a place to belong, they arrived in the mountains. Quetzalcoatl stayed in the psyche of the community and people continue to look for him/her. The *itzaes* continue to exist. In fact, they have always existed in this land before it was called America; not only in the United States but across the whole continent. Generation after generation, the *itzaes* cross the borders of time and space imposed by the *dzules*. Latin American immigrants continue to search for *Quetzalcoatl* in the United States, a search that takes place with humor and laughter.

[149] According to the Chilan Balan, the *dzules* are the Spanish colonizer and the *itzaes* are the Mayans. See *Libro de Chilam Balam de Chumayel : traducción del maya al castellano* by Antonio Mediz Bolio ; prólogo, introducción y notas, Mercedes de la Garza.

Piolín allows women to express themselves about sex in a comfortable space where they can debunk old taboos. Rafaela Castro, in "Mexican Women Sexual Jokes," analyses the humor of women of Mexican descent and contends that hands gestures and facial expressions are extremely important for the listener in order to understand the meaning of the joke. Castro writes, "Sexual organs and body parts are never called by their names, but instead are indicated by a gesture or by some other name. Much of the humor in jokes is found in hand gestures and in the alternative names" (143). In contrast to the performance of jokes that happen on a face-to-face basis where people see gestures, the jokes of the radio text are only received as sound. Castro argues that jokes about nuns are popular because they function as a social critique of sex as a taboo, and as a way to break with the idea that women are not supposed to enjoy it. In *Piolín*, women are no longer afraid to use sex as a tool, and they often use it to denigrate men by implying that their penises are too small or that they do not know how to use them. Castro writes, "The most hostile jokes are those about male genitals. Castration themes are evident in these jokes, along with a desire to dominate the sexual situation" (144). The jokes that women practice in *Piolín* also tend to show the superiority of women over the so called "sexo fuerte"[150] of men. Castro contends that scatological jokes, as well as forbidden topics, have a favorite place in the jokes told by Mexican women because of the techniques used and the playfulness of words. Although Castro writes about the jokes of women of Mexican descent in the late 80s, this is a phenomenon that continues in the radio text to date; this is in combination with interpersonal relationships that women have with both men and women from diverse backgrounds. Their use of proverbs, jests and

[150] In Mexican and Hispanic culture the "sexo debil" (weak sex) is often referred to women while "sexo fuerte" (strong sex) is attributed to men.

stories still prevails as a form of folklore. Castro observes that women of Mexican descent tend to tell sexual jokes among themselves without the presence of men, a peculiarity that does not happen in *Piolín.* The following dialogue, between Mexican comedians Nora Velazquez and Sergio Corona, television comedians who appeared on the show, exemplifies the use of sexual jokes that women and men alike share in the program. Chavelita is a religious catholic woman who goes to confession:[151]

CHAVELITA. Padre por favor ayúdeme.

PADRE. Ay Chavelita, ¿pero qué te pasa? Ave María Purísima.

CHAVELITA. Sin pecado concebida. Ay padre, es que ayer por la tarde vino a visitarme Serapio Orrea padre.

PADRE. Ah Serapito. Serapio tan simpático, tan bondadoso. ¿Y qué pasó Chavelita?

CHAVELITA. Pues yo estaba rezando mis oraciones en mi habitación, padre. Tocó a la puerta, salí inocentemente y qué cree que fue lo primero que me dijo el Serapito…

PADRE. No sé Chavelita. No soy adivino. ¿Qué te dijo?

CHAVELITA. [with masculine voice, Chavelita imitates what Serapito said to her] "Chavela, voy a recorrer con mi aparato, todas tus zonas peludas…"

PADRE. ¿Eso te dijo Serapito?

CHAVELITA. Sí padre. Mientras en sus ojos brillaba la luz de la lascivia y la concupiscencia, padre.

[The father gives Chavelita a hit with his hand]

CHAVELITA. Ay padre, ¿por qué me pega padre? Si así estaba la cosa…

[151] Piolín Sotelo's facebook on Agustut 26, 2010.

PADRE. Por tu marcada inclinación a darme datos que yo no pido ni necesito. Ni me hacen falta. Nada…

CHAVELITA. En ese caso no le digo nada, padre. No se ponga así.

PADRE. A ver dime.

CHAVELITA. Pues el Serapito que se agarra de aquella cosa larga y flaca, pero prieta de la punta, padre. Para mí que era rinconero padre.

PADRE. ¿Qué cosa estás hablando?

CHAVELITA. No me pegue padre, pues así pasó.

PADRE. Eres una bestia apocalíptica. A ver, ¿qué más?

CHAVELITA. Pues sin decir agua va, que se mete, y que lo comienza a mover, p'allá y p'acá, p'allá y p'acá. Y yo me quedé muda padre.

PADRE. Pero sigues hablando, Chavelita.

CHAVELITA. No, cuando estaba en movimiento el Serapito, padre.

PADRE. Ah, ¿y qué pasó?

CHAVELITA. Me quedé muda por lo grande y enorme de ese aparato padre. De ser flaco y rinconero de repente se puso aguado, cabezón y gordo.

[The father hits Chavelita again]

CHAVELITA. Pero no dejaba de recorrerme las zonas peludas padre. Que por cierto me las dejo bien pachoncitas.

PADRE. Bueno, ¿y qué pasó con todo esto?

CHAVELITA. Pues que me obligó a que se la comprara padre. Y ahora ya no se qué hacer padre.

PADRE. ¿Y te quedaste con eso? ¿Pero qué fue lo que te vendió?

CHAVELITA. Pues una bicón o beicon quién sabe como le dicen a la aspiradora aquí padre. Porque ya ve que tiene un tubo largo y flaco, rinconero que limpia los rinconcitos de los sillones…

PADRE. Pero tú dices que tienes unas zonas peludas…

CHAVELITA. Sí padre. Los tapetitos de la entrada de la casa.

SOLO AQUÍ EN EL SHOW DEL CARA DE PERRO

In the previous dialogue Chavelita goes to confession; she feels guilty because Serapio Urrea, alias Serapito,[152] visited her. According to Chavelita, Serapito had lascivious intents, and he told Chavelita "[performing a very masculine, lustful voice] Chavela, I'm going to pass my machine all over your hairy areas." The priest is surprised to hear that because he always thought that Serapito was an upright, excuse the pun, man. Chavelita continues with her description and gets smacked by the priest, "Why do you hit me, father?" asks Chavelita in a weepy voice, to which the priest responds that it is because of her constant inclination to give him unnecessary description. But he encourages Chavelita to continue, since they are in confession. Chavelita complains and tells the priest that if he is going to get into a bad mood, she'd rather not say anything. But she continues with her description anyway, and explains that Serapito grabbed his thing. It was something long, thin and dark on the tip. The priest gets upset and hits Chavelita again to remind her that he doesn't need to know the details of her sins. "[With a weeping voice] don't hit me father, that's the way it happened," Chavelita utters, and the priest responds by calling her an apocalyptic beast. He wants Chavelita to be brief in her confession, and she continues with her sinful story. She explains the priest that when

[152] Serapito is a game of words that has two meanings. The first meaning is the diminutive of Serapio, which means little Serapio; and the second meaning has sexual innuendo. Broken into Spanish syllables, "Se-ra-pi-to," and pronounced fast, it sounds like, "it will be dick."

Serapito got in, he started to move it up and down, up and down. She was speechless because of the length and size of the machine. After being long, thin and trying to find her hidden parts, all of a sudden it became watery. The priest hits Chavelita again to remind her that her description is not appropriate. But Chavelita continues her story and tells the priests that Serapito didn't hesitate to pass his machine over her hairy parts. In fact, she recognizes that he left them feeling really smooth. The dialogue ends when Chavela explains the priest that she ended up buying the vacuum cleaner that Serapito used to clean her hairy mats. The humor in this dialogue is in the ongoing sexual description that Chavelita gives to the priest, to end up talking about a vacuum cleaner. This comedic dialogue mocks the Catholic Church, and portrays the father as a dirty-minded old man who totally misinterprets Chavelita's feeling of guilt. He thinks that Chavelita feels guilty about the sexual intercourse she had with Serapito, when in reality Chavelita feels guilty for having bought the vacuum cleaner. The sexual description in the dialogue breaks with the traditional taboo that Hispanic/Mexican women do not have the right to manifest their sexual desires.

In conclusion, in this chapter I argued that *Piolín* is oral folklore that takes place in an era of digital technology and the internet, which allows individuals to form a community of *relajo*, (commotion) where the working class people find affiliation through the recycling of humor that takes place among the US Latino/a community that listen to the show. This recycling of humor is presented as *albureadas,* which are games of words with double meaning (often sexual and/or scatological) as well as *cantinfleadas,* which are exaggeratedly complicated uses of speech to communicate nonsense. These techniques function as a way to challenge established structures of power and to

counteract censure. In my chapter, I provided samples of the radio text that exemplify the interaction of individuals, and I gave a taxonomy of the cultural forms of oral folklore as practiced by the community of people that listen to *Piolín.*

In closing I return to José E. Limón's anthropological study, "Carne, carnales and the carnivalesque," where he contrasts dominant and elitist Mexican discourses (by thinkers like Samuel Ramos and Octavio Paz), with working-class speech, body play, and jokes as performed, experienced and practiced by people of Mexican origin in the South of Texas. Limón documents counter-hegemonic practices directed at Mexican authorities and elitist narratives; by recording the experiences and performance practices of working class people, Limón problematizes normative marginalizing and stigmatizing narratives. The *cantinfleadas* and *albures* presented in this chapter are oral folklore as practiced by working class people of Mexican origins. It is oral folklore that has evolved over time and space and now manifests in radio, through *Piolín*. The show utilizes diverse linguistic and cultural mechanisms to target various segments of the audience; it includes anthropological and ethnographic discourses that revolve around themes that are relevant to the US Latino/a community. These people use their imagination on the show to simultaneously occupy different levels of reality--real and fictitious male characters exhibit chauvinist attitudes, homosexuals accept their sexuality with laughter and mockery, and women talk about sex comfortably.

CHAPTER 5

PIOLÍN POR LA MAÑANA: A TIME AND SPACE FOR THE DISLOCATED

Piolín maps "nonce taxonomies" of recognizable immigrant personalities, types of people that one might come across in everyday life. The multiplicity of voices flashes diverse behaviors for short periods of time. That is, characters, and audience interrupt one another to interact. The characters fit types, recognizable but not necessarily exactly flush with any one setting or person. Piolín's "types" are, that is to say, not modeled on recognized celebrities or political figures. One character, Don Casimiro, likes to drink, and when he is drunk, he becomes aggressively, but comedically--via innuendo--interested in men. Don Poncho, another "nonce taxonomical" character from *Piolín,* is a "macho man" who often calls women "inferiors"; he frequently gets chided by callers for his misogyny, and responds characteristically like an asshole. The comments that Don Poncho made about women generated complaints from the radio audience, and due to their volume, his character has become less brutally misogynist. Chela Prieto, abandoned by her husband, is raising her two sons by herself: Culantro and Chiquilín. She is helplessly and gloriously vulgar. In contradistinction to these fairly flamboyant characters, Betty appears as incredibly normal, flat and proper. She is a divorced woman in her thirties and serves as a "comic foil,"[153] for the more loose-tongued characters. She is constantly scandalized by the vulgarity of others. La Flor Marchita del Tallo is a homosexual character who works as a *hierbera* giving absurd advice, interpreting dreams

[153] "The use of a character who, by contrast, brings out the comic qualities of another character (or of other characters). The comic foil is the straight man in a pair of comedians […] who allows the other to be funny, makes them funnier, without doing anything funny themselves."
http://www.statemaster.com/encyclopedia/Comic-foil

and generally serving as the butt of homophobic jokes. Beyond these comic types, the program offers real and not "funny advice" via the personae of a lawyer, a sexologist, a psychologist, and others. While these real experts fit into comedy sketches, they nonetheless offer clearly stated, well-founded, advice to listeners.

Although there is a stable of characters that appear regularly, either comic or advice- bearing, perhaps the most important narrative element of the radio program is the input of the call-in audience. This call-in audience is a constant, while the radio talk show itself frequently changes its structure. Skits do not follow any predictable course and the show itself often ends quite abruptly. This chapter analyzes verbal interaction that take place in *Piolín* between the main characters in the show and the participating audience. I identify some of the cultural tropes that originate from the *peladito/a* (rascal) figure that appear in the *Teatro de Carpa* (ambulant theater) and that have also been present in comics, movies, and television. Rita Urquijo-Ruiz explains that in September 1927 *El Universal*, a newspaper in Mexico published the comic titled "Vaciladas de El Chupamirto" where characters were versions of *peladitos* (Urquijo-Ruiz 53). She suggests that Cantinflas and others like him copy the character and costume of this familiar trope. Tomás Ybarra-Frausto extrapolates in "I Can Still Hear the Applause"[154] that the *carpa*, originally from Mexico and popular in the South West of the U.S., follows the tradition of the circus, and was extremely popular in that area from the late nineteenth- century to the 1940s. Ybarra-Frausto mentions that *carpas* had characteristics that range from "non-verbal forms of theatre like the carnival and *mimus* of antiquity" to the inclusion of "spectacles combining dancing, singing and acrobatics" (47). This type of entertainment was derived from semi-improvised, spontaneous

[154] *Hispanic Theatre in the United States*.

situations that satirized the social condition of Mexicans and Chicano/as in the Southwest. The author states that "*Carpa* performances were fluid, open, semi-structured presentational events with direct audience interaction and feedback" (47). *Carpas* used to travel from town to town targeting the *plebe*, the common people. Some of the prevailing themes in the shows were bodily functions, the process of *agringamiento*, and the cross-cultural nature of language. This humor functioned as a "chronicle of social processes." From this environment the *pelado*[155] emerges, imitating other *pelados* that had already appeared in *carpas* in Mexico City. Characters on *Piolín's* show share characteristics extrapolated by Ybarra-Frausto, and it travels through the power of radio, and the Internet, arriving at the "imagined community" of listeners identifying themselves with the *peladito/a* figure.

