

Freeways and Free Speech, Rail Cars and *Rancheras*: Geographic and Linguistic
Mobility in Contemporary Mexican and Mexican-American Cultural Production

By

Regan Lee Postma

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Chairperson Stuart Day

Vicky Unruh

Yajaira Padilla

Jorge Pérez

Ben Chappell

Date Defended: May 17, 2011

The Thesis Committee for Regan Lee Postma
certifies that this is the approved version of the following thesis:

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Chairperson Stuart A. Day

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Abstract

This dissertation considers mobility in contemporary Mexican and Mexican-American cultural production (1960s-2000s) and specifically demonstrates how characters utilize creative language to induce an alternate mobility in instances when geographic movement is limited, coerced, or impossible. The analysis of novels and plays highlights the possibilities of human agency via deployments of voice (poetry, song, code-switching, storytelling, parody, and protest, among others). These deployments allow characters to move emotionally to desired places and, in certain situations, to participate in larger social movements against injustices. The first chapter centers on the use of music and poetry as an alternate way of moving in two plays by Hugo Salcedo, *El viaje de los cantores* (1990), based on the lives of male migrants who die in a boxcar on their journey to the US, and *Sinfonía en una botella* (1990), on Mexican citizens who attempt to cross the border in automobiles only to find themselves stuck in gridlock traffic. Chapter 2 considers what I term “narrative motion” in Carlos Morton’s play *Johnny Tenorio* (1983) in which a Chicano Don Juan code-switches, and in María Amparo Escandón’s *González and Daughter Trucking Co.* (2005) in which truck-driving protagonist Libertad tells stories to her fellow inmates, taking them on the highways and back roads of the US during their prison “book clubs.” The third chapter analyzes what I call “vocal derailments” through the use of orality and parody in Emilio Carballido’s play, *Yo también hablo de la rosa* (1966), and his novella, *El tren que corría* (1984). In these works spoken language is used as a way of questioning and thereby moving against national discourses that leave certain Mexican citizens behind. Chapter 4 considers the connection between creative language and action in the farmworker movement by analyzing the use of the *künstlerroman* (artist’s) genre in *...y no se lo tragó la tierra* (1971) by Tomás Rivera and *Under the Feet of Jesus* (1995) by Helena María Viramontes. I demonstrate the way the works underscore the need for artists in the movement to continually move against injustice in the fields. This study adds to studies on migration and literature by highlighting the diversity of (im)mobile experiences in Mexican and Mexican-American cultural production and by signaling the possibilities of the tactical voice for those in limiting circumstances on both sides of the border.

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To my Grandmother Ruby, who was not allowed to drive the truck or to paint a canvas.
But who showed me the beauty of creative, everyday resistance
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Introduction

Climbing Fences with Words: A Transnational Framework for Linguistic Mobility

In the last decades human movements around the globe have increased dramatically. These movements include not only migrants traveling from Latin America, Asia, and Africa to places like the United States and Western Europe, but also the movements of students, business people, victims of human trafficking, backpackers, commuters, retirees, and refugees. John Urry in *Mobilities* underscores that the amount of travel continues to increase, with an expected one billion legal international arrivals worldwide in 2010 compared to 25 million in 1950 (3). This number does not include increased travel within cities, territories, and nations nor does it take account of undocumented migration. Not surprisingly, contemporary Mexican and Mexican-American/Chicano¹ cultural productions consistently engage this increased movement through the inclusion of various forms of mobility as central themes. In Mexican author Emilio Carballido's play *Yo también hablo de la rosa* (1966), and his novella *El tren que corría* (1984), characters derail trains or are left behind by them and desperately search for ways to get on board. This interest in mobility evidences itself along the US/Mexico border in Hugo Salcedo's play *Sinfonía en una botella* (1990) in which cars wait in long lines attempting to pass through checkpoints. It again appears in the US Southwest in the appropriation of flatbed trucks as stages by El Teatro Campesino, in the cars blessed by the priest in Tomás Rivera's novella *...y no se lo tragó la tierra* (1971), and in the big rig that Libertad (a.k.a. Mudflap Girl) drives in *González and Daughter Trucking Co.* (2005), a novel by María Amparo Escandón.

Mobility commonly has been related by the middle and upper class in Western society to freedom and progress. The idea of “going places” geographically connotes economic, social, and often educational advancements. Curiously, the Oxford English Dictionary underscores this freedom in its definition of mobility: “ease of freedom of movement; capacity for rapid or comfortable locomotion or travel.” Significant to this study are the words ease, freedom, and comfortable.² Mobility communicates both the ability to move from one location to another as well as the *possibility* that one can make the journey, and without great travail. This freedom has become especially pronounced since the advent of the automobile. Mike Featherstone, in his introduction to *Automobilities*, draws attention to the sense of autonomy provided by this particular vehicle: “The promise here is for self-steering autonomy and capacity to search out the open road or off-road, encapsulated in vehicles which afford [...] speed and mobility” (1-2). The vehicle and its associated sign-values of independence and progress have become intertwined in the American psyche, as Cotten Seiler in *A Republic of Drivers: A Cultural History of Automobility in America* notes. For Seiler, the US narrates itself ever “in forward motion” and concerns itself with this movement in tangible ways, such as the consumption and constant use of motor vehicles (8-9). Having a vehicle, and in certain communities an American-made vehicle, serves as a marker of national identity. This dependence on the automobile points to the ways that mobility is a term marked by social and economic privilege, and even national belonging.

In contemporary American society, it is not uncommon to hear references to the US as a nation of immigrants, harkening back to the days of the pilgrims. Tim Cresswell, commenting on migration in the national imaginary, signals however that these

celebrated migratory movements at the “heart of collective identity” most often refer to “the mobility of white European migrants” (*On the Move* 180). Thus, the positive connotations of (im)migration associated with US national identity connote northern European immigrants and, while excluding Native peoples from this imaginary, also exclude those more recent immigrants. Movements to the US, as well as those within the nation’s borders, are welcomed by society depending on the racial, class, or gender identity of the people involved. It is not simply individuals, but rather entire demographic categories, as Jeremy Packer suggests, that are marked as dangerous (9).

Given this diversity of experiences with movement, the idea of mobility cannot stand in consistently as a marker of social and economic progress or freedom. Differential access to mobility because of economics, social class, gender, and nationality, as Victor Kaufmann underscores in *Re-thinking Mobility*, complicates this simple understanding. Although people with limited access may become mobile through the appropriation of other forms of movement (what Kaufmann terms *motility*³), such as riding in top of a freight train or hitchhiking, their movements lack the safety and possibility of other journeys. In another way, highly mobile people — political refugees, agricultural migrants, victims of human trafficking — also complicate this idea of mobility as freedom and progress. Denise Segura and Patricia Zavella in *Women and Migration in the US-Mexico Borderlands* highlight the presence of structural violence in migratory experiences. These include gender inequality, racism, and economic policies that create unequal access to education and fair employment, necessitating migration when it is not necessarily desired (ix). In other words, these movements are not always dictated by personal choice but rather by coercion or economic necessity. Given these social realities,

a singular conception of mobility as progress that does not take into account the experiences of people with limited, complicated, or coerced mobility proves lacking.⁴ Differentiating between the reasons people move may help to distinguish different kinds of mobility. For mobility that is marked by choice it may be more accurate to speak of agentive mobility, while compelled or coerced mobility may better describe those movements dictated by social, economic, and political issues. Nevertheless, this study argues that coerced or stifled mobility can become agentive through various vocal tactics which will later be described.

In the context of these situations of limited movement, the present study considers novels and plays of contemporary (1960s- present) Mexicans and Mexican-Americans/Chicanos that treat issues of human mobility. My analysis of these cultural productions demonstrates a more complex understanding of mobility by signaling how class, race, nationality, and gender are imbedded in the term. In this way, this analysis elucidates that mobility does not function in certain communities in the same way it may in others of privilege where access to movement often is taken for granted. In one brief example which will be developed in Chapter 2, Johnny, a contemporary Don Juan figure in Carlos Morton's Chicano play *Johnny Tenorio* (1983), does not possess the same access to mobility as his literary predecessors who took horses and ships and were aided by servants when they needed to flee an adverse situation. Rather, Johnny takes a Greyhound bus, a mode of transportation associated with those of low economic status and lacking in cultural capital. As this play signals, Johnny's mobility is marked by social class and economics. Nevertheless, characters like Johnny become strategically mobile by taking advantage of the limited resources they have, as Kaufmann posits. More

important to this study are the ways characters consistently use the creative voice to find alternate forms of movement when geographic mobility is not possible. Through the deployment of creative language — singing, reciting poems, storytelling, protesting, parodying, and even code-switching (as is the case in *Johnny Tenorio*) — characters are able to “move” to a better emotional place or to “move,” in the broader sense of the word, against oppressive circumstances, as is the case in the farmworker movement. Via what I call “linguistic mobility,” characters find ways of “climbing fences” or crossing borders when they are not able to do so physically.

This study adds to the dialogue on mobility, voice, and social justice, by tying together distinct issues associated with creative language and human agency in Mexican and Mexican-American cultural productions. Many scholars have written on issues of movement, especially migration, in the field of Latin American and US Latino/a literary and cultural studies. Among these, David Maciel and María Herrera-Sobek in *Culture Across Borders* discuss how artists from both sides of the border use cultural productions as a way of critiquing stereotypical visions of migrants. Rather than using language to critique, Alicia Schmidt Camacho in *Migrant Imaginaries* considers how various artistic expressions — songs, novels, narratives, films, testimonios — sustain migrants in transnational movements and experiences of displacement. Rosa Linda Fregoso in *MeXicana Encounters* demonstrates how various artistic practices in the US/Mexico border region create social identities and contest abuses of power. This study also dialogues with others in fields outside of literary analysis that consider the role of storytelling and music in daily life. For example, Shari Stone-Mediatore’s *Reading Across Borders: Storytelling and Knowledges of Resistance* suggests that through the use

of story, marginalized peoples maintain control over their experience and representation, and Erin Clarke, Nicola Dibben, and Stephanie Pitts in *Music and Mind in Everyday Life* demonstrate how music aids in moving people to a better emotional place. Parting from here, my study adds to this discussion by considering how voice offers an agentive alternate movement in situations of limited geographic mobility. I posit that the value of voice lies in the options it offers to marginalized people for moving to better personal situations and to move against systemic injustice. By considering vocal deployments on both sides of the border, this study models the kind of transnational scholarship that Debra Castillo in *Redreaming America* and Diana Taylor in *The Archive and the Repertoire* propose.

In contemporary Mexico and US Mexican-American communities experiences of mobility vary greatly. Of all movements, migration may be the first to come to mind in this Mexico/US context. Indeed, a recent outpouring of films, journalist accounts, literary works, and scholarship from both sides of the border demonstrate this trans-national interest in migration. Films such as *Al otro lado* (2004), the documentary *Crossing Arizona* (2006), *La misma luna* (2007), along with non-fiction accounts like Luis Alberto Urrea's *The Devil's Highway* (2004), speak to the high costs of migration in physical deaths, emotional anguish, and economic repercussions. In each account, migrants use various modes of transportation: walking, riding buses, and hopping aboard trains, as is the case for a young Honduran boy in *Enrique's Journey* (2007) by journalist Sonia Nazario and the many other Central Americans who ride the infamous train, *La Bestia*.⁵ Salcedo's play *El viaje de los cantores* (1990), a work analyzed in Chapter 1, also centers

on migration. In it Mexican migrants from Ojo Caliente perish as they attempt to cross the border in a boxcar.