I present the Spanish-language talk show *Piolín por la Mañana* as a successor of the traditional *carpa*; that is, instead of the ambulant theater that travels physically, the talk show travels digitally and arrives in diverse locations throughout the US. It is an "imaginary space" where *la nopalada* interacts. I use this term to identify *la plebe* or the common people of Mexican descent. Sometimes *la plebe* are also called *la indiada* (the indigenous). The term is related to the aboriginal tribe of the Aztecs who departed from Aztlán and founded Tenochtitlán on a lake. The war god Huitzilopochtli, which translated from the Nahuatl means "Left-Handed Hummingbird,"[156] had instructed the tribe to build the Aztec city on the place where they found an eagle devouring a snake on

[155] Ybarra-Frausto uses the term *pelado* as the *peladito* that Rita Urquijo-Ruiz writes about, contrasting the *pelado* that Samuel Ramos describes as barbarian. *Perfil del hombre y la cultura en México*.

[156] Chris McManus writes in *Right Hand, Left Hand: The Origins of Asymmetry in Brains, Bodies, Atoms and Cultures*, "The principal war god of the Aztecs was known as Huitilopochtli which is usually translated as 'left-handed hummingbird'. It has been pointed out that 'humingbird' is a rather cute name for a war god, and adding 'left-handed' makes the name completely bizarre [queer]. A metaphorical interpretation seems far more likely, the tongue and sound of the hummingbird echoing the appearance and sounds of the rattlesnake. A left-handed hummingbird is therefore the deadly rattlesnake" (273).

a *nopal* (cactus). This is the image located in the center of the tricolor Mexican flag.[157] Being a *nopal* (noun) or *nopaludo/a* (adjective) refers to indigenous people, but is also used as a derogatory term to describe someone who is dumb or stupid. Mexicans describe the *nopal* as *baboso,* which means "drooling," because this cactus, when cut open, produces copious "saliva," as someone cognitively disabled or *menso* might. But the *nopal* is not any simple producer of saliva; he/she endures despite not having much water or not having any water at all. Some people also call indigenous peoples *la tlacuachada*, which is a general noun that describes the groups of *tlacuaches* (possums). The *tlacuache* takes its name from the Nahuatl *tlacuatzin*, an ugly Mexican omnivorous, cave-dwelling creature. This marsupial is a scavenger that often steals food from people in order to live; chicken's eggs and chickens themselves are among *la tlacuachada* favorite dishes. *Los tlacuaches* have big families, with as many as sixteen members that often live in the same nest. Human beings, along with birds of prey, are their biggest predators. As a defense mechanism, *el tlacuache* pretends to be dead in order to escape predators, "playing possum," but when the mother has to defend her children, she attacks aggressively. *El tlacuache*'s skin is used to produce fancy leather products, and their meat and oil are used to alleviate painful diseases such as arthritis, stomachaches, as well as to fortify the blood. Superstitious people believe that a woman who is not fertile can procreate if she drinks an elaborated hot chocolate with a small portion of *tlacuache's* tail in it.[158]

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[157] Ilan Stavans and Luis Leal write in *A Luis Leal Reader*, "…the use of the eagle from the Mexican flag and of the colors red and white has a symbolic meaning for the *mexicano*, since it reminds him or her of the national flag. The eagle, Aztlán, The Quinto Sol, and other Chicano symbols of Mexican origin form a part of a mythic system, a characteristic often attributed to the symbol" (7).

[158] One of my aunts in my family is known to have procreated her first born child thanks to this remedy.

Cultural tropes in *Piolín*

Some cultural figures, like *el tlacuache,* that appear in *Piolín* are *peladitos/peladitas, mojarras, valemadristas, hocicones/ hociconas, carnales/carnalas, comadres/compadres* or *nacos/nacas.* I read this contemporary Spanish-language radio-text in relation to these and other literary, historical, and cultural conventions via a content analysis of the *Piolín* radio-text, and by an examination of the interaction of the program's characters and its audience. *Piolín* is extremely popular with the Latino/a working class immigrant community, which both consumes and creates it.[159] It speaks to the ways that narrative tropes, inherited from literary and dramatic convention, influence subject creation, and modification, in U.S. society. Considering the very important, contested, and often obfuscated, role immigrant communities presently play in the U.S., my argument has broad implications; this chapter offers a new optic through which to examine the ways in which U.S. Latino/a subjects are imagined and constructed.

Samuel Ramos, in his efforts to discover the national identity of Mexicans, describes the figure of the *pelado* as a negative subject. In *El Perfil del hombre y la cultura en México,* he writes: "Es un individuo que lleva su alma al descubierto, sin que nada esconda en sus más íntimos resortes […] pertenece a un fauna social de categoría ínfima y representa al deshecho humano de la gran ciudad" (444). Ramos contends that the *pelado* is a being that comes from the lowest levels of society and represents the human effluvia of the big city. This Mexican thinker portrays the *pelado* as a savage who erupts into verbal violence, "estalla al roce más leve. Sus explosiones son verbales, y tienen como tema la afirmación de sí mismo en un lenguaje grosero y agresivo" (444).

[159] Most of the people that call the program are working class individuals.

Ramos argues that the *pelado* assigns himself the masculine role and he relegates his adversary to an imagined feminine role. This character puts people down violently to feel better about himself. *Piolín*'s male characters follow Ramos' description as argued in chapter two with my discussion of the *albur*, where individuals put one another down with sexual insult and scatological comments. Carlos Monsiváis, in *Escenas de pudor y liviandad*, writes: "El chiste del albur reside en la humillación femenina y en la feminización de la tontería sexual" (307). Monsiváis believes that the humor of the *albur* resides in the humiliation of women as well as in the feminization of sexual nonsense. This minimization of women happens in *Piolín*, which causes the audience to react. For example, when pejorative comments affect women, they call the program to complain, and to insult Piolín. This might be where his moniker *cara de perro* comes from.

Although not all the members of the audience that listen to *Piolín* are people of Mexican descent, the show targets the Mexican audience; Mexican humor dominates the show. However, Central and South Americans also take part in the formation of this radio-text, forming a plurality of identities that fuse together in a cultural *mestizaje* of Latino/as, manifested in the linguistic interaction of individuals in the show. Despite this plurality of identities, the show imagines the majority of its listeners as Mexicans, though the humor is tinted by the participation of other groups of Latino/as. This is a market strategy by the show that attempts to reach the largest group of Latino/as possible. According to the data from the Pew Hispanic, Mexicans are the Latino/a group with the largest number of people living in the United States: "Nearly two-thirds of Hispanics in the United States self-identify as being of Mexican origin. Nine of the other ten largest Hispanic origin groups—Puerto Rican, Cuban, Salvadoran, Dominican, Guatemalan,

Colombian, Honduran, Ecuadorian and Peruvian—account for about a quarter of the U.S. Hispanic population"[160] (Country of Origin Profiles). Regardless of the cultural and linguistic diversity of *Piolín*'s audience, they can be identified as, and identify as, *peladitos* and *peladitas*.

The *peladito/a*, nevertheless, different from the *pelado,* as understood by Ramos is a comic character made popular by Carpas, or tent theaters that became popular in the 60s and 70s on both sides of the US-Mexico border as well as in the South West of the United States. Rita Urquijo-Ruiz differentiates the *pelado* from the *peladito*/*a* by arguing that the first one was violent, as perceived by Ramos, while the second one used humor to communicate social injustices.[161] However, the *peladito/a,* as I perceive it, has evolved in time and space such that it can be experienced via radio. This character, more than communicating social injustice through humor, adopts humor as a way of life.

The *peladito*/*a* developed and evolved in relation with literary conventions that originate from the *bildungsroman.* Jerome Hamilton Buckley, in *Season of Youth/The Bildungsroman from Dickens to Golding*, argues, "The Bildungsroman in its pure form has been defined as the 'novel of all-around development or self-culture' with 'a more or less conscious attempt on the part of the hero to integrate his powers, to cultivate himself by his experience'" (13). The *bildungsroman,* according to Hamilton Buckely, always includes the following elements: "childhood, the conflict of generations, provinciality, the larger society, self-education, alienation, order by love, the search for a vocation and a working philosophy" (18). This is not only true in the novel, it is also true in the radio-

[160] http://pewhispanic.org/data/origins/
[161] *Las Figuras de la peladita/ el peladito y la Pachuca/ el pachuco en la produccion cultural chicana y Mexicana de 1920 a 1990.*

text. The *peladito/a* grows, develops and transforms, and he/she also expresses some characteristics of the *pícaro*, the main character from the picaresque novel. As Juan Luis Alborg puts forward in, "La Novela Picaresca: El Lazarillo de Tormes," some of the distinctive characteristics of the *pícaro* in the featured novel include that he is someone born from the lowest strata of society, he has no specific job, and he is raised by many masters; he has no scruples. The *pícaro* prefers leisure over work and is often a vagabond beggar. He uses his ingenuity to satisfy his needs. Alborg mentions:

> Su origen y la estrechez de su vivir le convierten en un desengañado irremediable frente a todas las experiencias y valores de la vida social; la necesidad de soportar las desventuras de su condición determina su filosofía pesimista no menos que su estoica resignación para aguantar los daños que vinieren; y la intimidad con que trata a las gentes a quienes sirve le hace ver las miserias de la supuesta grandeza humana y le enciende el dardo de su sátira. (*Historia de la Literatura Española* 403)

In other words, because of his low lifestyle, the *pícaro* sees life without being seduced by romanticization. His difficult experiences make him tough. The fact that he serves different masters allows him to see misery as produced by humans and not by circumstance. His harsh life gives the *pícaro* the capacity to see the world as classist, elitist, deeply stratified, and greedy. His life experience provides him the ability to critique (however helplessly) the current state of economic inequality. *El Periquillo Sarniento* by José Martín Fernández de Lizardi is the Mexican versión of *Lazarillo de Tormes*. In this novel the *pícaro* is the product of society and uses dishonesty to survive in his world.

The harsh life of the *pícaro* filtered, through time and history, into the figure of the *peladito/a* in the *Teatro de Carpa*, then into the *Teatro Campesino* of the 60s and 70s, and finally into the characterological and narrative tropes of *Piolín's* radio show; these figures form nothing less than a *lineage*. This lineage, I argue throughout this chapter, gives *displacement* a place to speak, if not to actually feel safely physically *located*. However, the lineage also suggests that the *peladito/a* is a harbinger of better things to come, even while being a narrative messenger of troubled subsistence and mere survival. *Piolín*, given his radio program's important place in contemporary U.S. culture, has made literary, cultural, and sociological tropes, such as the *pícaro/a*, and the *peladito/a* central to analysis of the United States, as it currently exists, inflected by Latin American immigration. Immigrants, especially the undocumented workers, like the *pícaro/a*, are forced to find survival strategies and like the *peladito/a*, they use humor to confront the hardships of life.

The Mexican tradition of *Teatro de Carpa*, especially its use of *peladito*[162] and *peladita*, influences and enables art by Chicanos, now as it did in the past for *El Teatro Campesino* in the 60s and 70s. Yolanda Broyles-Gonzalez explains: "Rasquachi Aesthetics refers to the creation of artistic beauty from the motley assemblage of elements momentarily seized" (36).[163] This aesthetic emphasizes the beauty and artistry of mundane materials, the capacity to make art from anything available.

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[162] Ilán Stavans, in *The Riddle of Cantinflas*, mentions, "Cantinflas, whose real name was Fortino Mario Alonso Moreno Reyes, was the peladito par excellence—a lumpen, street-wise itinerant citizen, the master of *mal gusto*—bad taste. He's slightly abusive, often disoriented, never totally happy, in total control of la *peladez*, with an irreverence that at once highlights and eases the tension between upper and lower classes in Mexico." (35)

[163] Yolanda Broyles-Gonzales studies the historical importance of "Teatro Campesino" in the Chicano movement. *El Teatro Campesino*.

Peladitos* and *peladitas

In *Piolín* the *peladitos* and *peladitas* curse and swear about their living conditions and use laughter to soften the hardships of life. This is manifested in the communication between the characters in the show as well as with and between audience members. For example, on February 25, 2010, Erika called the program to trick her mother then living in Guerrero, Mexico. She explained that her husband works at a restaurant and lost sight in one of his eyes because he got hot oil in it while cooking. Via *Piolín* she calls her mother in Guerrero to inform her that Francisco was going to get a camel eye implant; but Piolín convinces Erika to tell her mother that her husband needed to choose between an eagle's eye and a fly's eye. The first one was to see well from far away, while the second one was to read well. In the joke, Piolín acted as a doctor who happened to be from Acapulco, México. The following dialogue, as absurd as it is, exemplifies the type of interaction and the language that *peladitos* and *peladitas* use in the program:

> PIOLIN. ¡Identifícate compa!
>
> RADIO ESCUCHA. Soy Erika y vivo en Denver. Escucho a *Piolín por la Mañana.*
>
> PIOLIN. Mamacita hermosa, ¿cómo amaneció la belleza? ¿En qué trabajas?
>
> ERIKA. En un fey way, comida china.
>
> NARANJITO. ¿Es fey way el que canta con los Cumbia Kings, no?
>
> CHELA PRIETO. (Le pega al Naranjito) Te digo que tu aparte de derramar grasa, también derramas brutés…Comadre di "fierro"
>
> ERIKA. ¡Fierro!

PIOLIN. Okay Erika, ¿a quién le vamos a llamar para hacer la broma de la hora mija?

ERIKA. A mi mamá. Es que mi esposo tuvo un problema. Pero mi esposo me va a matar Piolín vas a ver. Este…lo de su ojo. Es que tuvo un problema en su trabajo.

CASIMIRO. A es que una vez su esposo estaba en la cocina y su jefe le dijo que le echara un ojo a los frijoles y se lo echó.

(risas)

ERIKA. No, es que le cayó aceite de cocina.

PIOLIN. ¿Perdió un ojo mija?

ERIKA. Sí, no ve de uno.

CASIMIRO. Pues que descuidado tu marido.

OTRO. Cállese Casimiro…

NARANJITO. Solo dos tiene ya entonces…

ERIKA. Sí, y le vamos a decir que…

CASIMIRO. Dos que no ven uno que ve. [164]

(Sonido de un martillazo en el rin)

ERIKA. Le vamos a decir que le van a implantar un ojo de camello a mi esposo y a ver que dice mi jefa. Me va a mandar a la fregada pero…

[…]

[164] Casimiro practices a meta-joke; that is a joke inside the joke. Casimiro talks about *el ojo del culo* as another eye.

PIOLIN. Mira mi amor…Le vas a decir que estás ahorita con el doctor y que qué te sugiere... porque tienes varias opciones: un ojo de águila pa ver de lejos o un ojo de mosca pa ver de cerquitas y pa leer.

ERIKA. Okay, okay.

CHELA PRIETO. Naranjito tu deberías darle uno de tus ojos mijo.

NARANJITO. ¿para qué?

CHELA PRIETO. Para que le pongan un ojo de buey[165]… (risas)

NARANJITO. Cállese Chela.

CHELA PRIETO. ¡Fierro!

This conversation reflects the type of communication that *peladitos* and *peladitas* have in the talk show; it is the ability to make jokes and manipulate situations to find amusement in everything. On the one hand, they denounce the condition of oppression that they experience in a capitalist system; like when Erika explains that her husband lost vision in one eye while working in the kitchen of a restaurant. On the other hand, they use laughter to make fun of one another to soften the hardships of their life experience. While Erika explains the joke she is also a victim of the characters in the program who make fun of her husband's condition. The joke gets interrupted by Piolín who sends greetings to Norma in North Carolina: "Después de esto vamos a llamarle a tu mamá. Saludos para Norma que está cumpliendo años en Charlotte, North Carolina, de parte de la familia Gómez que nos escucha todos los días en Concord, North Carolina." After the greetings there is an intermission of the song "5 minutos" by Gloria Trevi and Los Horoscopos de Durango, but the joke continues, allowing the *peladitos* and *peladitas* to keep on laughing and enjoying the *alboroto* (disturbance):

[165] To be a *buey* in the Mexican dialect means to be stupid.

PIOLIN. ¿Dónde vive tu mamá?

ERIKA. En Guerrero [México]. Un saludo para todos los del Chipotle de ahí de la Berrio. Ahí están todos mis camaradas en el Chipotle de la Berrio Piolín.

PIOLIN. Qué bueno mamacita…

CHELA PRIETO. Diles fierro comadre…

ERIKA. ¡Fierro Chelita!

PIOLIN. Oye mamacita. ¿Estás lista? ¿Qué le vas a decir a tu jefa?

ERIKA. De que a mi viejo le van a injertar un ojo de águila para ver de lejos o uno de mosca para leer mejor…

Once Piolín has reinforced the structure of the joke, the telephone rings:

ERIKA. ¿Apa qué hace?

EL PAPA. Aquí nomas ya casi me voy a chambear.[166]

ERIKA. ¿Y mi amá? A ver pásemela apá porque hay algo urgente.

EL PAPA. Te habla Valente o Clemente [Erika's father also jokes with Erika's mother].

ERIKA. Es que toy en el hospital…

LA MAMA. ¿Qué? ¿…y que tás haciendo?

ERIKA. Pues acá nos hablaron temprano porque a Francisco qué cree… Que hay una manera de ver y le quieren implantar un ojo de águila que disque para ver de lejos u otro de mosca para leer bien. ¿Va a creer usted amá? ¿Usted cuál cree que está mejor? El de águila pa que me vea mejor y de lejos o el de mosca pa que me lea mejor? Pues no sé

[166] *Chambear* means to work.

qué hacer. Ahorita aquí nos tienen en el hospital…pero dije ahorita voy avisarle allá a mi jefa pa que le avise a mi suegra.

Erika asks her mother for suggestions about what to do, and the mother affirms that she has no idea; after some talk the mother mentions that the eagle's eye is the best option:

ERIKA. Usted dígame algo pues. Algo pa que yo diga cuál es el mejor.

LA MAMA. No sé cuál es el mejor pue (con acento costeño de Guerrero) Pues no sé cuál será el más bueno pue.

ERIKA. Pues amá usted dígame pues.

LA MAMA. ¿Pues el de águila ta bueno no? Pos pa que vea lejos.

ERIKA. A bueno pos les voy a decir quel de águila pa que vea desde lejos.

LA MAMA: Si pues fiate.

Erika tells her mother that the doctor is right there and that he happens to be from Acapulco; she wants her mother to talk with the doctor who will explain the surgical process.

ERIKA. Aquí le paso al doctor pa que le explique mejor…

LA MAMA. ¿Cómo, a quién me vas a pasar? ¿Pa qué?

ERIKA. Al doctor, aquí está en el teléfono. Es un costeño de allá de Acapulco. Qué suerte tuvo éste pa agarrar a este paisano, acá. Así que orita te lo paso eh.

Piolín fakes being the doctor and consults with Erika's mother:

EL DOCTOR. Buenos días mama (without an accent on the last a).

LA MAMA. ¿Cómo está pues?

EL DOCTOR. Aquí contento sanca…aquí preparando pa cambiarle los ojos a su yerno.

LA MAMA. Si pue.

EL DOCTOR. Veo que le cayó aceite en el restaurante.

LA MAMA. Si pue. Bueno, sí.

EL DOCTOR. Pos si pues…

LA MAMA. Pos si pues pa que vea bien.

EL DOCTOR. ¿Pos si no?

LA MAMA. Pos si para que vea así como él quiere.

EL DOCTOR. Así es la cosa, ¿veda que ta bien pues?

LA MAMA. Sí pues ta bien.

EL DOCTOR. Pues ta bien la cosa, ¿o te vas a negar?

LA MAMA. Si ta bien para que él vea.

EL DOCTOR. Sí mama (sin acento en la a) la cosa ta así (ruidos sin sentido) ¿verdad que si mama?

LA MAMA. Sí mijo sí, pa que quede bien.

EL DOCTOR. ¿O te vas a negar mama?

LA MAMA. No sí, que lo operen…

After Piolín and Erika's mother *cantinflean;* going over and over about the same subject without making any specific point or communicating anything substantial, Piolín gets approval of Erika's mother for the operation:

EL DOCTOR. [Ruidos tartamudos] sí pos sí, ¿o te vas a negar mama?

LA MAMA. Claro que sí pues.

EL DOCTOR. Yo sabía que contaba contigo Sanca.

LA MAMA. Claro que sí mijo primero Dios santísimo.

EL DOCTOR. ¿O te vas a negar mama?

LA MAMA. No. ¡Opérenlo! [With determination]

EL DOCTOR. Así está la cosa mama. O se lo ponemos el ojo al yerno o no se lo ponemos. ¿Verda que sí mama?

LA MAMA. Sí, claro.

EL DOCTOR. [Tartamudeando] Mama uste conoce al comediante costeño mama? Yo lo arreglé a él. El perdió un ojo también..el ojo izquierdo del costeño que tenía un problema con un ojo de pescado y le puse un ojo de atún, lo único que fue difícil fue abrir la lata pa sacar el atún… [laughter]

Up to this point in the conversation, Erika's mother has not realized that she is the victim of a joke; despite the fact that Piolín explained to Erika's mother that he was able to cure a comedian from the coast who had a problem with his *ojo de pescado* (wart or *verruca*) and he implanted a tuna eye on him. Piolín mentioned that the only trouble he had was opening the tuna can. The lady does not realize that it is a joke because of the linguistic smoke screen that Piolín manages to create. Bakhtin mentions "figures [like the fool and clown in our case] carry with them into literature […] a vital connection with the theatrical trappings of the public square, with the mask of the public spectacle…[they] are laughed at by others" (*Rabelais* 26). In the case of *Piolín*, members of the audience become fools and people laugh at them, like Erika's mother who at this point does not seem to understand that she is the victim of a joke. She continues to talk

with the fake doctor as if everything was seriously happening in real life. They continue the conversation:

> LA MAMA. Eso fíjate.
>
> EL DOCTOR. ¿O te vas a negar mama?
>
> LA MAMA. No, no, no, pues pónganselo bien si ella quiere.
>
> EL DOCTOR. ¿Mama tú crees que me puedes conseguir una iguana allá en Guerrero?
>
> LA MAMA. Aquí podemos conseguir lo que quieran…
>
> EL DOCTOR. Es que esos ojos salen más baratos mama. Necesitamos que tú agarres una iguana mama y que tú la traigas p'aca pal otro lao mama.
>
> LA MAMA. Ay Jesús yo p'allá no voy, no.
>
> EL DOCTOR. ¿Porqué no mama?
>
> LA MAMA. Porque tengo miedo yo.
>
> EL DOCTOR. Me lo deja en Tijuana nomás mama.
>
> LA MAMA. Solamente así pues.
>
> EL DOCTOR. ¿O te vas a negar mama?
>
> LA MAMA. No, como cree que no.
>
> EL DOCTOR. Es que le queremos poner a tu yerno los ojos del entrenador del ojitos del Nesa pa que juegue futbol. ¿O te vas a negar?

Up to this point in the conversation, the doctor has given a lot of hints to Erika's mother that everything has been a joke. The "doctor" explains that they want to implant an eye from a soccer player whose name is "El Ojitos" [the little eyes]. It is obvious that Erika's

mother does not understand what Piolín is talking about; she still does not realize that it is a joke, and continues the conversation with the fake doctor explaining that she will not oppose the surgery:

> LA MAMA. No, ¿porqué me voy a negar?
>
> EL DOCTOR. Mama pero es que tu hija le quiere poner un ojo de payaso…
>
> [Erika's mother starts to laugh]

The doctor explains that Erika wants her husband to have a clown's eye. At this point Erika's mother starts to laugh, but we still do not know exactly if the mother knows that it is a joke (though it seems likely that she does); and she continues to talk with the doctor:

> EL DOCTOR. Me cae bien porque se ve recontenta sanca…Mama te paso a tu muchacha.
>
> LA MAMA. Si, gracias, primeramente Dios que salga bien. Ándale si gracias.
>
> EL DOCTOR. Te encargo una cocada mama, un tamarindito también mama. ¿O te vas a negar?
>
> LA MAMA. No como [se da cuenta que está jugando]

It is until this point in the conversation that Erika's mother realizes that it is a joke since Erika explains that she is calling from *Piolín*, a radio program in California:

> [Laughter]
>
> ERIKA. Ama, te la comiste. Es una broma de aquí de *Piolín por la Mañana*.

PIOLIN. Señora, es una broma, no se crea…

ERIKA. Es un programa aquí de California. Es un señor que sale ahí con Don Francisco.[167]

Now, the show's cast tries to trick the audience to make them believe that the conversation continues. The cast continues with the same conversation between Erika's mother and the fake doctor:

PIOLIN. ¿O te vas a negar mama?

LA MAMA. No, como cree que me vo a negar…

[laughter]

The previous example illustrates one type of humor that *peladitos* and *peladitas* occasion in the program. Individuals utilize any situation to laugh about their disadvantaged living conditions. The earlier dialogue will be helpful in the identification of other cultural tropes that evolve from *peladitos* and *peladitas*. These cultural figures exist in the show because listeners and characters interact with one another; their particular and often peculiar behaviors constitute them as personae.

The figure of the *Mojarra*

Piolín allows ***mojarras*** to "swim" in its radio-textual space. Here, the undocumented immigrant does not have to evade the *migra*, the police or the authorities. I use the term *mojarra* to identify a person who crossed the U.S. border as a *mojado/a* (an undocumented immigrant), swimming or forging a river, navigating the ocean and/or negotiating any other above- or under- ground surface. Indeed, I use the term *mojarra* instead of *mojado/*a to emphasize the stigma of the undocumented immigrant, one who

[167] Don Francisco conducts *Sábado Gigante*, a television show from *Univisión*.

might have to swim like a fish in order to survive. He or she experiences *el syndrome de la mojarra*, the condition of feeling persecuted, believing that freedom depends on the ability to evade capture.

In the Latino/a immigrant community there are different types of *mojarras;* the *mojarra-fregado*/a (the screwed one), the *mojarra-trucha* (the smart one) and the *mojarra-soñador/a (*the dreamer) are just some examples. The *mojarra-fregado*/*a* is the *mojarra* that gets by in life with jobs that require physical labor. They wash dishes in the back of restaurants, pick vegetables or construct houses among other heavy labor jobs; these *mojarras* are often unseen in society. Almost nobody thinks of them. They experience physical pain in their bodies: for instance, the field worker and the construction worker suffer from *derriengue*, a pain that strikes them when walking or when getting up in the morning. The *mojarra* that works in restaurants and factories often labor under bad working conditions, but because of their condition as *mojarras*, they are often afraid to denounce any type of impropriety. The *mojarra-fregado/as* rarely visit the doctor, the dentist, or the psychologist, because their health insurance does not cover diseases. In other words, they have no health insurance. These *mojarras* do not have the right to get sick because if they get sick, *se friegan*, they get screwed, fucked. For those who are not able to go to the doctor, la Flor Marchita becomes the healer in the community of *Piolín* listeners. The *mojarra-trucha* is the one that manages to not use physical labor to survive; he or she has discovered his or her capacity to continue to exist without physical stress. They find indoor jobs where they are less exploited, and they use non-physical abilities to survive. The *mojarra soñador*/*a* is the student who dreams of a better life through education; he/she feels that there is a better tomorrow where he/she is

taken into account as a positive contributor in society, instead of as a criminal. They are, for example, the Dream Act[168] students who arrived in the United States at a young age. I am referring to the Dream Act, a legal initiative that would legalize undocumented students who graduated from high school, demonstrate good moral character, graduate from an American university or join the army. This bill was defeated by the US Senate in December 2010. It could have benefited young people who went to school in American institutions, grew up in the United States, and those who developed legitimate love for this country. After finishing high school, the *mojarra* Dream Act students face financial obstacles to continue in college. These students often self-identify as "dreamers" because they advocate for their dream to become documented and to be able to study and work legally. The *mojarras* in the United States live in the shadows, but wish to be seen as positive contributors to the culture and economy of the United States. People cross the border for many reasons. Children, men and women are often forced to run away from sexual discrimination, poverty or other conditions that might threaten their lives; many are victims of exploitation of various types: human traffic, prostitution, abandonment, drug dealing, and abuse at work. Many of them die in the process of fleeing. The lucky ones that manage to arrive in the United States alive, swim in the company of others in the radio-textual space that *Piolín* provides.