Migration north, however, is only a small part of the many experiences of mobility in the context of Mexico and US Mexican-American communities. Francisco Jiménez's memoir *Breaking Through* (2001) recounts his deportation to Mexico as a young adult, reversing this pattern of northward movement. The issue of deportation also appears in the popular film *Born in East LA* (1987) in which Chicano character Rudy, played by Cheech Marin, is mistakenly deported to Mexico. Many other contemporary literary texts also demonstrate a return of Mexican-Americans/Chicanos to Mexico, but in a kind of cultural pilgrimage to their homeland. This is the case in Chicano lawyer and author Oscar Zeta Acosta's autobiographical road novel, *The Autobiography of a Brown Buffalo* (1972), for the Reyes family in Sandra Cisneros's *Caramelo, or, Puro Cuento: A Novel* (2002), for Libertad and her father in Amparo Escandón's *González and Daughter Trucking Co.*, as well as for the Chicano protagonist in Mexican author Élmer Mendoza's recent novel *Cóbraselo caro* (2005). In other cases, Chicanas/os live in the border zone and consistently move back and forth across the line, as Gloria Alzaldúa's quintessential *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (1987) exemplifies. These counter-narratives and counter-moves signal that movement is not only south to north but north to south, and for varying reasons.

Another aspect of mobility in Mexico is the daily transport of millions of people and goods within Mexico and the US, as well as between the nations. While Mexico's history with large scale freight and mass transportation dates back to its freight trains in the 1830s and electric streetcars in the late 1890s, large scale infrastructure

modernization efforts, especially highways in large city centers like Mexico City, increased in the 1960s.⁶ The Mexican construction company ICA built the capital city's peripheral highway rings from 1960-67 and then began constructing the metro in 1967, just before the 1968 Olympics. This increase in transport technology in the 1960s — much like the advancements during the rule of Porfirio Díaz (1876-1911) which “measur[ed] progress in physical terms” — attempted to demonstrate Mexico's status as a modern nation (Buffington and French 416).

Significantly, this modernization in the 19th and 20th centuries that bolstered Mexico's national image had much to do with foreign investment, particularly from US and European nations who brought the railroads, locomotives, and other transport infrastructure. Donald Hodges and Ross Gandy explain the extent to which foreigners controlled this transport technology:

American- and British-owned railways led north into the United States or to Veracruz (toward Europe); on the trains US conductors, firemen, and engineers worked; American managers pumped the profits out of the country and spent their own exceptional salaries back home; the official language of the railway, spoken on trains and in offices, was English. (15)

This economic and political foreign involvement in the rail system is central to several cultural productions from Mexico, including Emilio Carballido's play, *Yo también hablo de la rosa*, and his novella, *El tren que corría*. More recently Elena Poniatowska's historical novel, *El tren pasa primero* (2006), considers the strikes by railroad workers for better wages.

US involvement in Mexican transport returned in a more direct way with the signing of the North Atlantic Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) in 1994. Before this agreement, Mexican law prohibited international land transport from entering into Mexico, thus requiring all goods from the US be transloaded at the border. In recent years, the laws have changed and US based companies are free to transport goods into Mexico (Maxfield and Shapiro 111-12). However, Mexican freight may enter the US only up to 25 miles and stringent restrictions have made it difficult for many to enter, increasing the unequal power dynamic between the nations.⁷

In addition to national identity, issues of race, class, and gender come to the forefront when considering mobility. Public transportation is officially available to all in Mexico, nevertheless, many struggle to pay fares to and from the city for work on city run metro and public buses (*Metrobus* and *Microbus*) and privately owned smaller buses called *peseros*. Public buses and subway cars also have become a concern for women who experience harassment and even physical and sexual assault in these crowded public vehicles, as the recent play *Ellas a bordo* (2010), staged in the Trolébus Escénico in Colonia Condesa, Mexico City elucidates. In response to this harassment and violence, the government of Mexico City launched a program of buses exclusively for women in 2008 called *Atenea*, after Athena, the Greek goddess of wisdom, strategy, and just war. Other large public buses, *Metrobuses*, are divided into two sections so that women and children sit or stand in the forward part, and men in the back. Additionally, both Mexico City and Puebla offer a fleet of taxis painted hot pink with service for women and children. Puebla's fleet began in 2009 and the capital city's in 2010. Many women who fear harassment and assault in the close spaces of public transport feel more comfortable

surrounded by those of their same gender; these women celebrate the changes (Lacey). However, feminists critique the taxis in their stereotypical use of pink as well as gendered features of these vehicles, such as beauty kits in the back seat. They also suggest that the change to segregated transportation is a mere band-aid on the larger societal issues of gender inequality and violence (“Mexico’s Pink Taxis”).

The ways that gender intersects with mobility is also an issue for Chicanas/os. Lowriding culture, although a symbol of ethnic pride, is one dominated by men. Amy Best notes, for example, that in magazines like *Lowrider* and *Street Truck* “women are rarely featured behind the wheel but can be regularly found draped across the hood of a car, usually wearing very little” (58). In 1979, when *Lowrider* magazine began placing women on the cover from the perspective of the male gaze, a debate that has lasted over twenty years began. Nevertheless, as Sandoval explains, the models increased sales by 15 to 20 percent, and the company has yet to change its practices (186-87). These popular magazines point to larger societal ideas including beliefs about who might have access to mobility, as can be seen works like in Amparo Escandón’s *González and Daughter Trucking Co.*, as the book’s title suggests.

In this context of limitations on geographic mobility because of gender, nationality, economics, and social class, my analysis of cultural production points to the ways people use small maneuvers — such as the creative use of voice — to maintain a sense of autonomy in daily life and to contest systems of injustice. In other words, I suggest that these contemporary Mexican-American/Chicano novels and plays offer the creative voice as an alternate mode of movement when geographic movements are not possible. Michel de Certeau’s concept of tactics in *The Practice of Everyday Life* is

useful in describing these creative deployments of the people to keep a sense of control and autonomy. For de Certeau, tactics are quotidian actions, such as walking through the city, telling stories, cooking, or even believing religiously. In his analysis, which grows out of studies of popular culture, de Certeau suggests that the strong control spaces through what he terms “strategies.” Within these spaces, other members of society, “the weak,” find countless ways of maneuvering to create better experiences for themselves. Given de Certeau’s division of the weak and the strong, it is important to note that de Certeau’s weak are not limited to minority groups because these power relations are played out in many ways. Thus, tactics are available to those in the middle or upper classes as well as those who lack social and economic power — as is the case for those upper-middle and middle class Mexican citizens in Salcedo’s and Carballido’s works analyzed in chapters 1 and 3.

These small actions often require creativity in working within the spaces and with the available materials of the strong. Thus de Certeau describes these actions as “poetic ways of ‘making do’ (*bricolage*)” and “clever tricks” that allow the weak to keep some kind of autonomy within a dominated space and that reverse the relationships of power (40, 23). Along with the tactics de Certeau cites, the various creative deployments of voice — singing, reciting poems, protesting, storytelling — analyzed in contemporary Mexican-American/Chicano cultural productions could be considered tactics for those with few other resources. Code-switching could be considered a tactic, for example, because of the ways people move between languages, choosing a certain language to better express themselves or to persuade their listener.

What is crucial for this study on mobility is the way that this interplay of strategies and tactics depends upon *movements* within dominated spaces. Cresswell, commenting on de Certeau, highlights the importance of mobility in these maneuvers of the weak:

The strong depend on the certainty of mapping. The weak, on the other hand, are left with furtive movement to contest the territorialization of urban space. The cunning of the nomadic allows pedestrians to take short cuts, to tell stories through the routes they choose. These *tactics* refuse the neat divisions and classification of the powerful and, in doing so, critique the spatialization of domination. Thus, the ordinary activities of every day life, such as walking in the city, become acts of heroic everyday resistance. The nomad is the hero(ine). (“Imagining the Nomad” 362-63)

Through their tactical movements in dominated geographies, the weak demonstrate their power and resist complete control. de Certeau’s conception of tactics, as Cresswell signals, functions both in tangible ways, like walking through the city, and verbal ways, like telling stories. To take this connection further, voice might function as an alternate form of movement — deployed in lieu of physical movements. This conception of tactics is valuable particularly for this study because of the ways de Certeau considers small actions in every day life as highly political (xvii). In this way, the weak maintain a certain amount of power in the land of the strong, which is of utmost importance for migrants and other people whose physical movements are limited or coerced.

The everyday ways that the weak resist the strong also have been of great interest to scholars like James C. Scott in the field of anthropology. In *Weapons of the Weak*:

Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance Scott analyzes how subordinate classes work within oppressive systems when not “afforded the luxury of open, organized, political activity” (xv). Drawing on his experiences in a Malaysian village in South East Asia, Scott notes that the peasant class struggled daily to retain autonomy through the uses of “ordinary weapons” such as: “foot dragging, dissimulation, desertion, false compliance, pilfering, feigned ignorance, slander, arson, sabotage, and so on” (xvi). Small actions, these everyday forms of resistance, together signal how the weak could avoid completely bowing to the strong. In many cases the issues at stake were not only financial but also “a struggle over the appropriation of symbols, a struggle over the how the past and present shall be understood and labeled, a struggle to identify causes and assess blame, a contentious effort to give partisan meaning to local history” (xvii). Given that many of the marginalized — especially undocumented migrants or exploited farmworkers — are not able to act directly for fear of deportation or bodily harm, these small actions provide them with tools for maintaining a certain control over their selves and their experiences.

In *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* Scott looks specifically at the role of voice in resistance in his chapter, “Voice Under Domination: The Arts in Political Disguise.” Rather than understanding domination in terms of space like de Certeau, Scott considers how oppression plays out in the interactions between subordinate groups and their oppressors. He centers on discourse and the two primary ways it functions: public transcripts (the open, visible interactions between the dominator and the oppressed) and hidden transcripts (critiques of the dominator or actions against him that take place “offstage”).⁸ What is key to this study is the way that Scott signals the use of small actions as ways of maintaining power for those with little control over their

movements or lives. In his discussion on voice, Scott underscores the many clever ways it can be utilized as a way of resisting oppression. This resistance might appear in the use of gossip, rumor, euphemisms, or grumbling. An employee, for example, might gossip about her boss with the desire to ruin his reputation. Scott suggests this seemingly minimal action of gossip as “the linguistic equivalent and forerunner to witchcraft” as it has as its core the desire for the other person’s downfall (143). Many of these linguistic weapons function so well because they rely on anonymity. That is, it would be hard for the boss to know who started the rumor. Or in another example, it is hard to know how to stop the hollering and rapping of hundreds of inmates on prison walls (152). Although mass punishments may be used in prisons and individuals may still be signaled out, such tactics may provide safety to some of the participants. This protection increases the efficacy of the weapons and their ability to function long term. This anonymity is crucial in the marches of El Teatro Campesino considered in chapter 4, as well as recent immigration marches, in which remaining anonymous can serve as a protective shield.