Piolín allows people, *comadres, compadres, carnales and carnalas,* to establish imaginary kinship--personal relationships outside of blood ties, and even outside of actual physical acquaintance or proximity. Listeners and callers bond as a community. Men

[168] For more information on the Dream Act visit: http://dreamact.info/

call themselves *compas,*[169] the short version of *compadre* and/or *compañero*, and women call themselves *comadres*. C*ompadre*s or *comadres* in Spanish are co-parents, a relationship that comes from *compadrazgo,* a godfather/mother affiliation to a child. In the case of *Piolín*, the trope of the *compadre* and *comadre* unite people by way of an imaginary child. For example, at the beginning of the previous joke, Piolín said: "Identificate compa," (identify yourself, compa) thinking that it was a guy who was going to answer the phone. However, Erika answers. As the dialogue develops, Chela establishes a relationship of *comadrasgo* with Erika after she sends greetings to her comrades from the barrio *el Chipotle* in her hometown. Chela mentions: "Diles fierro comadre" implying that there is power in the expression.[170] These imaginary relationships can go even deeper when members of the community identify themselves as *carnales* or *carnalas*; [171] meaning that they establish among themselves imaginary relationships implying that they have the same flesh and blood as if they were brothers or sisters. In the community people also call themselves *el brother* or *la sister* using the combination of both languages, English and Spanish. Ilán Stavans identifies this phenomenon as *Spanglish*, a cultural manifestation of a linguistic *mestizaje* that happens in the interaction and union of Spanish and English. Stavans writes: "Spanglish *también* is often an intra-ethnic vehicle of communication, though only en los *Unaited Esteits*. It is used by Hispanics to establish a form of empathy between one another. [… It] is a result of the evident clash between two full-fledged, perfectly discernible *lenguas*; and it is not defined by class" (43). This form of communication is heard regularly in the *Piolín*

[169] The term "compa" is also the short for the Spanish "Compañero/a," which means "partner."
[170] *El fierro* is often used as a metaphor for the penis.
[171] C*arnal* or *carnala* is slang to say brother or sister. It is the equivalent of the English "bro" or, less contemporary "sis."

radio-text; it is a linguistic phenomenon that was identified in the program when Piolín called a man and a woman in India, and connected both of them to see their interaction. On the first call, they apologized to one another, thinking that it was a technological problem; they subsequently hung up. Piolín called them for the second time, and they started to fight, asking one another to stop playing around. They hung up again, but Piolín connected them for a third time; they started to have a serious fight combining their native language with English. The characters in the show were delighted by hearing an unknown language mixed with English. The phenomenon became a theme of discussion, and Betty, one of the recurring characters in the program, explained that as we speak Spanglish in the United States, they also spoke "Indunglish" in India. *Piolín* allows the *comadres, compadres, carnales and carnalas* to have imaginary close personal relationships, connections between people that allow events and discussions to take place in the show.

An important part of the human interaction that the show offers to its listeners is the freedom that the *valemadristas* communicate undermining the opinions of others. They use vulgar language to bristle against what is considered appropriate. This is a "fuck you" attitude that people in conversation use to foreclose being judged. A *valemadrista* is a person who does not care about what is right or wrong, *le vale madre todo*. This character evolved from the *peladito* and *peladita* who have nothing to lose; all they have is their own experience and their ability to use humor to find meaning in life. That is the reason why they do not care about the opinion of others. For example, in the previous joke Erika called her mother to joke about her husband's condition and did not care about the propriety of the joke. On the one hand, she made a fool of her mother in a

public space. On the same inappropriate hand, she used her husband's health issues as an excuse to laugh. Erika did not care, *le valió madre*. This Mexican expression of *valer madre*[172]uses the verb *valer,* which means to have value or to have worth[173]and the word *madre,* which means mother. In other words, it has the value or worth of a mother. This expression reflects the double standard that the mother has for the Mexican; first, the mother is a lovable, endearing, nurturing being, and second, is a despicable and unworthy being that deserves our disgust. This condition of unworthiness is examined by Octavio Paz in his essay "Los hijos de la Malinche" from *El Laberinto de la Soledad,* where he explains that Mexicans are sons [and daughters] of the *chingada*, the fucked woman. Paz goes back to the times of the Spanish conquest and mentions that *la Malinche* is the archetype of the Mexican woman; she was sexually abused by the Spanish conquerors.[174] This raped woman produced the *mestizaje* among the Mexican people, devaluing women, especially as they serve symbolically in their culture. *Valer madre,* then, refers to the act of not being worthy because of being diminished, used sexually, and made fun of in a derogatory manner. La Cuca, a rock band from Guadalajara, Mexico, explains the condition of not caring:

> Pues a mí me vale madre si no fuiste a la escuela/ y también me vale madre si tú tienes orzuela/ me vale madre si tú tienes piojos/ o si por necesitarme tu me sacas los ojos […] Pues a mí me vale madre si no tienes modales/ o si tienes hemorroides y problemas triviales.

[172] People often use *vale madre* to imply that is not worth the effort. People often say *Está a toda madre* to imply that it is very worthy.
[173] http://www.merriam-webster.com/spanish/valer
[174] Hernán Cortes is the archetype of the Spanish father.

This song reflects the attitude of the *valemadrista*; a behavior that does not care about people, things or situations. However, this attitude of *not caring* for anything is a mask. On the surface the individual does not care, but inside, is quite concerned. This concern is expressed by denouncing carelessness, and is a defense mechanism that the *valemadrista* adopts to pretend that he or she is invulnerable towards the injustices of life. It is a pose; in reality, the *valemadrista* is very susceptible to his/her social and cultural circumstances.

The *valemadrista* becomes *un hocicón*, or *una hocicona*, (big-snout) when he/she no longer cares about the decency of his/her words. In Mexican Spanish, *hocico* means snout and people use it as an adjective to describe someone who says bad words and/or who verbally challenges someone's authority. Gloria Anzaldúa, in *Borderlands / la Frontera: The New Mestiza*, writes:

> *En boca cerrada no entran moscas.* 'Flies don't enter a closed mouth' is a saying I kept hearing when I was a child. *Ser habladora* was to be a gossip and a liar, to talk too much. *Muchachitas bien criadas*, well-bred girls don't answer back. *Es una falta de respeto* to talk back to one's mother or father. I remember one of the sins I'd recite to the priest in the confession box the few times I went to confession: talking back to my mother, *hablar pa''trás, repelar. Hocicona, repelona, chismosa,* having a big mouth, questioning, carrying tales are all signs of being *mal criada*[…]. (76)

In *Piolín*, listeners do not care if they eat flies while opening their mouths too wide, as the Mexican proverb says. On the contrary, their vulgarity allows them to open their

mouths, grab some flies with their tongue, and spit them right back at each other. Everyone turns into an *hablador,* or *habladora,* talking too much and giving unasked-for opinions about situations that are irrelevant or absurd. People turn into *malcriados* and *malcriadas* (ill-mannered) and, through their big-snouts, allow their vulgarity to flow.

Piolín allows *nacos* and *nacas,* the so called trashy and vulgar, to feel comfortable, or at least vocal, being themselves, owning their particular social and cultural status.[175] A *naco* or *naca* is someone who, according to the general culture, has extremely poor taste, and expresses it extravagantly. The *Academia de la Lengua Mexicana* defines "naco" as "(Posiblemente de *totonaco.),* naca. adj., y m. y f. 1. Indio, indígena. || 2. De bajo nivel cultural, ignorante."[176] Shamelessly, even proudly, performing this stigmatized persona before the radio public changes the stigma associated with it. Such performances potentially open space for new subject positions. Jorge Mejía Prieto, in *Así habla el mexicano: diccionario básico de mexicanismos,* defines the term as:

> adj. Individuo burdo, vulgar, mal educado; barbaján. En un principio, el vocablo se empleó para nombrar peyorativamente al indígena aturdido y mal incorporado a la vida urbana; al plebeyo de piel morena, al peladito, al lépero. Con el tiempo, la palabra se fue transformando y hoy en día designa al mexicano de cualquier color de piel y de cualquier estrato social; pero caracterizado por su ordinariez. Para algunos, el término es aféresis de totonaco; para otros, de chinaco. (111)

[175] Generally a *naco* or *naca* expresses vulgarity through both sartorial and verbal signs, while in the radio text, there is nothing but verbal expression; thus, such expressions are especially pressurized.
[176] *La Academia Mexicana de la Lengua Online*. http://www.academia.org.mx/dicmex.php

The previous definition shows that naco/a was an adjective to pejoratively describe the urban indigenous dislocated population. Although in the past, the term was used to refer to people of dark complexion, currently the term is used to address any vulgar Mexican with any type of skin color, race, and/or social status. Along the same lines, Sandra Strikovsky, in "Estudio sociológico de la palabra 'naco'," studies the term naco in Mexico and explains that:

> La palabra naco es un ejemplo de un término del lenguaje coloquial cuya definición no parece clara. Su significado y uso parecen depender de otros factores sociales […] Los resultados revelan que el significado varía dependiendo de la edad de los informantes, y que la tendencia a percibir el termino como ofensivo también es generacional. (1)

Strikovsky argues that the word naco/a is a colloquial term whose definition is unclear. Its meanings and use seem to depend on social factors such as age; the offensiveness of the term changes with the generations. In the case of *Piolín,* the term naco/a is no longer offensive; instead it is an attitude willfully adopted to establish communication. This attitude functions as a critique of social aspects of the community and as an occasion to laugh about many types of injustice.

The term *naco* was made famous in the 80s by El Pirrurris, a Mexican comedian who used the term to address and describe people that belonged to the working class. Although the term can be pejorative, it varies according to age, and generation as Strikovsky mentions. In the context of *Piolín* the term may be pejorative, but because of the nature of the program, people do not get offended when called *nacos* or *nacas*. In

fact, it is okay to be one. Being a *naco* or *naca* is often a linguistic strategy that the characters in the program and the audience use to make people laugh. Nacaranda[177] and Nacadia two female Mexican comedians exemplify the nature of being a *naco* or *naca* in the following song:

> En el metro tu viajastes[178]/ Y p'arriba te subistes[179]/ De estación Te equivocastes/ Y p'abajo te bajastes/ Dicen que soy renaca/ Porque siempre meto la pata/ Dicen que soy renaca / Y naca seguiré/[180] […] Quise ser como Thalia/ Pero lo naco se me salía[181]/ Quise ser como Lucero[182]/ Se me salía lo ñero/ Quise ser como Lorena Herrera[183]/ Pero me falto cadera, me falto cadera/ […] ¿Dónde guardan agua los nacos / En el tinaco, en el tinaco/ Donde vacacionan los nacos?/ En Nacapulco, en Nacapulco/ ¿Qué verdura comen las nacas?/ Las espinacas, las espinacas/ ¿De dónde vienen las Nacas?/ De Nacotitlán, de Nacotitlán/ ¿Cuál es el Santo de las Nacas?/ Santa Nacacia, y Nacaranda/ ¿Qué crema se ponen las nacas?/La concha nacar, la concha nacar. (Canción de *La Hora Pico*)[184]
>
> You traveled in the subway / And you ascended up/ You missed the station / And you descended down / They say I'm super naca/ Because I always screw up/ They say I'm super naca / And that I will continue to be /

---

[177] Nacaranda has visited the program to advertise presentations in theaters.
[178] The naco's lack of education will make him/her say *tú viajastes* or *tu viajates* instead of *tú viajaste*.
[179] The naco or naca will also say *subirse p'arriba* or *bajarse p'abajo*. His or her vocabulary will be full of pleonasms, a redundant use of unnecessary language.
[180] The naco/a blunders, or moves steadily, confusedly or mistakenly through stupidity, ignorance, or carelessness.
[181] In his/her effort to be accepted in society the naco/a needs to imitate others that have some type of prestige and/or acceptance in society. In this effort, the naco/a only ridicules himself/herself.
[182] Lucero is a Mexican actress and singer.
[183] Lorena Herrera is a Mexican actress with an exaggerated body: big chest, big hips, etc.
[184] Song from *La Hora Pico*, a Mexican television show from Televisa and transmitted via Univisión.

> [...] I wanted to be like Thalia / But the naco was so obvious / I wanted to be like Lucero / But the cheap (low class) was so obvious / I wanted to be like Lorena Herrera / But I didn't have enough hips, not enough hips / [...] Where do nacos keep the water / In the water tank, in the water tank / where do nacos go on vacation / In Nacapulco in Nacapulco / What's the vegetable that nacas eat? / the spinach, the spinach / Where do nacos come from? / from Nacotitlán, from Nacotitlán / Who's the Saint of the Nacas? / Santa Nacacia and Nacaranda / What cream do nacas wear? / The *concha nacar*, the *concha nacar*.[185] (Song of *La Hora Pico*)

This song exemplifies the linguistic condition of the *naco/a;* it reflects an alteration of the standard use of the Spanish language in combination with comic modes of phrase construction and formation of images and ideas through language. The lack of education of this cultural type will make him/her say *tú viajastes* or *tu viajates* instead of *tú viajaste*. The *naco/a* will also say *subirse p'arriba* or *bajarse p'abajo*. His or her vocabulary will be full of pleonasms, which are redundant uses of language. The *naco/a* blunders, or moves steadily, confusedly or mistakenly through stupidity, ignorance, or carelessness. In his/her effort to be accepted in society the *naco/a* needs to imitate others that have some type of prestige and/or acceptance in society. In this effort, this character only ridicules himself/herself. For example, the *naca* singing the previous song mentions that she wanted to be like Lucero (Mexican actress and singer) or like Lorena Herrera (Mexican actress with a voluptuous body); however, in this intent to be someone with more social prestige, the *naca* acknowledges that she only ridicules herself.

[185] The pearl shell cream.

Piolín uses similar strategies where the context, time and place of the program allow *naco/as* to manipulate the language and culture of the working class people in the United States. They combine Spanish and English in a multicultural manner. For example, on January 29, 2010, Piolín uploaded a picture of an enormously elongated horse to his facebook page; it looked like a *salchicha* dog, but instead of a dog it was a horse. Piolín titled the picture like this: "LA NUEVA LIMOSINA DE VICENTE FERNANDEZ"[186] (The new Vicente Fernandez limousine). This picture caused the interaction of *nacos* and *nacas*. Veronica posted: "jajajaja te pasas que culpa tiene el horse lol," (You over exaggerate blaming the horse). Nora mentioned "jajaja I like the new limo." Celina commented "es unique!!!!!!!! muy chido lol," Jesus wrote "omg, were[187][sic] is the other half!!!!," and Cynthia said "Is this real? No lo puedo creer...lol [laughing out loud]" (Is this real? I can't believe it). These postings to Piolín´s Facebook page reflect the lack of common sense and poor linguistic abilities that *nacos* and *nacas* have. However, I contend that the adoption of this attitude is a choice that helps people have a good time and laugh about life; the so-called trashy and vulgar feel comfortable being themselves in the space that the show provides.

The cultural counterpart of the *naco/a* is the *fresa*, which is the pretentious individual who does not have a place in the radio text. The online *Urban dictionary*[188] for slang explains that "Fresas [in Mexico] are usually stuck up, have expensive clothes, cars, are usually middle high or high class, and talk different than everyone else. Like in every other country there are pseudo-*fresas*, those who pretend to be preppy but aren't."

[186] The original title was all in capital letters.
[187] Jesus tries to say "where" instead of were.
[188] http://www.urbandictionary.com/

The following parody "El Padre Nuestro de la Niña Fresa,"[189] (Our Father in Heaven by the Fresa Girl) exemplifies the attitude that *fresas* have against the working class people:

> Papi mío que estás en los súper cielos
> santificadísimo mil veces sea tu nombre
> venga tu reino a nosotros
> porque si es tuyo ¿verdad?
> Haz tu voluntad o sea
> así como en el cielo igual en la tierra
> sabes cómo, ¿no?
> Perdóname por esas cosas que a veces
> hago que o sea ¿no? perdón, nada que ver conmigo,
> No sé qué me pasa… un mal viaje, ¡que oso!
> Así como yo perdono a los que me hacen cosas en mal plan
> y con toda la envidia del mundo
> o sea bola de loosers.
> Bendice a mi prójimo: a mi papi, a mi mami,
> a los mala copa, al niño que me gusta, a los mataditos
> y a todo el proletariado: nacos, cholos, feos,
> pelusa, la tiza, chusma, perrada e indiada
> etc, etc que me rodean.
> No dejes que caiga en tentación
> Porque o sea tu sabes que el diablo es malísima onda
> y me quiere hacer cosa que yo ni al caso, pero
> la que carne es débil ¿no?
> Para nada dejes o sea porfis porfis
> Que se me pegue lo naco.
> Enséñame a ser tan nice como tu
> Porque tuyo es el reino el poder la
> gloria, o sea eres de otro nivel
> Tu aquí y el satán por allá
> Y además eres súper cool
> o sea sí me entiendes, ¿no?
> Poca madre, contigo todo fresh
> gracias por todo
> vales mil
> eres súper buena onda siempre estás in,
> never change. Santo eres por siempre amén ¿ok?

[189] http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yLDBN7OlEAA

sale, bye, besitos, te cuidaaas.
En el nombre del papi, del junior,
palomita buena onda, Amen.

The previous text reveals the language and attitude that *fresas* use in order to differentiate themselves from working class people. For instance, the *fresa* girl speaks in a unique argot and intonation. She uses phrases like "¡Qué oso!" or "mal plan." The first expression emphasizes embarrassing and/or stupid situations while the second one indicates a bad intention. The *fresa* girl utilizes these phrases to emphasize her superiority. She identifies others as a bunch of "losers" and when she asks God to not allow her to fall into temptation she begs him/her to not let her become a *naca*. She wants to be as "nice" as God himself/herself. Her English expressions are conceited uses of language that in Spanish sound like inflated affirmations of her snobbism as well as her effort to not be a *naca*. Her exaggerated use of language and her efforts to not be a *naca*, turn her into what might be called "a ridiculous trashy bitch."

In conclusion, in this chapter I have presented the Spanish-language talk show *Piolín por la Mañana* as a cultural product that has evolved from the theater of *Carpa* or Tent Theater. It is an "imaginary space" where *la nopalada* interacts; other cultural figures that appear in the radio text are *peladitos/peladitas, mojarras, valemadristas, carnales/carnalas, comadres/compadres* as well as *nacos/nacas*; a group of cultural figures that come from the tradition of the literary trope of the *pícaro* and have evolved and developed in the United States in the context of bilingual and bicultural radio. I have used the interaction of the main characters in the show, including the audience, to exemplify the linguistic characteristics of these particular cultural figures. I explained that *Piolín* allows the *mojarras* to swim in the space of the radio-text where the

individual does not have to evade the *migra*, the police or the authorities that want to catch him/her. Also, *Piolín*, allows *peladitos* and *peladitas* to curse and swear about their living conditions and use laughter to recontextualize the hardships of life. The show allows the *valemadristas* to undermine the opinions of others and use language to buck what is considered appropriate. *Piolín* lets *comadres*, *compadres*, *carnales and carnalas* to have imaginary close personal relationships. Finally, *Piolín* allows *nacos* and *nacas*, the so called trashy and vulgar to feel comfortable being themselves, and even *own* their cultural and social status. As Foucault notes, in *History of Sexuality V. 1.*, to name a "perversion" is to offer those identified *as* that, to identify *with* a stigmatized position, and thereby create a community and a politics based on the reclaimed identity term. This powerful shift from *being identified* to *identifying with* is most clearly put forward in the seminal works of queer theory. Queer Theory itself reclaims a formerly stigmatized term in the way that, were they theorists, *Piolín's* guests would also reclaim identity terms. It is tantalizing to think about Naco/a Theory, or, even more suggestively, and perhaps more productively, Mojarra Theory.

CHAPTER 6

PIOLÍN POR LA MAÑANA: A CARNIVALESQUE EXPERIENCE IN RADIO

Ay, no hay que llorar, que la vida es un carnaval,
es más bello vivir cantando.
Oh, oh, oh, Ay, no hay que llorar,
que la vida es un carnaval
y las penas se van cantando.[190]

Textual reproduction happens when two texts go to bed. This process does not require the union of two sexes. Instead, the union of two texts (or more, in an orgy of meaning) produces progeny. This happens through the selection, addition, elimination, and organization of texts that create a new one where millions of intertextual voices cry out. Angel Rama, in *Transculturación narrativa en América Latina*, appropriates the concept of "transculturation" from Fernando Ortiz, in *Contrapunteo cubano del tabaco y el azúcar*, and elaborates his notion of "narrative transculturation." I appropriate this terminology, get rid of the "narrative" and graft the "textual" to formulate a "reproductive -textual transculturation," something like a *reproductive textual mestizaje.* For many, the process of writing is a space of, if I may wax lyrical, liberation where the individual releases the spirit from the restrictions of life and sets free the imagination. This practice happens in *Piolín* when individuals build new texts by combining actual life experience with technology, along with traditional and new forms of cultural production. In this

[190] Cruz, Celia. "La vida es un carnaval". 30 April 2007. Online video clip. Youtube. Accessed on 22 April 2010.

portion of this chapter, I analyze *Piolín* as a radio carnival that rides into many a town in this digital era.

Piolín is a carnival where the power of radio and the Internet allow diffusion of information in new ways and across wholly new landscapes. It is a digital era of *information* where technology gives people access to data and allows them to make sense of the world by the reality that data itself generates. The computerized world invites people to understand the *self* as a structured reality that is regulated by axes[191] of control. The digital era *transforms* the world and invites individuals to take part in the malleability and transformation of culture. The carnival in *Piolín* gives listeners the opportunity to transform the present moment into a carnivalesque experience; now multiply that by the digital revolution. Renewal of the self takes place through laughter and the individual enters the realm of creativity by putting heart and mind into the liveliness of the carnivalesque. This cultural transformation makes *Piolín* a source of digitalized literature, not only in radio but also online (Facebook and Portal Univisión). Katherine Hayles argues that electronic literature forces scholars to re-think the notion of what literature is and what it does. Hayles writes:

> Hypertext fiction, network fiction, interactive fiction, locative narratives, installation pieces, "codework," generative art and the Flash poem are by no means an exhaustive inventory of the forms of electronic literature, but they are sufficient to illustrate the diversity of the field, the complex

[191] *History of Sexuality* by Michael Foucault.

> relations that emerge between print and electronic literature, and the wide spectrum of aesthetic strategies that digital literature employs.[192]

The previous example of electronic literature that Hayles presents invites scholars to "think digitally," which according to her, means to use programmable and networked media in combination with printed literature as well as criticism. Hayle argues that this "electronic literature" has existed since the early 60s and deserves the same close readings that critics of print literature have traditionally exercised on literature proper. Training for close reading this new medium requires "new modes of analysis and new ways of teaching, interpreting, and playing" (Ibid.).

Bakhtin, in *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* (122-160), argues that the literary and street carnivals feature some of the following characteristics: there is not a distinction between performers and spectators; the people live in carnival, allowing "mass action" where people have contact (in otherwise constrained public spaces) with one another. The carnival provides extraordinary blending. This blending occurs between violently diverse types of people, where the 'sacred and the profane' come together (*The Sacred and the Profane* by Mircea Eliade). The profane nature of carnival brings people down to earth, to the level of the body. It crows and uncrowns kings. It also, and thereby, allows death and renewal to take place through laughter and parody. The carnival includes diverse types of laughter, legends, unofficial histories and locations that provide the feeling of a great city as Sue Vice reminds us in *Introducing Bakhtin*. She argues that according to Bakhtin, ritual spectacles can be categorized under three headings: first, ritual spectacles like "carnival pageants [and] comic shows of the market place" (151).

[192] To see the detailed explanation of each type of definition, see: http://eliterature.org/pad/elp.html#sec2

Second, the "comic verbal compositions," which include "parodies both oral and written, in Latin and in the vernacular" (151). Vice's third category is the "various genres of billingsgate:" "curses, oaths, [and] popular blazons" (152).

In an effort to explore the carnivalesque, Carla A. Calangé reminds us in "Le carnaval ou l'ultime tentative de remettre la vie à l' endroit," that carnival is an attempt to put life into a lifeless place. She contends that the most notable effects of carnival manifest in the noise and the singing that oppose the silence of fear and resignation to liberate the body and its desires. Calangé argues that the carnival becomes synonymous with the fall of the generalized principles that rule the lives of ordinary people. Carnival is a period of time where the roles of people turn upside down to parody the most serious characters in order to deterritorialize official ideology. Calangé asserts that carnival can not be lived as an isolated experience; instead, people laugh together about everything, and in this process invisible borders that establish hierarchies are broken down and establish for a short period of time the feeling of an utopian world, where liberty and equality are universal and unconditional. Laughter overcomes fear; madness and desire allow people to parody the official and serious ways of living.[193]

The carnival is experienced in the francophone cultures of the Americas as Dennis Bourque and Anne Brown argue in their study about the francophone literatures of North America, including Quebec, Acadia, New Orleans, New England, and Ontario. The authors write, in *Les littératures d'expression française d'Amérique du Nord et le carnavalesque*, that humor, "joie de vivre," and the pleasure of feasting are important

[193] "Lors du carnaval la peur est absente du fait qu'elle vaincue par le rire. De plus, la folie et le délire qui caractérisent les transports de la foule permettent de poser sur le monde un point de vue différent qui défie et parodie la manière de voir officielle et son esprit sérieux et étriqué" (Calargé 18).

elements in the carnivalesque literary experience. According to Bourque and Brown, the carnival is used in pieces of literature inspired by feminist and gay points of view where the carnival is not dominated by patriarchal and heterosexual images of the world (Ibid).[194] Carnival functions as a way to rebel agaist the dominant ideology that invites individuals to be submisive to religious and civil authorities in order to maintain social, moral and economic stasis. The desacralization of the world presses against the rigid and sterile, homogenic, forces of the herarchical, official, culture. Carnival is a method that liberates people from fear; it, for example, critiques the exclusion of women in the participation of laughter. Carnival also allows the exploration of a hybrid, homosexual sub-culture; this peculiarity is present and observable in *Piolín* in the performance of joke delivery such as *albures*, which I exfoliate in chapter 2. The *albur* is a game of words with double meaning; it is often sexual and/or scatological; its presence in the show abounds. This linguistic game invites male interlocutors to have sexual intercourse (what in Victorian times might have been called "criminal conversation") amongst themselves. Men who often portray themselves as macho show their prejudice as well as their homosexual side in the carnivalesque practice of this linguistic game. Men try to sexually penetrate one another through words in order to demonstrate their supperiority. This becomes a tolerable practice where the laughter and mockery of the carnivalesque experience erase the boundaries of heterosexual practices and discourses that dominate the Latino/a community's cosmology.

[194] Bourque and Brown write, "Transcendant les frontières géographiques et culturelles qui les séparent, ces auteurs s'expriment dans une langue commune aux accents différentes et partagent une vision similaire du monde. Celle-ci se veut rénovatrice et est marquée par la joie de vivre, le gout de la fête ainsi que par une féroce opposition au monde officiel" (17).