Another way that subordinate groups use voice as a tactic is through storytelling, among other forms of popular culture such as ritual, dance, drama, dress, folktales, and religious beliefs (Scott 157). In telling stories, the teller imagines an eventual reversal of power and exerts a symbolic control over his and his community’s life and experiences. For example, many times those in power will be excluded from the story and cast in a poor light. As Scott explains, these inversions, in addition to reversing power relations, “play an important imaginative function, even if they accomplish nothing else. They do, at least at the level of thought, create an imaginative breathing space in which the normal categories of order and hierarchy are less that completely inevitable” (168). This

“imaginative breathing space,” then, might work as a pressure release valve for the teller and community which allows them to withstand various abuses. This, of course, can be positive for the powers that be as well. In *El viaje de los cantores* by Salcedo, when the men find themselves trapped inside a boxcar on their journey from Mexico to the US, El Chayo, one of the central characters in the play, sings *rancheras*. These familiar songs are loved by his fellow passengers and help to preserve their sanity in the dire circumstances of extreme heat, physical proximity, and darkness they must endure. In singing “El Rey” by José Alfredo Jiménez, the men re-envision themselves as powerful kings of the road, much like the poetic voice, rather than a group of poor, dying migrants. Story thus becomes a powerful tool available to the marginalized for reversing, albeit temporarily, the power dynamic in their everyday interactions.

To keep from being punished for these kinds of power reversals, which may recall Bakhtin’s carinvalesque,⁹ the marginalized again utilize the anonymity inherent in oral culture. While stories are told repeatedly across geographic and generational lines, the multiplicity of versions and authors provides what Scott terms a “protective cover” (161) for the teller. The lack of a specific author and a written document historically have been reason for devaluing oral traditions. However, Scott underscores the power which comes through the disguise offered by orality: “For good reason, nothing is entirely straightforward here; the realities of power for subordinate groups mean that much of their political action requires interpretation precisely because it is intended to be cryptic and opaque” (137). By remaining enigmatic, marginalized groups avoid retaliation and also enjoy a sense of power by choosing to hold on to their narratives, as Doris Sommer suggests in *Proceed with Caution, When Engaged by Minority Writing in the Americas*.

By not disclosing certain stories to outsiders, Sommer explains, oppressed people maintain power over their stories and by extension their lives.

When considering the role of voice in creating alternate movement, it is imperative to remember the connection of voice with the body. Other parts of the body are engaged in these performative actions to go places with words: speaking requires breathing and producing sound with the vocal cords, storytelling necessitates gesture, and protesting calls for movements of the entire body. In this way, voice and body function together to induce a sense of movement (physical, emotional, and political). Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* stresses the role of voice and body in resisting political, social, and economic forces. By considering those who have been "deprived of their voice" because of illiteracy, poverty, and lack of representation in society, Freire offers a new model of education as an instrument of liberation in which students and instructors are encouraged to reflect critically on the educational process (50). Through this critical reflection paired with action, what Freire calls *praxis*, people are able to "simultaneously create history and become historical-social beings," in other words, have a voice in their own lives and societies (101).

Agosto Boal, following the ideas of Freire, urges the use of the creative voice and action in theater in *Theatre of the Oppressed*. For Boal, ruling classes traditionally have used illiteracy and theater and weapons for controlling subordinated classes. However, Boal attempts to show that while theater has been used as weapon of the strong, it "can also be a weapon for liberation" (ix). In the last section of his book titled "Poetics of the Oppressed" Boal offers various exercises drawn from his work in Latin American communities which are useful in helping subordinated people find their voices. He

explains that there are four steps for “transforming the spectator into actor,” including: 1) knowing the body (exercises emphasizing “social distortions and possibilities”), 2) making the body expressive (games to encourage expression), 3) theater as language (exercises to see theater as part of the present in which spectators can intervene, instead of the past), 4) theater as discourse (spectator-actors create spectacles) (126). The first two steps focus on helping people to become more comfortable when using the body performatively while the second two center on the use of voice along with body. In one of the exercises from step 3, theater as language, the actors in a play stop in the middle of a performance to ask spectators for their solutions to a problem (132). This valuing of voice encourages all spectators to see themselves as actors in the plays they are viewing, and more broadly in the play of life. By asking spectators for their ideas, this kind of theater emphasizes the need for creativity and improvisation in the every day.

Boal bridges this gap between theater and everyday life in other exercises by encouraging peasant-actors to stage spectacles outside of the theater. For example, peasant-actors visit a restaurant and after one finishes his meal he says he would like to pay with labor-power as he has no money. This spectacle publicly draws attention to the discontinuity between the wages of the workers and the cost of the meal and provides a way for the marginalized to have a voice, literally and figuratively, in society (146-47). What is significant for this study is the value Boal places on voice as a tactic for dealing with limiting social situations. Through Boal’s techniques, peasant-actors move from a position of spectator to actor. They then utilize their voices and actions for change, influencing their social situations. In Boal’s words, “*The poetics of the oppressed* is essentially the poetics of liberation: the spectator no longer delegates power to the

characters either to think or to act in his place. The spectator frees himself; he thinks and acts for himself! Theatre is action!” (135).

These theorists’ discussions of resistance via daily actions provide the groundwork for the present study. The cultural productions analyzed, however, do more than highlight the availability of tactics to marginalized people whose mobility is limited or coerced. These Mexican and Mexican-American/Chicano cultural productions signal the power of the creative voice, a kind of tactic, to *move* emotionally when geographic movement is not possible — both to better the immediate situation and to move against larger systems of injustice. That is, language becomes a way of moving — a kind of *doing* — rather than functioning merely in a descriptive capacity.

To explain how language works to move or do, it will be useful to draw on studies of performative language. J. L. Austin, as a speaker in the William James Lectures at Harvard University in 1955, first questioned the traditionally held notion of language as merely descriptive. Austin posited that in certain situations language moves beyond describing, rather — it *does*. He divided language into two categories, designating language that describes as “constative,” and language that acts in situations such as in a marriage ceremony (“I do”), the naming of a ship, or a will, as “performative” (5). These oft-cited examples of performative language, along with others, later became known as a “speech acts” or “performatives,” again emphasizing the ways in which language works beyond mimetic ends. Unlike constative language, performative language does not describe or report. Neither can it be marked as true or false. Rather, a performative utterance does or is a key part of doing an action (5).¹⁰ John Searle’s “What is a Speech Act?” (1965) develops Austin’s idea of performative language by offering a case study

on the act of promising, thus demonstrating how Austin's idea of performative language can be used in analyzing language.¹¹ What is useful about these ideas about performative language is the notion that language has the potential to *do* and not merely describe. In the cultural productions analyzed, many of the deployments of creative language *do*. They function to take the characters to another emotional space when they cannot move to those spaces physically. Although Austin and Searle do not suggest language specifically as an alternate movement, as I do, their recognition of the possibilities of language as action proves a useful base for this study.

Judith Butler similarly draws on earlier work on performative language by Austin, Searle, and Derrida¹² in *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative* to demonstrate the ways that language has the power to *do*, and more precisely to do violence. In her study Butler looks at how language functions as violence in hate speech, torture, and military policies that make declaring homosexual orientation a punishable act. Utilizing African-American author Toni Morrison's stories and anecdotes in which language is considered as a living thing, Butler reinforces how language can do more than describe. Butler explains: "Oppressive language is not a substitute for the experience of violence. It enacts its own kind of violence" (9). This verbal violence may occur, for example, in a threat of bodily harm where the victim is "assaulted" through the use of language. The power of language for Butler comes from the interconnection of language and being: "Could language injure us if we were not, in some sense, linguistic beings, beings who require language in order to be?" (2) as well as the interconnection of language and the body: "speaking itself is a bodily act" (9). Butler's insistence on language as an act — *doing* rather than representing —, her emphasis on the inseparable relationship between

speech and the body, and her acknowledgement that language can be a weapon offer the groundwork for understanding the possibilities of language for inducing movement.

Most scholars like Austin and Searle understand performative language as occurring in real-time speech situations. However, others, like Mary Louise Pratt in *Toward a Speech Act Theory of Literary Discourse*, extend these ideas to show how performative language occurs in the context of literary works.¹³ In this way she attempts to unify the idea of language (traditionally divided into literary and non-literary) by demonstrating how the performative functions in both real time and literary discourse. One of the key points she makes is that literature is not autonomous but occurs as part of human experience much like other forms of language. Rather than seeing literary language as a different kind of language, then, Pratt notes that it must be seen as having a different use (xii). It is for this reason that she highlights the need for a “unified theory of discourse which allows us to talk about literature in the same way we talk about other things people do with language” (vii).

Pratt approaches speech acts in literature by analyzing the way that readers and texts interact in creating a kind of “literary speech situation” (*Toward* 100). She notes that this interaction may on surface level appear to vary greatly from other kinds of real time speech act situations. However, through her analysis she seeks to show this is not the case. In explaining how reading a literary text is a kind of speech act situation, Pratt posits readers (receivers of the speech act) as committing themselves to “the role of narrative audience” (100). Unlike real time speech acts where receivers often engage verbally and continually with the speaker, readers temporarily suspend their dialogue with the text only to later pass judgment (109). This may be through comments to the

author, to a friend or colleague about the text, in purchasing or not future texts by the same author. Pratt suggests that this kind of speech situation occurs in all texts and in this way all texts can be considered a part of language a large and likewise performative. *González and Daughter* points to this kind of interaction with narrative through the prison audience's engagement with Libertad's storytelling. While this interaction with a narrative occurs within a novel, it suggests the kinds of interactions that readers, too, would experience with a text.

While it is not my intention to argue that all language deployed in the cultural productions of this study are examples of performative language, I draw on these ideas to demonstrate the possibilities of doing with language. Each of the aforementioned theorists points to how voice is deployed as a tactic for dealing with challenging circumstances. For de Certeau, telling stories or jokes can be a strategic way of retaining power and for Scott it is a tool for evading submission to the strong in everyday life. Freire and Boal, in their work for social activism, underscore the centrality of voice as part of the body for personal and social change. In their focus on the deployment of language, Austin, Searle, Butler, and Pratt signal the power of voice to *do*, and not merely describe. By weaving these ideas together I show how language can function as a tactic for doing — that words become ways of moving to distinct emotional realities and critiquing unjust systems.

Specifically, I argue that the cultural productions in this study exemplify the power of creative language as a vehicle for going places, especially when the physical journey is not possible. What voice does in these situations, then, is to facilitate a kind of emotional journey to another desired place in the mind and heart. These tactical uses of

voice through such creative ways as protesting, singing, reciting poems, storytelling, code-switching, performing a parody, or otherwise deploying language performatively, demonstrate how voice might be used as an alternate form of agentive mobility. I argue that this agentive linguistic mobility is transnational, as the cultural productions in this study demonstrate the power of voice to move across national borders — or other kinds of social and economic borders. Additionally, by transnational I signal how cultural productions from both Mexico and Mexican-American communities in the US deploy voice, thus suggesting the availability of voice to people regardless of national origin.

There are many possibilities for how voice can provide alternate movement. Each of these relies on the creativity of the person who deploys them. This artistic use of language may come through the process of penning poems or songs, inventing stories or games, moving cleverly between linguistic codes, or protesting along a picket line with an invented slogan. In each case the person involves herself in the creative process through original authorship or appropriation of the linguistic and cultural signs of another. Appropriation, as Linda Hutcheon notes, is always “a creative *and* an interpretive act” (*A Theory of Adaptation* 8, emphasis in original). In this creative salvaging and repurposing of earlier images, texts, or performances, a kind of palimpsest is formed which allows for distinct interpretations by receptors.

Significant power can come through this process of appropriation and reconfiguring. In one brief example, El Teatro Campesino utilized the image of La Virgen de Guadalupe, marching under her banner for farmworker rights, and singing the popular religious song from the *cursillo* movement, “De colores.” Through repurposing this iconic Catholic figure and song, the farmworkers suggested that La Virgen and God

were on their side, putting Anglo-Catholics in a challenging position (Stavans, *César Chávez* 61). This kind of bricolage or creative repurposing within the territory of the powerful makes the actions of the small highly political. As Kelly Oliver explains in “What is Transformative about the Performative?,” the strength of such acts comes though displaying the underlying processes or systems (176). In using religious discourse performatively, the farmworkers not only gained the protective cover of religion but also uncovered how religion might function as a form of control (and could function, too, as a way to liberation).

I have chosen to focus on cultural productions from the 1960s to the present because of the technological developments and increased use of vehicular technology during this time and the more pronounced social movements beginning in this decade, many of which center on the use of voice. Doing so also allows me to discuss different modes of transportation, such as rail and automobile travel. I have chosen to utilize cultural productions by contemporary Mexican and Mexican-American/Chicano authors to demonstrate how this issue of complicated mobility geographically, thematically, and theoretically crosses the US/Mexico border. This is not to say that issues of mobility are the same for Mexicans and Mexican-Americans, but rather that these issues of class, gender, economics, and nationality come into play on both sides. The first two chapters center on deployments of voice through the use of music, poetry, code-switching, and storytelling to move characters to a distinct and better emotional place. The second two chapters understand the role of voice more broadly in the move against injustice by considering the use of orality and parody in critiquing national narratives of progress and the development of the artist in the farmworker movement. In each of the chapters,

creative language is used as a form of agentive movement to better one's one life and the lives of the community.

Chapter 1 considers the tactical use of music and poetry to create a kind of movement through song (what I call "melodic mobility") in the plays, *El viaje de los cantores* and *Sinfonía en una botella*, by northern Mexican playwright Hugo Salcedo. In *El viaje*, based on the historical event of 18 male migrants who died from asphyxiation after being locked in a boxcar on their journey to the US, the men use their voices to sing *rancheras*, thereby transporting themselves to their homeland. This chapter also looks at the role of voice as a way of moving across geographic lines to be with loved ones who may have died, as the chorus of women illuminate. It also signals the use of voice as a call to action in religious circles, and thus touches on the larger implications of "having a voice" in society. The analysis of *Sinfonía* also looks at the use of music and poetry but in the lives of upper-middle class Mexican citizens who attempt to cross the border from Tijuana to San Ysidro in four distinct automobiles, only to find themselves stuck in gridlock traffic. Rather than using their own voices, the characters in this play utilize music on the radio or the cassette players in their vehicles or poems written by others as a way of managing their frustrating quotidian experience of waiting in long lines at the border crossing.

Chapter 2 centers on what I call "narrative motion," the strategic use of language via code-switching and storytelling, as a way of evading class, ethnicity, and gender limitations in Mexican-American/Chicano communities. Chicano playwright Carlos Morton's *Johnny Tenorio* presents a Don Juan *a lo Chicano* who takes a Greyhound to the north rather than a lowrider to Mexico City like his friend, Louie. Despite the

limitations placed on his geographic and cultural mobility, Johnny uses language strategically, following earlier Don Juans to attract women and to navigate himself in a country where he is not always welcomed by the dominant culture, in large part because of his race, class, and economic situation. Unlike earlier Don Juans, however, his linguistic mobility evidences itself in his strategic code-switching between Spanish and English. In María Amparo Escandón's *González and Daughter Trucking Co.* the protagonist, Libertad, a female truck driver, utilizes storytelling as a tactic to move herself and her fellow inmates at the Mexicali Penal Institute for Women beyond the prison walls. In addition to issues of ethnicity and social class, this chapter also discusses how mobility is gendered in Chicano communities. From there, it considers how story might function as a liberating tactic in working within gendered cultural systems.

Chapter 3 underscores the use of voice — particularly orality and parody — for critiquing the national narrative of progress in two works on the Mexican railroad by Emilio Carballido. After demonstrating that the train in Carballido's play *Yo también hablo de la rosa* and novella *El tren que corría* might stand in for a national narrative of modernization and progress, I signal how indigent and middle class characters derail this narrative that has left them behind via voice. In the play, the use of orality by a medium questions the exclusion and exploitation of Mexico's indigenous and impoverished and underscores the need for an alternate narrative. In Carballido's novella, *El tren que corría*, middle-class passengers are left behind by a passenger train and take a taxi through the night to Monterrey. Through the use of parody by a speechwriter and an actress, the novella signals the way Mexico continues to value foreigners over its own people as it follows a narrative of progress; it also underscores the role of voice in

symbolically derailing this national narrative.

Chapter 4 looks at the need for the artist's voice in the larger movement for Chicana/o farmworker rights. Beginning with El Teatro Campesino's marches under the banner of La Virgen de Guadalupe, their use of short political plays or *Actos* (1971) in which flat bed trucks were converted frequently into stages, and other uses of art, this chapter demonstrates the centrality of artist figures in the movement. Tomás Rivera's foundational novella ... *y no se lo tragó la tierra* and Helena María Viramontes's novel *Under the Feet of Jesus* reinforce this need for artist figures in the farmworker movement in their use of the *künstlerroman* or artist's novel genre. The development of the artist in each points to the role of an artist-activist in communities where coerced mobility pervades. Cars are blessed by the priest for a fee for his own vacation fund in Rivera's novella, while the only use for the flatbed trucks in Viramontes's novel becomes a shelter from the heat. In these frustrating circumstances, the artist-activist protagonists continually use thought, voice, and action in the movement for justice.

This study identifies similar thematic concerns of limited and coerced mobility over the past several decades and the ways social class, gender, nationality, economics, and ethnicity intersect with mobility. Each cultural production offers an alternate agentive mobility through the use of the creative voice; through singing, penning poems, or otherwise using voice that the characters move from a passive to an active position. In the social sciences, agency refers to the ability of people to act independently and to make their own free choices. Psychologist Albert Bandura suggests that people can be "agentic operators" in their lives "when they act on the environment" around them (5). This agency often comes through strategic thinking and the deployment of some kind of action

in the context of the environment. While speaking may not change one's experience — most of the men still die in the boxcar in *El viaje*, for example — it shifts the power dynamics. Through language the men choose how they will understand their experience and thus alter their reality. The creative voice becomes the tool of action, allowing the characters to move beyond their limiting circumstances; through this linguistic “going places” the characters become agents in their lives.

In valuing creative language, this study signals the power and agency available to all people, especially the marginalized, in everyday life. Echoing Diana Taylor's insistence on the importance of what she calls “the repertoire,” forms of embodied memory, “performances, gestures, orality, movement, dance, singing — in short, all those acts usually thought of as ephemeral, nonreproducible knowledge” (*The Archive* 20),¹⁴ it is precisely these kinds of vocal deployments that contemporary Mexican and Mexican-American/Chicano cultural productions offer as viable options for those who do not possess the same freedom of movement.

While people are moving around the world more frequently and more quickly, as Urry signals, not all movements share the same kinds of freedom and comfort. By signaling the creative voice as a kind of alternate movement, my analysis of these novels and plays insists on the location of agency in the human body, available to all people. In another way, it signals that linguistic mobility connotes the larger issues of having a voice in society. Given that these voices are often the most muffled by the shouts of the strong, the tactics of voice are invaluable to the marginalized. That is to say, the weak, too, might climb fences, if only with words.

Chapter 1

Turn Up the Volume and Sing Along: Geographic and Melodic Mobility in *El viaje de los cantores* and *Sinfonía en una botella*

Along the US/Mexico border, drivers wait in endless lines, frustrated by the slow movement toward US border checkpoints. Nearby, migrants find themselves trapped in boxcars, hoping to hear the rumble of the train continuing on its journey northward. In other parts of the city, migrants wait patiently for nightfall before they make the swim or literally climb fences to a “better life.” Tragically, these scenes have become quotidian occurrences, and while the latter are more heartrending than the first, each speaks to the ways in which human mobility is limited by geo-political borders and further complicated by issues of nationality, race, gender, economics, and social class. Confronted with these daily realities of inhibited human mobility along the US/Mexico border, this chapter centers on dramatic representations of the creative use of voice — primarily through music and poetry — as vehicles for moving to an alternate emotional space when few options for physical movement remain. I term this tactical (although sometimes unconscious) use of music and poetry “melodic mobility,” thus emphasizing that the use of voice becomes a medium through which humans are able to travel to another space, albeit with their minds and emotions. This concept is especially important — as the dramatic works *El viaje de los cantores* (1990) and *Sinfonía en una botella* (1990) by Northern Mexican playwright Hugo Salcedo reveal — because it underscores the role of human creativity in maintaining agency in daily life and dire circumstances, particularly when geographic mobility is restricted or coerced. In this way, melodic mobility encompasses both the deployment of poetry or song to move emotionally as well as the broader implications of having a voice, speaking up for oneself, and maintaining control

over one's body and life to the extent that this is possible.

In a study of *El viaje de los cantores*, *Arde el desierto con los vientos que llegan al sur*,¹⁵ and *Sinfonía en una botella*, the trilogy of Salcedo's plays published in a single tome in 1990, Peter Beardsell notes the common theme of migration to the north, "which has developed from its economic basis into a form of cultural mythology" ("Crossing" 72). Indeed, the plays all treat distinct forms of movement to the US by Mexican citizens of varying social classes. In *El viaje*, based on factual events published in a news article in *La Jornada* on Friday, July 3, 1987, 19 poor migrants from Ojo Caliente, Mexico attempt to cross the border in a railcar in search of work. The journey, however, is unsuccessful; the boxcar door jams and all but one survivor die from asphyxiation. *Sinfonía* similarly treats a case of border crossing and centers on middle class Mexicans waiting in their vehicles to pass through at the Tijuana/San Ysidro crossing. With their minds on shopping, work, and visits with family in California, they find themselves stuck in long lines of traffic only to hear that the checkpoint has been temporarily closed. Considered in tandem *El viaje* and *Sinfonía* treat the issue of movement from Mexico to the US, but more accurately, the plays treat *challenged* movements. They underscore the characters' (im)mobile experiences as frustrating, and in some cases tragic and impossible. The plays likewise signal how both Mexicans of the middle class as well as those who migrate north because of their economic challenges find their mobility impeded. Yet, the plays do not leave their characters without agency. Given the impossibility of physical movement in varying degrees, my analysis of *El viaje* and *Sinfonía* underscores music and poetry as another kind of mobility available to geographically bound characters in each distinct case.