The carnival in Brazil is an important part of the country's individuality as Eloisa Brantes in argues, in "El espectaculo de las escuelas de samba en el carnaval del Rio de Janeiro," when she affirms that carnival is associated with an indigenous cannibalism. It is an important source of national identity. Via this, Brazilians feast on foreign cultural elements and digest them into an exportable national product. In this anthropophagic movement, Brazilians devour that which comes from the outside. Within the digestive process, the individual formulates a product different from its origins, which surpasses its complexity. In the parade, physical activity, exhaustion, ecstasy and excitement are causes and effects at the same time. In this eruptive event, bodies overcome the physical and psychic limits which require integration of the inside and outside worlds, manifested in thought and action, to maintain gracefulness. Aural movement determines everything. The rhythm ropes in microcosms and macrocosms. In a similar manner, Piolín produces movement among his listeners. It is an "imagined" parade that moves according to the rhythm of laughter, parody, and mockery. This procession corrals the digital power of radio and the Internet to bring people together in a single, but various, procession; this forward-moving group includes working class people in different locations with diverse occupations. These folks get together to laugh and mock the difficulty of life in all of its incarnations.

The carnival for people of Mexican origins is a combination of European, African, and Indigenous elements. Marco Polo Hernández Cuevas, in *África en el Carnaval Mexicano*, argues that there are two historic ways by which to understand carnival. One is a Eurocentric version that contends that the carnival is descendant from the Roman pagan feasts. The second is an Afro-centric version, whose origin is the Nile

River region, and is celebrated with pagan rituals of fertility directed to Wosir or Orisis (in Greek). Hernández writes, "estos festivales pasaron de Egipto a Grecia y de ahí a Roma. España desarrolló su Carnaval siendo Hispania (tierra de conejos) una provincia del Imperio Romano mediterráneo que se extendió por lo que hoy es el norte de África" (22). In other words, according to Hernández, these festivities went from Egypt to Greece and then to Rome. Spain (Hispania back then), as a province of the Roman Empire in the Mediterranean, developed its carnival influenced by Northern Africa. Hernández disputes that Eurocentric and Creole discourses were erased from the Mexican collective memory and the national Mexican identity; a kinship exists between Mexico and Africa. Acknowledging the influence of Africa in the enigmatic construction of the Mexican festive personality, the "enigma" vanishes and we discover new perspectives in the historical background of Mexican identity.

A digitalized Carnival

The festive nature of the Spanish-language talk show in the Americas allows its participants to wear masks. That is, *Piolín* functions as a veil that covers the face of interlocutors. The nature of radio itself protects people's identities by hiding them. It is a mask that prevents people from seing one another's faces. This allows listeners to share their views of the world while at the same time remainging anonymous. Miguel Ruiz argues, in *The Four Agreements*, that people have been domesticated by what he calls the "dream of the planet;" these are expectations that society has from individuals about how to live a good life. He writes, "The dream of the planet includes all of society's rules, its beliefs, its laws, its religions, its different cultures and ways to be, its governments, schools, social events, and holidays" (2). Through repetion of language and behavior,

institutions inject expectations in people's minds making them believe that they indeed have to live according to those expectations. By acting as domesticated individuals, people forget about their true dreams and their personal desires become supressed by their aspiration to fulfill social roles. People's happiness depends on the the dream that society has for them, and they get tamed, believing that their objective is to satisfy the outside world. In the process of exploring dreams, people wear masks for fear of dissapointing others' expectations and to dissimulate their true desires. That mask protects them from mockery, judgement and critique. *Piolín* functions as a carnivalesque mask and allows people to open up and reveal their own selves without showing their face; this allows radio-text subjects to stay anonymous.

Similar to what Bakhtin postulates, *Piolín* does not mark distinction between performers and spectators, because the people that live in the carnival allow 'mass action' where people have magical contact with one another. The contact between individuals that occurs in the carnivalesque experience of *Piolín* is mediated by the technological effects of radio, making it arrive at diverse locations in the United States and around the world. Radio mediates between different settings, making it a transcendental force that allows clashes of geographically and economically various voices. Words become fireworks of cultural frisson. People become practitioners of white and black magic through the words they incant. White magicians manifest their power through the words that provoke positive emotion while the black magic appears in the words that cause negative feeling. The combination of both types of magic make a *mitote*, which is a Toltec word that refers to "the chaos of a thousand different voices all trying to talk at once…" (Ruiz 41). Witches and sorcerers come together to cast their spells and perform

rituals and incantations where the most powerful show their strength by not allowing others to cause them negative emotion. This is a practice that instructs people to maintain mental control. Here, the individual allows or disallows actions by others; for example, when *Piolín* decides to intentionally upset someone with the "botellita de jerez, todo lo que digas será al revés" type of joke. Members of the program call someone in the world not to establish communication, but to repeat what the person on the other side of the line utters. The following text is the transcription of a "botellita de jerez" joke that was made at the expense of "Sebastian" in Argentina:[195]

SEBASTIAN. Allo?

SHOW CAST. Allo?

SEBASTIAN. Allo?

SHOW CAST. Allo?

SEBASTIAN. ¿Quién habla?

SHOW CAST. ¿Quién habla?

SEBASTIAN. ¿Con quién quiere hablar?

SHOW CAST. ¿Con quién quiere hablar?

SEBASTIAN. ¿Porqué me están inchando las pelotas, qué es lo que están haciendo?

SHOW CAST. ¿Porqué me están inchando las pelotas, qué es lo que están haciendo?

SEBASTIAN. Quisiera verte de frente para ver si es tan guapo para hablar como para pelear.

SHOW CAST. Quisiera verte de frente para ver si es tan guapo para hablar como para pelear.

[195] "Argentino Botellita de Jerez Broma." Online videoclip. 30 Oct 2008. Youtube. Accessed on 2 Feb 2011.

SEBASTIAN. La verdad que me tenes podrido nene.

SHOW CAST. La verdad que me tenes podrido nene.

SEBASTIAN. Si te llego a agarrar la verdad que te rompo la cabeza, verás.

SHOW CAST. Si te llego a agarrar la verdad que te rompo la cabeza, verás.

SEBASTIAN. Pero hijo de la gran puta…que no puedo entender…¿de dónde sos vos?

SHOW CAST. Pero hijo de la gran puta…que no puedo entender…¿de dónde sos vos?

SEBASTIAN. ¿Porqué no me hablás como tenes que hablar?

SHOW CAST. ¿Porqué no me hablás como tenes que hablar?

SEBASTIAN. Sos un atorrante vago.

SHOW CAST. Sos un atorrante vago.

SEBASTIAN. Sin vergüenza, ¿porqué no pones la cara?

SHOW CAST. Sin vergüenza, ¿porqué no pones la cara?

SEBASTIAN. Ponte con otro ser humano de tu calaña..que esté trabajando como vos..Si conoces a mi hijo te rompe la cabeza y te deja como fungi de italiano.

[The guy recites this phrase so fast that the show cast can't keep up with it]

SHOW CAST. Muy largo. Muy largo. Hijo de Maradona.

SEBASTIAN. Maradona, Maradona. Así te voy a dar a vos.

SHOW CAST. Maradona, Maradona. Así te voy a dar a vos.

SEBASTIAN. Te voy a ir a buscar y te voy a dejar sin calzones.

SHOW CAST. Calmate Valeria Liverman. [They change the conversation to allude to an Argentina celebrity who got married to a Mexican singer (Cristian Castro). After these celebrities got divorced people

worried that she was going to take everything from him, even his underwear]

SEBASTIAN. Escucháme. Solo te digo una cosa: te llego a agarrar y te rompo la cabeza hijo de la XXXX madre que te recontra parió. XXXXX sos un cuernudo, guampudo, hijo de mil XXXX.

SHOW CAST. Mamá, ahí te hablan. [The guys in the show don't feel insulted at all; on the contrary, they are amused about the way the Argentinian insults their mother]

The purpose of this joke is to make people mad and its amusement is in the way things develop. In this example, Sebastian gets irritated by the behavior of the person calling. He wants to find out who the person on the other side of the line is and the continuous inquiry gets him extremely frustrated. Sebastian gets so upset that he starts to insult his interlocutor in a ridiculous-funny way. This attitude reflects the meaning of the common Hispanic proverb "el que se enoja pierde," which means that "the person who gets upset loses." It could mean that the individual who allows himself/herself to be upset by others loses his ability to control himsel/herself; or simply that the person who gets irritated just wastes time that could have been used to feel positive emotion. This type of joke has different effects: either people react really angrily or they go with the flow without allowing themselves to be upset by the caller. Such is the case in the following example. This case presents a woman who is able to control her emotions and does not allow herself to be angry:

FEMALE VICTIM. Hello may I help you?

SHOW CAST. Hello may I help you?

FEMALE VICTIM. Who is this?

SHOW CAST. Who is this?

FEMALE VICTIM. What are you talking about?

SHOW CAST. What are you talking about?

FEMALE VICTIM. Is this like a concert or what is this?

[The show cast in *Piolín* sound like a bunch of people reciting a prayer in church]

SHOW CAST. Is this like a concert or what is this?

FEMALE VICTIM. What is your name?

SHOW CAST. What is your name?

FEMALE VICTIM. Hello?

SHOW CAST. Hello?

FEMALE VICTIM. That is not really nice!

SHOW CAST. That is not really nice!

FEMALE VICTIM. Wow. I'm amazed.

SHOW CAST. Wow. I'm amazed.

FEMALE VICTIM. Miauuuu [like a cat]

SHOW CAST. Miauuuu.

[the lady starts to laugh]

FEMALE VICTIM. So.

SHOW CAST. So.

FEMALE VICTIM. Are you guys going to repeat everything?

SHOW CAST. Are you guys going to repeat everything?

FEMALE VICTIM. Ok. Let's play then!

SHOW CAST. Ok. Let's play then!

FEMALE VICTIM. [The woman starts to make animal sounds] Cu-cu-cu-cu-cu-cu. [I'm using Spanish sounds to describe the onomatopoeia. This is the sound of a chicken.]

SHOW CAST. Cu-cu-cu-cu-cu-cu.

FEMALE VICTIM. Guau, Guau, Guau. [Like a little puppy.]

SHOW CAST. Guau, Guau, Guau.

FEMALE VICTIM. Muuuuuuuuu. [Like a cow.]

SHOW CAST. Muuuuuuuuu.

FEMALE VICTIM. You guys are good to sound like animals!

SHOW CAST. You guys are good to sound like animals!

FEMALE VICTIM. Miauuuuuuu. [Like a cat.]

SHOW CAST. Miauuuuuuu.

FEMALE VICTIM. Oi, oi, oi. [Like a pig.]

SHOW CAST. Oi, oi, oi.

FEMALE VICTIM. Hello!

SHOW CAST. Hello!

FEMALE VICTIM. Hi!

SHOW CAST. Hi!

FEMALE VICTIM. Do you like to hear this?

SHOW CAST. Do you like to hear this?

[There is the sound of a bird in the back]

FEMALE VICTIM. You guys wanna get excited?

SHOW CAST. You guys wanna get excited?

FEMALE VICTIM. You like my voice? [talking in a sexual tone]

SHOW CAST. You like my voice?

FEMALE VICTIM. I'm so hot!

SHOW CAST. I'm so hot!

FEMALE VICTIM. You wanna know…

SHOW CAST. You wanna know…

FEMALE VICTIM. I'm in my bed.

SHOW CAST. I'm in my bed.

FEMALE VICTIM. Naked! [with a sexual voice]

SHOW CAST. Naked!

FEMALE VICTIM. Big booty! [very seductive]

SHOW CAST. [The technique changes] Oh my Gooood!!!

[the lady laughs]

FEMALE VICTIM. Big booty!

SHOW CAST. Oh my God!!! Again…[Note the change]

FEMALE VICTIM. I'm so sexy!

SHOW CAST. I'm so sexy!

FEMALE VICTIM. Would you like to eat me?

SHOW CAST. Yes we do! [They change the pattern again]

FEMALE VICTIM. How bad?

SHOW CAST. Big time! [Now the sexual conversation broke the pattern]

FEMALE VICTIM. I gotta go!

SHOW CAST. I gotta go!

FEMALE VICTIM. See you later!

SHOW CAST. See you later!

FEMALE VICTIM. Make sure…

SHOW CAST. Make sure…

FEMALE VICTIM. To have…

SHOW CAST. To have…

FEMALE VICTIM. A good time…

SHOW CAST. A good time…

FEMALE VICTIM. I love you all!

SHOW CAST. I love you all!

FEMALE VICTIM. Muah! [She throws a kiss to them]

SHOW CAST. Ahhhhh. [They sound seduced and almost in love]

This example presents a woman who is able to control herself when others intentionally try to make her upset. The goal of many jokes in the carnivalesque experience of *Piolín* is to irritate people. The more irritated they are, the more successful the jokes. However, people who are willing to play, add extra texture to the public face of the audience; this is an audience who will not be had, or, figures out that they are being had and good-naturedly adjusts.

The carnival in *Piolín*, similar to what Bakhtin proposes, provides an extraordinary celebratory blending between diverse type of people allowing the 'sacred and the profane' to come together. This blending of people creates a party atmosphere in the radio space. Octavio Paz, in his effort to explore Mexican identity, studies the "fiesta." Paz argues, in "Todos santos, día de muertos," that the party is an expression of relaxation of the closed spirit of the Mexican. The solitary Mexican loves the "fiesta" and the public gathering because the fiesta is one of the few luxuries that substitutes for the theater, the vacation, the cocktail party, the weekend, the coffee and the receptions of the bourgeoisie. It is in this type of ceremony that the Mexican opens up to the world and, in this opportunity, the individual allows himself/herself to talk with the divine, the relatives, the friends, and the homeland. Paz writes that, "El solitario mexicano ama las

fiestas y las reuniones públicas […] Las fiestas son nuestro único lujo; ella sustituye acaso con ventaja, el teatro y a las vacaciones, al *weekend* y al *cocktail party* de los sajones, a las recepciones de la burguesía y al café de los mediterraneos" (*Laberinto* 64). Paz contends that during this time of celebration in the *fiesta*, the Mexican purges his/her soul. The party opens up and assimilates to the carnival as a release valve for the people, a ritual that produces profanities, an inversion of hierarchies, and an erasure of borders; but, the party according to Paz also generates loneliness, which prevents Mexicans from transcendence.[196] However, unlike what Paz postulates, the carnival in *Piolín* shows that individuals do transcend a time and a space reality and, in fact, listeners transport themselves to the enjoyment of the present moment. This accomplishment happens in the company of fellow listeners who also enjoy the momentum of the carnival; this moment and momentum gives individuals the opportunity to co-inhabit an environment where the paramount purpose is to have fun. The quality of internal loneliness that Paz assigns to Mexicans is not only a characteristic that applies to a specific group of individuals. It is a common state, which is ameliorated by conscious awareness. When the individual is able to tame his/her thoughts, loneliness gets conquered and feelings and emotions are controllable. The carnival in *Piolín* gives people the opportunity to set their mind in a state where they allow themselves to enjoy the moment.