Significant for this study, scholars have noted music and poetry as an overarching theme in *El viaje* and *Sinfonía*. Beardsell relates the incorporation of diverse forms of music in *Sinfonía* to globalization, whereas in *El viaje* he understands the men's songs as a mere "diversion from tragedy" ("Crossing" 78). Priscilla Meléndez offers a more complex interpretation by highlighting the roles of the *cantores* (the singers) and El Chayo, a self-made poet, in the group of migrants, as suggestive of the tension between the literal and the metaphoric in *El viaje* ("The Body" 10, 13).¹⁶ In still another way, the playwright suggests that the incorporation of music in *El viaje* constitutes "[una] expresión vital de reafirmación, de identidad [mexicana]" ("Literatura fronteriza" 224). While these interpretations signal a range of possible meanings on the themes of migration and music, they do not consider geographic and melodic movement as interconnected in the plays.

Yet one cannot help but recognize the relationship between both themes (travel and voice), woven together in the very titles of the dramatic works: *El viaje de los cantores* and *Sinfonía en una botella*.¹⁷ The plays seem to make use of the disparate ideas of geographic movement and music/poetry in order to demonstrate how the creative voice becomes a medium for movement, especially when physical movement is not possible. In positing melodic mobility as a kind of tactic — a term popularized by Michel de Certeau, as outlined in my introduction — for those who may not be able to move geographically in the ways they desire, the dramatic works offer practical resources helpful for negotiating limiting circumstances and keeping calm in times of crisis. This tactic proves especially useful along the US/Mexico border where power dynamics of geographic movement are played out daily in the arrest and detention of suspected crossers by US

Border Patrol and in the patrolling of the region by controversial non-governmental groups like the Minutemen. If de Certeau's adage, "what the map cuts up, the story cuts across" (129), rings true in this case, then creative language constitutes a kind of movement that cannot be limited by geo-political borders, among other factors. This tool is available to distinct Mexican social classes in the border region — a social reality reflected in plays like *El viaje* and *Sinfonía*. Indeed, both economically challenged migrants and middle class citizens utilize music and poetry as a vehicle for movement, although the mediums and ways of using them vary. Thus, in addition to analyzing the presence and functions of melodic mobility in the plays, this chapter underscores the socio-economic heterogeneity of the US/Mexico border region as well as the commonalities of Mexican social classes in their uses of music and poetry.

According to de Certeau in *The Practice of Everyday Life*, a tactic is a "calculated action" (37) that the weak use within the dominant cultural economy. Tactics can be found in the ways humans utilize space, tell stories, make jokes, and believe religiously.¹⁸ These can be as subtle as the way in which a person walks to work, going against the trajectory the city sidewalks have laid out for him. Albeit in small ways, tactics offer a sense of control over circumstances and provide the means of resisting conformity to the will of those in power. As this quotidian nature of tactics signals, de Certeau's work grows out of research on popular culture and marginal groups.

In his study de Certeau posits that humans operate within systems, much like the linguistic system analyzed by Noam Chomsky on which much of de Certeau's theories are based (xii-xiii). The primary actions that take place within these systems are tactics and strategies. According to Michael Gardiner, de Certeau's tactics are deployed by the

weak while strategies “seek to colonize a visible, specific space that will serve as a ‘home base’ for the exercise of power and domination, in order to ‘delimit one’s place in a world bewitched by the powers of the Other’” (172). Gardiner clarifies that for de Certeau “the Others” are those in power. It is thus that while strategies control space, tactics utilize time — manipulating the system for their own benefit. In other words, they are “clever tricks of the ‘weak’ within the order established by the ‘strong’” (40). Via tactics the weak are able to temporarily gain a certain kind of control or domain despite their context.

This marginality, what de Certeau calls the “weak,” does not apply only to minority groups, but rather is widespread and functions on many levels. Nevertheless, this does not mean that the weak are a homogenous group (xvii). Widespread marginality is in large part due to the advent of consumer culture in which humans are principally understood as users of products rather than in other metaphysical or biological ways. For de Certeau consumers are never passive victims, but rather they find creative ways of taking advantage of or making do within these marketing structures (xv). Culture thus develops in “an atmosphere of tensions” (xvii) in which tactics — whether poetic, aggressive, or somewhere in between — are consistently deployed in response to strategies.

De Certeau’s understanding of tactics is significant because it signals the political nature of small actions in every day life that are often disregarded by those in power. He thus complicates the idea of a society in which one group singularly controls another, and instead emphasizes how the weak are ever utilizing the system to their own ends. Power relations, according to de Certeau, are more dialogic in nature, and thus small maneuvers

are highly political and constitute part of the interchange with the strong. In his words, “the ingenious ways in which the weak make use of the strong, thus lend a political dimension to everyday practices” (xvii). It is in and through small maneuvers that the weak enjoy moments of power, even while in the strong’s territory.

For this study in particular de Certeau’s conception of the relationship between strategies and space is crucial, given the context of the US/Mexico border region. In the 1990s and 2000s, the time in which the plays were written and staged, the 1,951-mile line became increasingly militarized by US Border Patrol and at the same time experienced the violence and extra-official control of Mexican drug cartels. In this space, deploying tactics becomes a way for the weak to manage challenging circumstances and to maintain a sense of stability. In other words, although the weak do not control this space, their tactical actions offer ways of coping, surviving, and avoiding complete submission to the strong.

Although de Certeau does not mention music and poetry specifically in his analysis of tactics, it becomes apparent in *El viaje* and *Sinfonía* that the characters utilize the creative voice to provide themselves with ways of dealing with their overwhelming circumstances. As this chapter argues, through the tactical use of music and poetry the weak are able to move to another space, albeit emotionally. Despite their physical location in the US/Mexico border region controlled by political and extra-official powers, in this distinct emotional space they are able to maintain a sense of agency. As with other tactics, imagination utilized to keep some kind of autonomy is key. In the words of Gardiner, “[de] Certeau insists that the popular imagination is capable of creating and sustaining a ‘utopian space’ that resists total assimilation or incorporation, and within

which justice is done and the powerful de-throned, at least symbolically” (178). It is precisely this alternate emotional space at which the characters in *El viaje* and *Sinfonía* are able to arrive through their tactical use of music and poetry — that is, through melodic mobility.

Following de Certeau many other scholars have examined the ways people utilize music in everyday life. There are similarities between music and poetry as forms of rhythmic creative language; as such, these studies also are useful in understanding poetry and other forms of poetic language in the plays. Within the wide body of research on music and everyday life, this study focuses on the role of music in creating a sense of control over the body, of power, and of agency. It also examines how music constitutes a kind of movement that can carry people to other mental and emotional spaces.

Erin Clarke, Nicola Dibben, and Stephanie Pitts, in their study *Music and Mind in Everyday Life*, underscore the role of music in human psychology. According to the authors music serves four primary functions for humans: 1) ordering and organizing time, 2) representing and expressing values, 3) controlling and facilitating participation and observation, and 4) channeling and expressing emotions (1-2). The last two functions speak to the ways that music provides a sense of power and agency. According to the authors in their discussion of the third function, music “provide[s] an opportunity for people to participate in collective action that expresse[s] and embodie[s] a certain kind of solidarity and shared experience” (5). Thus, the feeling of power comes through a sense of community garnered in the act of making music. As the fourth function suggests, music offers a medium through which people can focus or channel strong emotions. In this way it serves a cathartic role (6). This is especially true when a person sings, rather

than merely listens to music, because of the physical actions which take place in singing:

The very act of singing involving deliberately deep breathing, the increased muscle tone associated with standing up, and the concentration required to follow the words and music, also bring together physiological and psychological phenomena commonly used to help people cope with, and overcome, strong negative emotions. (6)

By using the body in a more conscious way, a person who sings releases and/or can better handle strong feelings. This sense of control, which psychologists of music call entering into a “state of flow,” occurs when people narrow their attention from many things to fewer (80). A person may move from feeling tense, frustrated, and overwhelmed by many troubles to feeling relaxed and in control because of the way music, through its distinct beat, alters their breathing, heart rate, and pace of thought. Because of this intimate connection between music, the body, and the mind, psychologists and music therapists often utilize music as a tool for dealing with traumatic experiences, calming the mind, creating community, and even as a catalyst for helping groups identify their desires, imagine future possibilities, and move toward social action.¹⁹

Michael Bull, in *Sounding the City: Personal Stereos and the Management of Everyday Life*, also considers listening to music a practical aid for dealing with boredom, traffic, and other frustrating daily activities. However, Bull takes a sociological rather than a psychological approach in his analysis of how people in urban settings utilize music to manage quotidian experiences (19). According to Bull, music helps people in public urban landscapes, where the industrial sounds of the city dominate, in several distinct ways. By listening to a personal stereo people are “able to maintain a sense of

identity within an often impersonal environment,” thus transforming and personalizing public spaces (24). Bull highlights the connection between music and space, and that by selecting certain genres and songs listeners influence and change their space. For example, when listeners choose music from their childhood — and I might add homeland — in a foreign context it gives them “a heightened sense of well-being” (38) because they are moved mentally and emotionally to an alternate location via song. Such actions, often as small as turning on a radio in a traffic jam, elucidate how listeners find a sense of power and control through listening to music. They likewise experience a greater sense of agency as they choose how they live in their present moment.

In *Music in Everyday Life* Tia DeNora also explicitly connects music’s role in maintaining mood with the power it offers in daily life. According to DeNora, “[music] is implicated in every dimension of social agency” (17) including how people act, experience time, and feel about themselves, their peers, and their situations. For this reason, DeNora utilizes the metaphor of a vehicle in describing music; this vehicle can be “use[d] to move out of dispreferred states (such as stress or fatigue)” and utilized “to sketch aspired and partially imagined or felt states” (53). For DeNora, music understood as a vehicle facilitates internal movements — the subject of this study on melodic mobility.

In addition to providing a sense of control, power, and agency, scholars recognize music itself as a form of movement that in turn offers a sense of movement. Clarke, Dibben, and Smith signal the physical movements that are intrinsically part of making music: the breath, the vibrations of the vocal chords, the production of sound, as well as the frequent bodily movements of hand clapping, foot tapping, and dance that accompany

most songs. This combination of music and with bodily motion is present in all musical traditions, although how music creates a sense of moving emotionally is debated: “One view is that music’s ability to induce a sense of movement is purely symbolic or metaphorical, but an alternate is that the sense of movement comes through hearing in sound the movements of the performers, so that music creates a direct sense of virtual movement” (101).

Regardless of the reason that people move emotionally through music, Josh Kun in *Audiotopia: Music, Race, and America* proposes that music works as a conduit for moving people to alternate spaces, which he calls *audiotopias*. He suggests that “music functions like a possible utopia for the listener, that music is experienced not only as sound that goes into our ears but vibrates through our bones but as a space that we can enter into, encounter, move around in, inhabit, be safe in, learn from” (2). It is through the use of music, Kun suggests, that people can transport themselves internally to a different place. At the same time, music offers “new maps for re-imagining the present social world” (22). Thus, music not only becomes the medium for moving to a distinct place, but its after effects influence a person’s experience of his or her immediate surroundings.

Considering this research, melodic mobility — originally defined in this study as the tactical use of music and poetry to “move” to an alternate space with the mind and emotions — becomes a more complex term. It requires an understanding of the corporality of music. In other words, the production and consumption of music rely on the use of the body. These studies also show how music plays a key role in human psychology, in psychotherapy as well as in daily life, in the ways it aids people finding

greater satisfaction with their circumstances. Music allows people to travel to a distinct emotional place, and as they are changed, so too their experiences and perceptions of the current situation. The following sections on *El viaje de los cantores* and *Sinfonía en una botella* represent two case studies of how melodic mobility works as an option for those of distinct social classes who cannot move geographically because of geo-political borders and issues of economics, race, class, and gender.

El viaje de los cantores: Human Cargo or Ranchera Singers?

When considering mobility in *El viaje de los cantores* it is vital to remember how closely this play is tied to the socio-historic context of Northern Mexico along the US/Mexico border in which it was written and staged. Northern Mexican cities, such as Tijuana and Durango, experience the constant flow of migrants from other parts of Mexico as well as from Central America venturing North through their cities. Residents of this region undoubtedly would be aware of migrants in their midst as well as knowledgeable of the increase in border deaths in the 1990s and 2000s. A study by the Center for Immigration Research at the University of Houston estimates that the number of migrant deaths on the US/Mexico border exceeded 300 per year in the 1980s, peaking in 1988 at 355 (Eschbach 44), two years before the publication and staging of *El viaje*, which treats such tragic occurrences. This number of border deaths continued to increase in the late 1990s and 2000s, doubling in number from 1995 to 2005 without an equivalent increase in undocumented entries (United States Government Accountability Office).

Although the play is most recognized for its staging in 1990 with the Compañía Nacional de Teatro/INBA under the direction of Ángel Norzagaray and received

international recognition for its representations in Mexico,²⁰ Spain, and the United States,²¹ since that time many smaller independent theater groups in Northern Mexico have staged the dramatic work.²² While Salcedo mentions a “gira por la frontera norte del país” in the early 1990s, little information exists on these independent theater groups in Northern Mexico, their venues, and spectators (“Literatura” 227). Nevertheless, the play’s popularity in this region speaks to the cultural value of the piece and of its continued relevance to Mexican spectators who may find the tool of melodic mobility useful when they or others experience limited geographic movement in their region.

The playscript of *El viaje de los cantores* begins with an article from the Mexican newspaper *La Jornada* on Friday, July 3, 1987 announcing the death of 18 Mexicans who attempted to cross the US/Mexico border in a boxcar. According to the report, the boxcar was completely sealed, not allowing the entrance of air. All but one of the migrants died of asphyxiation; the sole survivor, Miguel Tostado Rodríguez, lived by cutting a small hole in the side of the train through which he could breathe. An immigrant smuggler sealed the compartment upon the men’s departure and apparently did not notice that the boxcar door was jammed (15). While the play originates from this historical account, many of the ten scenes include additional elements, such as the women left behind in Ojo Caliente, the smugglers who assist the men onto the boxcar, the Latino conductor of the train, other groups of migrants who plan to cross the border, and the Catholic priest of a church in Ojo Caliente. Beyond fleshing out the story with additional characters and details, the playwright adds another dramatic dimension by suggesting three options for its staging. The notes to the director indicate that the play can be represented in the order that it is printed, in chronological order following the dates and times of each scene, or

according to an order drawn at random before each representation with or without the aid of the audience (15-16).

As evidenced in the description of *El viaje*, the play highlights the migrants' lack of control over their geographic mobility, especially as they find themselves sealed in the boxcar of a powerful freight train. In this way the play juxtaposes the geographic mobility and characteristic power of the freight train (the strong) with the seemingly immobile and powerless position of the migrants (the weak). For spectators arriving at the play, this contrast is established in the set design in which boxcars dominate the visual landscape.²³ According to the design notes, "para un tratamiento realista, la escenografía deberá contar, al fondo, con uno de los vagones de la línea ferroviaria Missouri-Pacific, con un corte transversal, por donde se podrá observar lo que dentro de él sucede" (16).²⁴ The numerous scenes that take place along the rail line and in the boxcar also reinforce the train's mobility in comparison with the migrant's geographic immobility. Beardsell signals that the majority of the scenes, six of the ten, are set on the rail line leading from Mexico City into the United States. Two of the scenes (6 and 9) take place on the inside of the boxcar, while the others take place along the line (1, 2, 3, 8). Of those on the line, some occur south of the border in Ojo Caliente (2) and in Ciudad Juárez (1, 3), while another takes place in the United States (8) ("Distant Centre" 434-35). The movement for the train on both sides of the border further emphasizes its transnational freedom, and by extension, those companies that control the train's movements. This liberty of movement evokes the histories of US and European companies that have entered Latin American countries and have been granted or taken political power, often affecting the physical infrastructure as well as political and

economic systems over the last two centuries. Whereas the train has its origin in the central United States, and travels into Mexico without travail, the men in *El viaje* who venture north find themselves without an established route — they lack the political power and legal authority to move transnationally that others possess, and they must alter their path constantly to avoid capture.²⁵

The play, however, moves beyond a juxtaposition of powerless migrants and the strength of the freight train to articulate what happens when migrants attempt to appropriate²⁶ this mode of transport in order to cross the border. By traveling clandestinely in the boxcar, the migrants enjoy the train's physical power and its ability to traverse great spaces. They also benefit from on another facet of the train's strength, its transnational political freedom, as freight trains generally are able to move across geopolitical borders with relative ease while human movement is inhibited by the need for political documentation. This use of the train by undocumented migrants evokes the hijacking of trains during the Mexican Revolution by Pancho Villa and other revolutionaries,²⁷ who also fought for the freedom of the oppressed. It marks the men's limited mobility, at the same time emphasizing their resourcefulness in finding a way to travel north by whatever means necessary. However, even in this potentially subversive situation, in the end the migrants find themselves trapped by the train — ironically rendered immobile by a vehicle that represents political and geographic freedom.²⁸

At the end of scene 9, the realization of the entrapment sets in and El Timbón, one of the migrants, panics after the group tries to ignore their surroundings by competing to see who can remember the most cantina names in Mexico:

EL TIMBÓN. (*Estalla a gritos.*) ¡Ya! ¡Ya no aguanto más, ya no puedo,
ya no!

EL MIQUI. ¿Qué traes?

EL NOÉ. Agárrenlo.

EL TIMBÓN. Me voy a ahogar. Voy a morirme, me voy a morir.

EL CHAYO. Espérate.

EL MOSCO. Aguanta...

EL TIMBÓN. Me voy a morir. Aire por favor...aire...

EL MIQUI. ¡Ya estuvo! Abre esa puerta, Mosco. Ábrela.

EL MOSCO. Espérate un rato, nos van a agarrar a todos...

EL CHAYO. ¡A la madre! Abre esa puerta.

EL MOSCO. Nos van a agarrar a todos...

EL TIMBÓN. Aire...

EL NOÉ. Ayúdanos, Mosco. La puerta como que se atoró.

EL MOSCO. ¡Está atorada la puerta! ¡No se puede abrir!

EL MIQUI. (*Golpea las paredes.*) ¡Auxilio! ¡Sáquenlos de aquí!

EL MOSCO. ¡Está atorada! ¡Está atorada!

EL TIMBÓN. Me ahogo.... (44)

After El Timbón's last cry, the stage goes black; spectators understand that he, along with 17 others, die of asphyxiation. While the migrants attempt to appropriate the benefits of the train's freedom of movement and political power, the train — as if a character in the play — turns on their desires of appropriation and suffocates them. This scene illuminates the double immobilization of the men; while the fear of opening the door because of the

Border Patrol — a fear based on their lack of legal status in the US — keeps them locked within the boxcar, the jammed door (their physical entrapment) leads to their deaths.

Caroline Moorehead, in *Human Cargo*, begins her chapter on Mexican migrants with a quote by Adam Smith: “Man is, of all sorts of luggage, the most difficult to be transported” (71). Following Smith’s words, Moorehead’s study reveals the ways in which humans defy becoming cargo. Besides resisting physical containment, humans pose problems to smugglers in the physical needs (food, water, air, sanitation, and medical care) they require. In cases of human death during transport, smugglers are also faced with legal, economic, and ethical issues. In scene 3 of *El viaje*, some of the “ilegales,” to use Salcedo’s word, and El Gavilán Pollero, the smuggler who later assists them in crossing the border, discuss the venture. This scene reveals how the men are understood as cargo as well as their resistance to being contained:

EL CHAYO. ¿No decías que otro grupo también va a irse con nosotros?

EL GAVILÁN. Ah, sí. Son como unos cuatro o cinco más. Para que convenga hacer el viaje tiene que ser cerca de diez por lo menos.

EL CHAYO. ¿No somos muchos? Digo, por el espacio en el vagón.

EL MOSCO. Mira, eso es si quieres. A nadie se le obliga. Ya se nos agotaron los boletos Pullman y de Primera Especial. (26)

While El Chayo fears enclosure with too many others on the journey in a small space, a fear which is later realized in the play, El Galiván’s calculations stress his desire to make money off the transport of “goods” with no regard for the comfort and safety of the migrants.²⁹ When El Mosco, the smuggler’s assistant, jokingly reminds El Chayo that Pullman luxury sleeping cars and first-class tickets are sold out, El Chayo and the other

men are marked as less than human; they do not possess the economic or political means to cross the border on the train in first- or even second-class. That an official third class does not exist on trains again points to their status as cargo and their invisibility in official political discourse. Traveling in the boxcar or crossing in other clandestine and dangerous ways are their only known options. Yet El Chayo and the other men are not without (limited) agency. They are aware of the treatment they will receive as third-class citizens and choose to accept said treatment as a means to a (possibly) better life in the North. In the context of this situation, one way the men maintain their agency, as the play demonstrates, is through utilizing their voices creatively to move to a distinct emotional space when they are not able to move physically.

The references by the men to others in the boxcar as animals, as well as by the confusion as to the number and identity of passengers, further elucidates the men as cargo and signals their lack of value in the play. The explicit comparison to animals occurs when the men in the boxcar joke about the proximity of El Mosco to El Timbón, suggesting they are a couple. El Mosco replies that he does not like “las vacas lecheras,” referring to El Timbón (35). He then goes on to tell El Timbón that rather than phallatio, he would rather have sex from behind, as if an animal (“mejor perro”) (35). In these jokes, commonly found throughout Mexico, the men tease each other, using sexuality and by extension masculinity as their subject matter. Their presence in the play also hints at the experience of the men as animal freight in the boxcar. Likewise, the name El Pollero (the chicken herder) Galiván suggests the men as animals, as undocumented migrants who cross the border are often called “pollos,” and human smugglers are often called “polleros” as they herd the wandering, anonymous men across the border.