The carnival in *Piolín*, like what Bakhtin suggests, is a place where the profane brings people down to earth to the level of the body, crowning and decrowning kings to allow death and renewal to take place through laughter and parody. This peculiarity is

[196] Mexicans are not the only people that listen to the show, but since it is the largest minority group in the United States, and the station belongs to the Regional Mexicana genre, *Piolín* targets Mexicans as the Latino/a group that makes the most revenue in the show. This is reflected in most of the phone calls that happen to be from Mexicans. Central Americans are the second group of listeners.

also characteristic of the the "fiesta" that Octavio Paz celebrates. This Mexican thinker argues that the fiesta also represents a life-death dichotomy, which corresponds to the nature of the developed countries versus the nature of Mexico as a third world country. Mexicans have intense devotion for death, while US and European societies preserve and celebrate life; this, according to Paz, is a distorted notion of life, because when a real veneration of life happens, it is also a devotion to death. He writes: "ese respeto a la vida humana que tanto enorgullese a la civilización occidental es una noción incompleta o hipócritica. El culto a la vida, si de verdad es profundo y total, es también culto a la muerte" (*Laberinto*, 65). In other words, accepting death leads to a better understanding of life, a premise that is held by participants in *Piolín* when interlocutors laugh about death and erase the boundaries of the sacred and the profane. Jokes that make fun of the Catholic Church are common to the show. The dialogue between the priest and Chavelita presented in my second chapter, for example, shows a type of humor where sexual innuendo gets mixed with iconic figures of the Catholic Church, like the priest himself, who happens to interpret Chavelita's confession in a sexual way. Listeners to the show do not have to wait to die in order to enjoy the good fortunes that Heaven offers. They enjoy the divine richness of laughter here on earth.

The Carnival, a sense of community

The carnival in *Piolín*, similar to Bakhtin's theory, also identifies diverse types of laughter, legends, unofficial histories and locations that provide the feeling of a strong sense of community. These elements can be derived from an interest in why people laugh. This focus of psychologists and theorists who have analyzed laughter in diverse forms, like Freud who, in *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious*, argues that

individuals laugh about what they consider funny because that is how they release the psychic energy accumulated in the body. The father of psychoanalysis also suggests that when people laugh at others they communicate that they are different from those who are ridiculed and humiliated. Jennifer Alvarez Dickinson contends, in *Pocho Humor*, that psychologists and psychotherapists have developed that idea into the superiority theory which explains that people laugh at others because they dislike the individual and feel safe and dissimilar from those who are victims of oppression. Although this type of superiority is expressed in the show, the humor practiced in *Piolín* is also similar to the point of view that Rabelais has about laughter when he explains that it reflects the excesses of the human body that humans cannot explain in public. The carnivalesque experience of *Piolín* debunks any type of shyness. Members of the carnival talk openly about the scatological as well as about their sexual practices. It happens in code with the use of *albures*[197] as explained in Chapter 2, but still, they go beyond the conventions of good manners and etiquette. Alvarez Dickinson reminds us, in *Pocho Humor*, that "not only is humor virtually everywhere, there are also multiple and often overlapping modes of humor at work in each form: satire, parody, comedy, irony" (8). The carnival in *Piolín* is a combination of all these types of humor, and such amalgamation throws light on narratives that have not been taken into account by official history. *Piolín* talks about the experience of the Latino/a community in the United States and about the ways we construct and invent ourselves in the American society.

Piolín's carnival, similar to the Bakhtinian carnival, is a space where the ritual spectacle can be observed in events like "carnival pageants [and] comic shows of the

[197] An *albur* is a game of words with double meaning, often scatological and/or sexual.

market place" (151) as Sue Vice argues in *Introducing Bakhtin*. However, the nature of the radio show allows this event to happen in a virtual way. That is, instead of marching in a unidirectional parade, members of the carnival in *Piolín* move in diverse directions; the physical locations of the participants are dispersed around the US and the world. The carnival happens inside the individual, allowing him/her to experience its components and characteristics without having to be in a specific physical place. People in New York City, Chicago, or Texas call the program to enjoy the party/parade where the *mitote,* which is the multiplicity of voices taking place, gives the feeling of being in an open-air market. In this "place," unemployed people are given the opportunity to advertise their abilities by *Piolín*. For instance, in a specific section of the program José calls the show to offer his service as a landscaper and María promotes herself as a house cleaner. The feeling of the market place pervades the show, when people laugh, make jokes, and mock one another.

The carnival in *Piolín,* similar to the carnival that Bakhtin describes, includes comic verbal concatenations that contain oral and written parodies practiced in the Spanglish vernacular. These comic carnivalesque strategies are observed in the content of the radio text, and also travel to the virtual world when the members of the carnival interact among themselves via Internet like facebook or the portal Univisión. In this way, from being its oral origin, the carnival in *Piolín* becomes written and visual. The verbal and written components of the carnival work as a training where the members have to become immune to taking anything personally. In the carnival of *Piolín* listeners become witches and sorcerers that constantly criticize one another. They have to not take things personally in order to continue laughing. This same idea of the carnival as a *mitote* can

be helpful in understanding how participants can cognitively thrive in a hostile verbal environment. This carnivalesque practice happens in a micro and macro levels of reality because a similar carnival also happens in the psyche of individuals when they allow the *mitote* to occupy their mind. Miguel Ruiz, in *The Four Agreements*, compares the mind and the body and argues that the psyche is divided in parts as the body is, and that when the different parts of the psyche talk at the same time, making a sort of market in the head, it provokes confusion in the individual. He writes that when the diverse parts of the mind talk, "humans hardly know what they want. They don't agree with themselves because there are parts of the mind that want one thing and other parts that want exactly the opposite" (56). The carnivalesque experience of the mind requires taming to make order and organize all the conflicts in the psyche. *Piolín*'s carnival exemplifies the state of neutrality that participants have to achieve, and it provides an allegory of the psyche.

Piolín's carnival is composed of ritualistic elements, like curses and oaths, representative of the popular speech of the working class people that listen to the show. In an effort to understand the ritual in carnival, David D. Gilmore in his study of the carnival in Spain notes that the carnival as a ritual has been studied from diverse perspectives. In *Carnival and Culture*, he offers three nominalizations: "Dynamic Equilibrium," "The Culture of Resistance," and the "Interpretative-Symbolic." The ritual as equilibrium is composed of ceremonies that "subvert or question the basic social order" (30). In an attempt to explore the *status quo* in relation to ritual, Eva Hunt, in "Ceremonies of confrontation and submission," [198] a study of oppressed indigenous groups in Mexico, argues that rituals reinforce the current order. Billie Isbell, in *To*

[198] *Secular ritual*.

defend ourselves: Ecology and ritual in an Andean village, contends that indigenous peasant in Peru practice rituals to control spatial, cosmic, economic, and social orders. Stanley Brandes, in *Power and Persuasion*, maintains that the *fiesta* in Mexico is an element of oppressive social control. Alternately, ritual as resistance is, according to Gilmore, a Marxist technique of fighting against oppression. He writes, in *Carnival and Culture*, "the 'rebellious' rituals of the common folk should be seen as a weapon. . . against class domination, as a symbolic form of struggle" (32). In other words, Gilmore explains that ritual has the potential to be a revolutionary method to change the world. The author of *Carnival and Culture* suggests that ritual can be studied as a "symbolic text 'story grammar'" (33) expecting to be interpreted. In this respect, thinkers have interpreted the carnivalesque ritual in diverse ways, from a "ritual means of controlling social tensions while providing an illusory sense of 'freedom' for the oppressed" (34) as Umberto Eco, in "Frames of comic freedom,"[199] argues, to being understood as " '[…] a constant striving for equilibrium between binary polar oppositions in ritual myth'" as Vladimir Ivanov contends in "The semiotic theory of carnival as the inversion of bipolar opposites" (Ibid). The carnivalesque in *Piolín*, to use Gilmore's words, is a celebration of *ambivalence itself* where dualistic, contradictory, and mixed feelings get together to make a *mitote.*

The structure of the carnival in *Piolín*, a mixture of comic elements, curses, and insults, welcomes the development of *pocho aesthetics*. Jennifer Alvarez Dickinson, in *Pocho Humor*, develops the term "pocho" into an artistic, and creative notion, particular to the hybrid peoples of Mexican descent. The word "pocho" has been used to identify

[199] *Carnival!*

people of Mexican origins who have partially or entirely assimilated the US culture. She defines "pocho aesthetics" as:

> …a sensibility that simultaneously acknowledges traditional cultural markers and questions their validity, a mocking laughter that asks audiences to rethink citizenship, ethnicity, and difference. In this sense, pocho does not only refer to Americans of Mexican descent who have "lost" their cultural ties to Mexico. [It] also refer[s] to those who see themselves as Chicano, [and] who recognize the constructedness of identity. (59)

In other words, a "pocho" for Alvarez Dickinson is a term that helps describe how cultures get mixed in an individual who challenges diverse cultural categories. This subject defies dominant discourses using *pocho* humor, speaking many tongues, assuming multiple identities and addressing different audiences. These multiple variants speak about the way the members of the carnival in *Piolín* interact and communicate among themselves. A vivid example of *pocho* humor is the wake-up call Mexican alarm, where the character that imitates "Speedy Gonzalez" speaks English with an exaggerated Mexican accent. See my example of the wake-up call Mexican alarm in chapter 2 where "Speedy Gonzalez" alias *el chile* calls "la señorita."

The carnivalesque in *Piolín* is a cultural production of avant-garde. Renato Poggioli argues, in *Teoría del Arte de Vanguardia*,[200] that the avant-garde through history has transformed into a current second nature of modern art, and it has become attractive

[200] Translated from the Italian to Spanish by Rosa Chacel.

to many artists who borrow terminology from one discipline and apply it to another, like when artists use medical terms to address the pathology and physiology of culture. In a similar manner, the cybernetic carnival in *Piolín* invites scholars to find new modes of cultural analysis that depart from the traditional ways of making and studying art to arrive in a location where new alternatives are born from the contact of cultures, technology and imagination. Poggioli argues that the avant-garde is a reaction and an anti-classist revolution of the spirit that continues to evolve in time. In the same way, *Piolín* rebels against the elitist nature of art and parodies traditional, "proper," cultural production. This rebellion can be observed in the way the members of the show and the audience use language. Obscene language and vulgar behavior remind people of the marginalization they experience; they make fun of such injustice by parodying and ridiculing one another. With this action the marginalized group of people takes pride in the recognition of their vulgarity and improper behavior that condemns and liberates them at the same time. In an effort to continue reflecting on the function of the avant-garde in the social production of art, Peter Berger, in *Teoría de la vanguardia* , identifies avant-garde as a self-critique of contemporary art that rejects the institution by an attempt to reintroduce art to its practical life. *Piolín's* carnival brings the snobbish concept of art down to earth and transforms it into the vital praxis of the working class people, where art becomes malleable according to the needs and desires of the audience. The desire to acquire an art that belongs to the working class people that listen to *Piolín* allows the birth and development of *Mojarra cultural aesthetics*, which is a type of art produced and consumed by *mojarras*. This art revolves around the needs of the immigrant community suffering persecution; *Mojarra* aesthetics are artistic techniques that use laughter to ease

the intimidated individual's resistance. Laughter allows *mojarras* to relax, to relieve tension, and to forget for a period of time that they are persecuted. When *Mojarras* are able to control their agitated feeling of being "wanted," they allow their body to relax in a particular way that allows a nonanxiogenic stream of consciousness; people lose fear for an instant and words flow out of their mouth like fire. This process often develops into improvised artistic utterances in the form of *albures* and *cantinfleadas*. *Mojarra aesthetics* become a strategy of survival in the radio-text; this is an attempt by working class immigrants to forge a place in a culture that aggressively ignores their existence.

The carnival in *Piolín* is an ideal medium to study the humor of the Latino/a working class communities that listen to the show. Salvatore Attardo, in his Preface to *Working class humor*, wishes, through theory, to stimulate research of the working class people. Among his suggestions are the ideas that "Working class humor embodies and represents working class values… [which]…are, in significant part, antagonistic to middle-class values" (123). In this respect, the line that divides the middle class humor from the working class humor is not very clear in the carnivalesque experience of *Piolín.* Most of the people who call the show are working class Latino/as who understand the type of humor used in the program. In addition to this stratification, Attardo contends that mass-media reflects the values of the logical and physiological facade of the middle-class. The presence of working class humor in mass media would, theoretically, conflict with the principles of good manners and bourgeois mores. Working-class wittiness, however, unruly as it is, gives life blood to the main stream media. The inclusion of bourgeois humor in main stream media "draw[s] the line at politically charged, and aggressive (negative) humor, including openly homophobic humor, and scatological and

sexually overt (obscene) humor" (123). However, the carnivalesque experience of *Piolín* presents a mixture of the previous elements that work against the established *status quo* by utilizing coded speech to joke about life, such as when individuals shift into *cantinfleadas* and *albures* (To reiterate: *Cantinfleadas* are the use of speech to communicate nonsense; *albures* are playful games of words with sexual and scatological content). However, within the same game of jokes and mockery, members of the carnival in *Piolín* erase the boundaries between social critique and reinforcement of traditional oppressive patterns like Machismo, and gender discrimination. Attardo contends that the difference between the socialization of working-class humor and middle-class humor are disimilar because such distinctions "revolve around obscenity, scatology, aggression, and generally non-politically correct issues" (125) a group of elements that determine what is acceptable to say and/or do, to whom, and when. This division, laid out by Attardo, is perceived by the participants of the carnivalesque experience of *Piolín*, when they express likes and dislikes about proper or improper behavior that dissolve into laughter and mockery.