According to John Urry in *Mobilities*, through rail travel, “[t]he human body becomes like an anonymized parcel of flesh, ‘shunted’ from place to place just like the goods that get moved around the system” (94). While Urry discusses official first- and second-class rail passengers, the male migrants in Salcedo’s play are even further anonymized as they do not even possess a number. El Miqui’s account to the authorities, after he survives enclosure in the boxcar, signals this lack of specificity. He explains, “Éramos como unos 20 ó 30, todos gritaban y corrían” (28). His uncertainty of the number of men present and his description of the yelling and running of the mass within the boxcar stresses the lack of individual identity in this situation, a lack that is also enacted visually for spectators. The stage directions in scene 6 call for the boxcar to be filled with a total of 19 migrants to include El Mosco, El Timbón, El Miqui, El Noé, El Chayo, and the figure of “El Desconocido” (34). Thus, 14 of the men within the boxcar remain unnamed and without a significant role — much like animals — in the boxcar scenes. To make certain spectators do not miss this anonymity, the play includes a character known as “El Desconocido,” the unknown man. El Desconocido and the other men’s lack of identity might function as a reminder of the anonymity of other undocumented migrants.³⁰ This anonymity is duly fitting for these men because of their lack of an official place in the political landscape of the United States, for which reason they can provide inexpensive, easily replaceable labor.³¹

The structure of *El viaje*, which fragments space and time, likewise communicates the uncertainty of geographic mobility experienced by the migrants. In each of the playwright’s three possible options for stagings, spectators experience confusion about their location and the direction of the dramatic piece.³² By staging the play with a

fragmented chronology (the first option) the unity of time and place is broken, thereby disorienting spectators. The second option of presenting the play chronologically, although it may seem to offer a more coherent representation of the events, again breaks with the unity of place and the individual scenes deny closure. The third option, to choose scenes at random, calls for a further split with the idea of progress of mobility. In this version, there is no apparent order or progression. Rather, there is an implied sense of circularity in the play as scene one begins several months after the migrants have died in the boxcar. This circularity contrasts with mobility as forward movement, progress through space and time toward a desired destination. Thus the play does not conform to this paradigm of mobility as progression, be it geographic, personal or both.

While it is apparent that *El viaje* offers a variety of ways of looking at the situation, by adding scenes to the original, historical account, the fragmentation also may disorient spectators and complicate the conventional experience of narrative progress (or mobility) in a theatrical production. That is, if the traditional dramatic work has a beginning, middle, and end — a certain movement that progresses from one point to another through the dramatic action — *El viaje* disrupts this movement.³³ In doing so, while the characters on stage experience the start and stop of the train and panic, so do the spectators of the play: they experience a sense of immobility created by the lack of a traditional story line. Rather than progressing through space and time and arriving at a new place with those on the stage, spectators find themselves disorientated like the men in the boxcar. While this disruption of the classical space/time continuum has been utilized frequently in Latin American theater following the inspiration of Bertolt Brecht

and Antonin Artaud, it functions specifically in *El viaje de los cantores* to stress the lack of geographic mobility available to the migrants.³⁴

However, to understand this play solely as an expression of social realism or as documentary theater portraying the constant struggles of migrants would be to ignore its richness. The play is indeed much more complex and requires spectators to consider other aspects such as the role of the *cantores* in the play's potential meanings. Indeed, alongside the frustrated geographic movement of the migrants, music and poetry — the creative use of human voice — appear consistently in the *rancheras* that the men sing together in the boxcar; in the poetry of one of the migrants, El Chayo; in the chorus of mourning women in the play's last scene; and in the sermon of the priest at the funeral of the deceased men. These many examples of music, poetry, and other forms of poetic language utilized by the characters complicate a simplistic understanding of migrants as lacking agency or power. When the subversive tactics such as the appropriation of the freight train to gain geographic movement do not succeed, the migrants utilize the creativity of their minds and the strength of their bodies — what little resources they maintain — to move themselves to better emotional spaces, thus demonstrating their agency. In other words, through the use of melodic mobility they are able to move away from their dire circumstances and are able to keep some kind of mental sanity.

Iain Chambers, in *Migrancy, Culture, Identity*, establishes a connection between words and movement. He explains that “to write is, of course, to travel” (10). Chambers's idea of language as a tool for moving to a new space elucidates the ways in which El Chayo,³⁵ one of the migrants in the play, deploys the creative word. In several scenes El Chayo uses poetry as a tool for dealing with the challenging circumstances in which he,

his loved ones, and his fellow passengers find themselves. Before El Chayo starts on his journey, he tells the woman he loves and who carries his child, “No más me instale y te mando decir, te mando la dirección para que me escribas, y te mando unos poemas” (23). His promise to send not just letters but poems highlights his role as a poet in the play and in another way may contrast with the expectations of spectators for a poor migrant. Rather than poems belonging merely in libraries and classrooms, El Chayo’s use of poetry suggests the availability of artistic language to people in daily life, regardless of social class or circumstance. In another way, it points to the role of language in connecting loved ones across physical miles and geo-political borders. Following Chambers’s understanding of language in this case, it is through writing that he travels to the woman he loves and has left behind in Mexico.

In addition to poetry, El Chayo utilizes songs — specifically traditional Mexican *rancheras*³⁶ — as a way of moving the men through language to a distinct emotional place, thus offering them a sense of power and agency in a debilitating circumstance. Finding themselves trapped inside the boxcar, what might be considered a space of the weak (for animals, freight, human cargo) controlled by the strong, the men begin to panic. El Chayo suggests they sing one of their favorite songs by José Alfredo Jiménez (41). This tactic of utilizing music is helpful in concrete physical ways, as singing together, according to Clarke, Dibben, and Smith is a form of collective/social bonding and also functions to focus and express strong emotions. It even produces chemical changes in the body that would be valuable in the dire situation of extreme heat, proximity, and darkness in which the migrants find themselves:

Biological research has identified links between music and hormone release. Oxytocin, associated with social bonding, is released during music listening; conversely, testosterone levels, associated with aggression and sexual competition, are reduced, which may have the effect of enhancing group cohesion. (104-05)

Considering the competition among the men for space and air in the crowded boxcar, as well as their previously cited rivalry demonstrated in their sexual joking, El Chayo's use of music as a tactic to calm the men could only improve the tense situation. Rather than fighting against each other, El Chayo encourages solidarity by prompting the men to sing in the boxcar. Clarke, Dibben, and Smith emphasize that "music interventions also reduce anxiety and increase muscle relaxation, and this may reduce expectations of pain and catastrophizing thoughts, and distract an individual from the experience of pain" (120). Considering the panic of El Timbón, El Mosco, and others when they realize the door is jammed, song might serve as an invaluable tool in maintaining the men's sanity in the dark, stopped boxcar.

The first song that El Chayo selects to sing with his companions, "El Rey,"³⁷ is an appropriate, if ironic choice, as Meléndez signals in her study, because this popular song by Jiménez deals with long journeys on the road and the impending death of the poetic voice ("The Body" 12). The song begins with the poetic voice considering his own mortality and the potential reaction to it by the woman he leaves behind: "Yo sé bien que estoy afuera,/ pero el día que yo me muera,/ sé que tendrás que llorar./ Llorar y llorar, llorar y llorar." As the song continues, it describes the destiny of the poetic voice as ever tied to journeys on the road: "Era rodar y rodar./ Rodar y rodar, rodar y rodar." However,

in the face of this endless journey, only leading to death, the speaker makes clear: “Con o sin dinero/ hago siempre lo que quiero/ y mi palabra es la ley/ No tengo trono ni reina,/ ni nadie que me comprenda,/ pero sigo siendo el rey.” In the end, regardless of circumstances, the poetic voice understands himself as king and boasts about his ability to do what he desires. The irony comes into play here for spectators who witness the experiences of the migrants on stage echoed by those of the poetic voice. Having struggled in their incessant journeys on the road and facing imminent death, the migrants, like El Rey, utilize their creative words as tool for enduring their circumstances and reenvisioning their own lives.

Although at first glance the song offers little or no hope for survival, it cleverly escapes resignation to the imminent ominous circumstances. In this way, rather than crying in the face of death, the archetypal *cantor*,³⁸ according to Salcedo, mocks death: “El cantor se mofa de sí mismo y se burla de la muerte, de la calaca, compañera inseparable e irreductible” (“Literatura Fronteriza” 224). Thus by way of singing *rancheras*, and specifically Jiménez’s “El Rey,” the men — *los cantores* — transport themselves psychologically to a distinct place in which they each become “El Rey” and in which their word “es la ley.” In having the last word in their lives, the men “reverse the relationships of power and [...] ensure the victory of the unfortunate” (de Certeau 23). Although their situation has not changed, through envisioning themselves differently the men are able to die with dignity — a morbid but meaningful victory.

After singing the *rancheras* El Chayo again uses language as a vehicle to transport the men from their immediate surroundings by suggesting they have a

competition to see who can remember the most cantinas in Mexico. The men agree and proceed through a long list of bars they used to frequent:

EL MOSCO. El Mike.

EL MIQUI. El San Luis.

EL TIMBÓN. El San Luisito.

El NOÉ. Bar Roberto

EL CHAYO. La Ópera.

EL MOSCO. La Comanche, Night Club.

EL MIQUI. El Napoleón.

EL TIMBÓN. Eros Bar.

EL NOÉ. El Mesón del Gallo.

EL CHAYO. Los Balcones Bar. (42-43)

This game of recalling bars in Mexico, similar to the use of popular Mexican *rancheras*, reminds them of their homeland — a place familiar and loved. In addition to being transported to a comforting place through the use of the creative word, their sense of national identity might be reinforced. According to Clarke, Dibben, and Smith, music — and I would include word/memory games like El Chayo’s — “helps to construct and maintain gender, ethnic, cultural, regional, national, and other identities” (107). This would be especially true in the case of *ranchera* music which, according to Chew Sánchez, romanticizes the agrarian way of life in its “virile, melodramatic vocal style” as something uniquely Mexican (35). She goes on to note how “Música ranchera has long been a symbol of nationalism, particularly during the construction of ‘Mexicanness’” (36). Ana López similarly points to the way that music both constitutes part of national

identity and continually works in the creation of communities: “The rhythm must stand in as that which has *always* been part of the national imaginary, but it must also serve as that which can *performatively* interpellate social actors into a community in the present” (emphasis in the original, 311). While the music and word game aids the migrants to “travel” in their minds and hearts back to the places they love, these tactics also conjure up a sense of national pride and grow solidarity among the fellow travelers. By connecting themselves with the mythical, masculine, Mexican *Rey* of Jiménez’s *ranchera*, their story becomes part of the national narrative and they together become *reyes* even though trapped in the boxcar.

As the men continue to name off the many bars they have frequented in their homeland — in what begins to sound like a soothing litany —, El Desoconcido, the mysterious, unknown character adds after the mention of each bar “Ruega por nosotros,” thus turning the game into a kind of prayer:

EL MOSCO. El Portón.

EL DESCONOCIDO. Ruega por nosotros.

EL MIQUI. Las Escaleras.