In conclusion, in this chapter, I analyzed *Piolín* as a radio carnival that takes place in an era of digital communication. It is the product of a *reproductive textual mestizaje* that unites different textual elements in combination with life experience, technology, and old and new forms of cultural production; these elements ought to invite scholars to ferret out new modes of cultural analysis as well as new teaching methodologies and ways of playing and interpreting art. *Piolín* is a carnival in a cybernetic era when the power of technology and the internet allow movement across hitherto unimaginable landscapes. I used the theory of the carnival by Mikhail Bakhtin and argued that in the carnivalesque

experience of the radio program, *Piolín* is a mask that covers the face of the interlocutors to make the experience annonymous. Similar to what Bakhtin proposes, *Piolín* does not make distinctions between performers and spectators, because the people that live in the carnival, allow 'mass action.' People have magical contact with one another. The carnival in *Piolín* also provides an extraordinary celebratory blending between diverse people, allowing the 'sacred and the profane' to come together. It provides a space where profanity brings people down to the level of the body, which allows death and renewal to take place through laughter and parody. The carnivalesque experience, similar to Bakhtin's theory, also identifies diverse types of laughter, legends, unofficial histories and locations that provide the feeling of a great sense of community where the ritual spectacle is observed in a cybernetic and digital event similar to carnival pageants and comic shows that take place in markets. These spectacles include comic verbal compositions like the oral and written parodies practiced in the language of the people. The show is composed of ritualistic elements like curses, and insults, representative of the popular speech of the working class people that listen to *Piolín*. The structure of the carnival, which includes a mixture of elements welcomes the development of *Mojarra aesthetics*, a production of the cultural avant-garde and a medium to study the immigrant humor, and zeitgeist, of the Latino/a working class community that suffers from persecution. *Piolín* represents a carnivalesque experience of the workplace zeitgeist that allows its participants not just momentary rest from hardship, and not just instruction about how to ascend from hardship, but also, frankly, a place to simply be; to pause, or more extendedly, to rest. That the imagination of the show buoys up these subjectivities to simply find a place to be, is an enormous political and cultural statement, Mexican and

Latino/a immigrants, legal and illegal, are aggressively hunted by the US government even though the US citizenry needs this population to succeed if not to thrive.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION:

MOJARRA DIFRASISMO: NOT SUBVERSIVE, NOT HEGEMONIC; IT'S JUST THE OPPOSITE

No es ni bonito ni feo sino todo lo contrario.

Pa que te digo que no si sí.[201]

The previous epigraph honors the popular utterance of *la Chimoltrufia*. In Mexico and Latin America, she is a very well known character from the Mexican television show *Chespirito*.[202] The literal translation of her utterance would be, "it's not pretty, nor ugly, it's just the opposite." This indicates that truth is not found in structuralist binaries such as white/ black, cold/hot, fat/thin, man/woman, familiar/foreign; instead, *la Chimoltrufia* introduces a new method of understanding. For her, truth is the opposite of binary thinking. Her position debunks conventional structures of thought. In other words, her parlance leads us to reflect on the following question, "What is the opposite of the binary black/white?" *La Chimoltrufia* presents a third space (more than just "grey") of signification where binaries blur, meaning splinters, and a new dimension of linguistic possibility spawns (prolifically). Here, with some hesitation, I bring *la Chimoltrufia*'s management of linguistic reality to bear on *Piolín por la Mañana*.

Is the show subversive or is it hegemonic?

I argue that *Piolín* is neither subversive nor hegemonic; it is "just the opposite." That is, between subversive and hegemonic practices, the show gives birth

[201] This phrase is by *La Chimoltrufia* a popular character from Chespirito, a Mexican T.V. show.
[202] See *los Caquitos* from Chespirito a televisión comedy program popular from 1980 to 1995.

to *Mojarra Difrasismo*,[203] a space and time where binaries disintegrate and paradoxes reconcile. This is a *sentipensante*[204] (feeling-thought) experience. Eduardo Galeano, in "Celebration of the Marriage of Heart and Mind,"[205] writes:

> Why does one write, if not to put one's pieces together? From the moment we enter school or church, education chops us into pieces: it teaches us to divorce soul from body and mind from heart. The Fishermen of the Colombian coast must be learned doctors of ethics and morality, for they invented the word, *sentipensante*, feeling-thinking, to define language that speaks the truth. (121)

Along the same lines, the language practice of *Piolín* allows listeners to speak a version of their own truth. Language, in *Piolín*, is the personae roundhouse where *mojarras* and fisherpeople exchange positions in order to educate one another about being oppressed and being oppressive, and the very many positions between these polarities. Fisherpeople get trained to trap *mojarras*, and *mojarras* learn to not be caught.[206] This exchange of positions occurs restlessly between members of the

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[203] In *Llave del Náhuatl*, Angel María Garibay writes: "Difrasismo. Llamo así a un procedimiento que consiste en expresar una misma idea por medio de dos vocablos que se completan en el sentido, ya por ser sinónimos, ya por ser adyacentes"(115).

[204] Laura I. Rendón writes in *Sentipensante*: "The word sentipensante comes from a combination of two Spanish words: sentir which means to sense or feel, and pensar, to think. [Eduardo] Galeano is taking the stance that rationality and intuition can exist in dynamic and complementary opposition" *(131).*

[205] *The Book of Embraces.*

[206] This maps neatly onto Lee Edelman's important formulation of "homographesis." In Edelman's discussion, both homophobes and homosexuals have deep investments in discovering homosexuals. As John Emil Vincent usefully parses Edelman's argument in *Queer Lyrics*:

> In Lee Edelman's terms, Whitman's comment to Symonds is a perfect embodiment of 'homographesis,' which is 'on one hand, a normalizing practice of cultural discrimination (generating, as a response, the self-nominalization that eventuates in the affirmative politics of a minoritized gay community), and on the other, a strategic resistance to that reification of sexual difference' (Homographesis 10). A homograph, as in the examples Edelman provides of the

audience; it allows listeners to practice ***mojarra difrasismo,*** the deconstruction of binaries and the birth of a new time-space reality, which forces new thinking about what reality is or could be. Laura I. Rendon[207] writes:

> Difrasismo is a stylistic concept in the Aztec culture where a pair of words is employed to refer to a third term or phrase. The third term reveals the hidden wisdom behind the paired dualities. In modern times, we might consider a difrasismo as a dialectical space where two interacting themes exist in tension with one another. In a difrasismo, a larger truth emerges from illuminating the hidden mysteries of the paired realities, which dance interdependently and in grand cooperation with each other. In essence the difrasismo represents the resolution of dualities, the reconciliation of paradox. (134)[208]

Mojarra difrasismo in *Piolín* allows characters and audience to enjoy life by making the possibilities of life a vortex of *even more* possibilities. That is, the

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words 'lead' or 'bear,' bears more than one meaning under the same sign. Homographesis, 'in its deconstructive sense,' troubles what is finally to mean at all.

> It articulates the difference, that is, from the binary differentiation of sameness and difference, presence and absence: these couples wedded to each other in order to determine identity as sameness or presence to oneself. In this sense homographesis, in a gesture that conserves what it contests, defines as central to ' homosexuality' a refusal of the specifications of identity (including sexual identity) that marks out the very space within which to think 'homosexuality' itself. (14)

Sustained homographesis in the lyric was described by Keats as 'negative capability,' meaning a state in which a reader can 'dwell in opposites.' Negative capability can model, queer ontology. […]
(xviii-xix)

[207] See *Sentipensante Pedagogy*.

[208] Antonio Valeriano, Guillermo Ortiz de Montellano argues in *Nicān mopouha* that a *difrasismo* in Nahuatl has a figurative meaning that is taken from two words or even phrases. These two words or phrases do not have to be binaries; for example, *flor y canto = poesia* [flower and song= poetry] or *agua, cerro=población, pueblo, ciudad* [water, hill=community, town, city]. (34) In other words, *difrasismo* **breaks the binaries** and invites us to think in new ways that give birth to new forms of understanding the world.

reconciliation of paradoxes and the understanding of the common ground where listeners stand permit a dislocation and re-location of life conditions. Everyone mocks everyone. This does not mean that oppressive categorical axes are sidestepped. Instead, sometimes they are delicately tested and sometimes they are trounced. Men mock women, and women mock men, regardless of their sexual orientation, socio-political status, linguistic capacities and/or education. The human to human dislocation and relocation of life conditions goes further when things and situations mock people regardless of this, that, or, the other, category. Individuals are no longer victims of situations, but situations are "victims" of individuals. Everything in the show turns upside down and life turns into a coalition of paradoxes, absurdities, nonsense, and laughter.

Piolín por la Mañana's *mojarra disfracismo* invites listeners to produce multiple meanings, and thereby, increase the surface area of livable reality. The show helps people to move out of a myopic view of their situation, into a view that includes a multiplicity of voices, opinions, personae, situations, humiliations and elevations. Vanessa Ribas Fialho, in "El hipertexto electrónico: Un nuevo paradigma para los papeles de Autor, Lector y Texto," argues that the hypertext was originally used, by Theodor H. Nelson in 1981, to identify an electronic text with non-sequential writing. This type of text connected by links allows a multiplicity of routes and amplifies the possibilities of reading. The hypertext provides an open space with multiple ways of accessing information; it is associative because the index of a non-lineal text is included in the same text and not out of it. This easy accessibility allows the reader to save information in a practical manner. It is an electronic text that is organized and structured in a non-sequential way. The non-lineal nature of the hypertext

decentralizes the physical and conventionally lineal paginated structure of the printed text. This organization of pages does not obey a specific order and the unlimited chain of pages makes an infinite access of electronic pages where none of those pages is the first, or the last, available to the reader.

Mojarra disfracismo in *Piolín*, similar to the qualities that the electronic hypertexts provide, is a world of non-linear meaning; that is, the show does not have a beginning and does not have an end. The audience can listen to the show on any random day and time, and the audience is able to make sense of the jokes and the show's content. The electronic nature of the show in this digital era allows the audience to tune into *Piolín* without feeling that they have missed previous programs. The non-linear nature of *Piolín* permits story-telling in multiple spatial and temporal directions, where the Facebook, portal Univisión, telephone, radio, and email, form a multidirectional network of cultural traffic; this cultural "back and forth" stream of communication allows the audience to make sense of their particular way of understanding the show.

Piolín is neither subversive nor hegemonic; *it is just the opposite*. This allows *mojarra difrasismo* to take place. That is, when characters in the show insult one another, they allow a third space to be born where their emotions and identity positions are kept in control to understand that life in the show is just a joke, but also not a joke at all.

It is not a joke, and it is not serious; it is just the opposite.

When don Poncho insults Rosita[209] by calling her "vieja livinidosa"or easy woman, Rosita responds back by identifying herself as don Poncho's wife and mentioning that she's just like him. On the one hand, this affirmation may seem oppressive to Rosita. Once Rosita finds out that she's the victim of *Piolín's* show, she goes with the flow and insults Piolín back by calling him "donkey's teeth" and saying that she's just like don Poncho. In other words, what appears to be oppressive gets subverted by the reaction of the interlocutors when they defend themselves from their immediate adversary. This happens again and again *ad infinitum* until laughter calms down the situation. For example, when the audience mocks *La Flor Marchita del Tallo* (the homosexual character in the show) and tries to minimize her with homophobic comments, Flor responds to those comments by sniping back. She will not allow others to diminish her position in the show. This same game between hegemonic and subversive forces happens when Chela Prieto--the ridiculous, vulgar, and funny woman-- allows her vulgarity to flourish in order to mock situations and circumstances that might seem harsh, humiliating, and adverse. Along the same line of hegemony and subversion, the obesity of El Naranjito is no longer an insult; on the contrary, it is an affirmation of a certain type of peculiarity that forms part of his identity. This same appropriation and reappropriation of forms of representation happens among characters in the show as well as among characters and listeners. It is a practice that constructs and deconstructs meaning within the community.

Piolín's uses particular strategies that are hegemonic and/or subversive to stabilize and destabilize forms of representation. Bradley J. Nelson, in "Sigüenza and Sor

[209] See chapter three.

Juana's *fiestas alegóricas:* An Inquiry into Redemptive Hegemony and Its Disolution,"[210] studies the "interconnected issues of agency, transgression, and subversion and their relation to recent theorizations concerning the Baroque and the problematic of Criollo national consciousness in New Spain." (105) He argues that the Baroque is a "particular strategy, or series of strategies, involved in the appropriation, deployment, and/or subversion of institutionalized modes of representation…" (106). Nelson analyzes Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz's *Neptuno alegórico* and Sigüenza y Góngora's *Teatro de virtudes políticas* to reflect on the contingencies of Baroque and neo-Baroque. He contends that Sigüenza re-appropriates "hegemonic discursive practices in order [to] usurp imperial power, [while] Sor Juana…deconstructs the very notion of a stable discursive authority" (19).[211] That same re-appropriation of hegemonic practices is used in *Piolín* in order to dislocate structures of power; this happens when don Poncho diminishes women with his chauvinistic comments, for example. Furthermore, character interaction with the audience deconstructs those forms of power; this happens when Casimiro, after being drunk starts to flirt with other men in the show. Casimiro's contact with alcohol makes him forget about his heterosexuality. *Flor*'s homosexuality is no longer an issue in the show when men and women ask her advice to be cured. Piolín Sotelo, Casimiro, don Poncho and Chela Prieto exist as legitimate individuals despite being fictive. Listeners use hegemonic and subversive practices through joke delivery, laughter and audience participation. All comingle to form *mojarra difrasismo,* that third space where the opposites dissolve to reveal the hidden wisdom that human interactions, and laughter, provide for the community of listeners.

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[210] *Crosscurrents*.
[211] See "Transatlantic Changes and Exchanges: The Permeability of Culture, Identity, and Discourse in Early Modern Hispanic Drama" by Mindy E. Badía and Bonnie L. Gasior in *Crosscurrents*.

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