EL DESCONOCIDO. Ruega por nosotros.

EL TIMBÓN. El Rehilete.

EL DECONOCIDO. Ruega por nosotros.

EL NOÉ. Bar el Greco.

EL DESCONOCIDO. Ruega por nosotros.

EL CHAYO. Rosa Mística.

EL DESCONOCIDO. Ruega por nosotros. (42-44)

Ironically, the refrain “*ruega por nosotros*” recalls the imminent death of the men; it comes from the traditional Catholic prayer, the *Ave María*: “*Santa María, Madre de Dios, ruega por nosotros, pecadores, ahora y en la hora de nuestra muerte.*” El Desconocido’s prayer “*ruega por nosotros*” also elucidates a change in the direction of the men’s words. Whereas the game moved them to happier days in Mexico, his prayer suggests an emotional journey to a religious context in which he cries out to God or La Virgen for help. This movement to a metaphysical place occurs just at the moment before the men’s deaths, as if El Desconocido can sense the severity of the circumstance and the men’s need for help or mercy from a supreme being.

Indeed, as they recite the names of the cantinas together along with El Desconocido’s refrain, the rhythmic quality of their words becomes much like prayers in a mass. In this way, the migrants travel via their soothing words to another quintessential place in Mexican identity — the Catholic Church. This call and response in the game/prayer marks the appropriation of a traditional, cultural practice which is deployed in a distinct way and context (the land of the strong). It likewise speaks to the role of collective memory in the deployment of tactics. According to Gardiner, “[tactics] are temporal in nature and reliant on the art of collective memory, on a tradition of popular resistance and subversion passed from generation to general since the immortal” (172). Through the use of memory to bring to life the places they love — whether a cantina or a church in Ojo Caliente — the migrants tactically transport themselves to a distinct, comforting place.

Similar to the migrants stuck in the boxcar, the chorus of women at the end of scene 10 utilizes voice as a liberating vehicle. These women use their poetic song to

move to the site where their sons died in their journeys to the North. While this place is not one of merriment and fond memories, it is tragically the place to which they most desire to travel and that is off limits to them. It is therefore through music that they must make their journey.

In *Audiotopias*, Kun describes how music might be a tool that allows people not only to *move* to but also to *inhabit* a distinct space. In this way, music alters physical environments and allows people the possibility of transforming space without traveling to another location (2). In the case of *El viaje*, voice could be thought of not only as vehicle but also as a potential space in which connecting with loved ones — whether alive or dead — is possible. It is thus through the women's voices, which reach out in song, that they might find themselves in the place where they can mourn their lost sons. This tool of voice that offers people the ability to travel to as well as to inhabit different spaces would be invaluable for Mexican spectators in the border region. Many face similar experiences as the bodies of their loved ones have disappeared, remain unidentified, or at a distance because of mortalities during migration. Through voice, which I suggest is a form of alternate mobility, many may be unable to arrive at the place of their loved ones and grieve their losses.³⁹

In this last scene of the play, the women, represented by five different voices, do precisely this — they call out in pain and remorse for their lost children. The voices take turns in their poetic song by counting down the children they have lost in various ways: to migration to the US, to the brutality of the Border Patrol, to drowning in the river, to the lack of air in the boxcar — echoing the numerous fatalities of migration. Finding themselves at a distance from their deceased sons, they tell the story of their losses,

thereby transporting themselves to the place of the fatalities. According to Bull, there is a narrative quality attached to music which allows people “to reconstruct these narrative memories at will in places where they would otherwise have difficulty summoning them up” (39-40). This, along with the way music “creates a direct sense of virtual movement” (Clarke, Dibben, and Smith 101), provides a way of journeying to the place of death, where the women most desire to be. In chanting the story of their sons’ deaths, the women sing themselves into that place where they are with their children. It is there that they grieve the passing of their sons as well as to process their own loss, and it is through their song that borders cannot separate them from their children.

The stage directions indicate that the first woman is to cry out “tristemente” and each of the other women should follow suit (46). This rhythmic repetition is created in the echo of the last syllable of the fourth verse of each stanza. Because of the stylized meter that contrasts with the rest of the play, the women’s song conjures up the ancient Greek chorus:

MUJER 1. (*Tristemente.*)

Cuando estaba yo en el pueblo,

cuando estaba yo casada

cuatro hijos yo tenía,

cuatro hijos yo abrazaba,

aba, aba, aba. (46)

In the next stanza the repetition is of three children that remained, in the next stanza two, then one, and lastly Mujer 4 cries out:

De ese hijo que tenía,

de ese hijo que quedaba
 ese se murió en el tren,
 y nomás me quedé sola,
 sola, sola, sola. (46)

The song ends in a cry by all of the women: “¡Ay, mis hijos!/ ¡A, mis hijos!” (47). While evoking the Mexican/Chicano figure of La Llorona, a woman who cries out for her lost children who have drowned in the river⁴⁰ or the image of the Pietà, Jesus’s weeping mother cradling his dead body, this group of women more closely resembles the traditional Greek chorus, which indicated deaths that did not occur on stage. The presence of this chorus of women marks the death of the men in the boxcar, and by extension other migrants who die on their journeys.

In contrast to the Greek chorus, however, this chorus of women does not suggest that spectators respond in a certain way to the tragedy of the men who died in the boxcar and of other migrants who continue to die as they travel to the United States. This lack of recommended emotion by the chorus leaves a void with spectators and seems to hint at the need for the of use their own voices as a way to “move” against the injustices faced by migrant border crossers. In this way, the voices of this female chorus serve a double function: they allow the women to move emotionally to grieve their losses and they prompt the action of others which is tangible and capable of affecting the lives of those migrants who cross the US/Mexico border.

The play again suggests a connection between melodic mobility and social action in the last scene through the creative words of the priest who preaches at the funeral of the men who died. Although he does not sing like El Chayo and the other migrants or cry

out in verse like the women, the placement of his call for justice and action — after the scene of the men singing and before the chorus of women — signals a connection between creative discourse and social responsibility. Through the tactical use of language the priest attempts to move the congregants to a distinct space in which they work together as a community for social justice. This recalls Gardiner’s words on de Certeau, who “insists that the popular imagination is capable of creating and sustaining a ‘utopian space’ that resists total assimilation or incorporation, and within which justice is done and the powerful de-throned, at least symbolically” (178). In building this utopian space with his poetic words, the priest allows the people to experience a different kind of world — one of power and justice in community rather than individuality.

In his sermon the priest contrasts individuality with community, emphasizing the value of struggling together against injustice: “Yo, señores, soy simplemente un emisario de Dios en la tierra, pero ustedes, todos unidos, somos los que debemos luchar por un país más justo” (45). Through his words, the congregants experience unity and a world in which they move together for equality. This call for justice, as Beardsell notes, may be the playwright’s way of mirroring the protests of over 20,000 people that took place in the streets of Ojo Caliente on July 8, 1987 in response to the deaths in the boxcar (“Crossing” 72). It also recalls the actions on behalf of migrants by concerned citizens and members of religious communities in what was called the New Sanctuary Movement.⁴¹ In choosing a sermon over a protest on stage, the play insists on the value of creative language as a way of countering oppression and highlights the importance of political action in religious circles as a way of fighting injustice.

Although the sermon is not song, it shares many traits, such as numerous poetic devices including repetition, enumeration, and metaphor and can be considered a kind of creative language. It is through this creative language that the priest takes the congregants back to the space of the boxcar. When recalling the death of an unknown man in the boxcar, the priest begins each sentence with the same word, *nadie*, emphasizing the injustice and lack of action on behalf of his death: “Nadie lo reconoció. Nadie lo identificó. Nadie lo reclamó” (45). In the later part of his sermon he draws a parallel between the suffering of Christ and the migrants on the train: “Ahora puedo decir que un nuevo Jesús, un nuevo Jesucristo vino a este mundo y ha sido asesinado. Cristo ha muerto nuevamente, víctima de la miseria de la humanidad. Cristo ha muerto en un vagón de ferrocarril” (45). This comparison relating the suffering of lowly migrant workers to what Christians recognize as the Son of God proves shocking. Nevertheless, Christ has much in common with the migrants of the play as he was also poor, exploited, and led a largely migratory life. The comparison signals the gravity of the socio-historic situation to spectators and calls to mind the innocence of the migrants. It also constitutes a call to action, as if somehow Christ were being killed again and again in the boxcars that cross the border daily.

While the Church in many instances throughout history has not been a friend of the oppressed, the priest in this account recalls the popular Liberation Theology that emerged in Latin America in 1970s. Phillip Berryman notes that Liberation Theology can be differentiated from many other theologies in that it has its roots in the experiences of the poor and marginalized (4). According to Berryman, “[i]t is an attempt to read the bible and key Christian doctrines through the eyes of the poor” (4). Perhaps the most well

known figure in Liberation Theology, Gustavo Gutiérrez, Peruvian theologian and author of *A Theology of Liberation* (1973), suggests the centrality of charity as the foundation of praxis and that Christians have “an active presence in history” (6). Some of the documents that emerged from conferences on Liberation Theology demonstrate the connection between spiritual tenets and political action. One in Chile underscored that “Christians were discovering ‘the convergence between the radical nature of their faith and their political commitment.’” This particular document ended with a line by Latin American revolutionary, Che Guevara, which Berryman notes were posted on signs and banners during the conference. The quote read: “When Christians dare to give full-fledged revolutionary witness, then the Latin American revolution will be invincible” (28).

Similar to Che’s words posted at the Liberation Theology conference, the sermon in *El viaje de los cantores* conforms to one of the basic ideas of Liberation Theology — the use of words to produce action. It likewise speaks to the need for community in social action. This sermon again marks the value of melodic mobility in the play. As Adam Versényi affirms in his study on theater and Liberation Theology, the theater “should become as much a vehicle for *concientización* as the Christian base communities” (159). In envisioning a place of community and justice through the words of the priest, the congregants — left with the dream of what is possible — are able to act tangibly in their lives for change. It is through this kind of melodic mobility that the priest in the play uses his sermon to “*performatively* interpellate social actors into a community in the present” (emphasis in the original, López 311). Curiously, the priest’s call moves beyond the ears

of the characters who mourn the death of the men in the boxcar, and clamors for spectators to act as well on behalf of the exploited.

El viaje de los cantores speaks to the power of creative language as an alternative mobility, as a tool to be used to move to a distinct emotional space when geographic mobility is limited. Melodic mobility, while facilitating movement at an emotional level, can offer visions of social justice and inspire people to action. While the play is complex in its structure, themes, and meanings, one of the central issues is the agency that can be found in voice when travels do not lead where one hopes, when loved ones are at a distance and there is no way to reach them, and when there is much to be done for social change. It is, then, with voice that the men trapped in the boxcar are able to maintain some kind of sanity and that the women are able to journey across the border to grieve their dead, thereby “moving” from their current location, albeit emotionally. This tactic of melodic mobility offers many possibilities to those who de Certeau would call the weak because it does not depend on social or economic means. As my analysis of *El viaje* indicates, the tool of voice provides ways for migrants to control their mental and emotional states and to re-imagine themselves as kings of the road. In this way, the weak demonstrate their agency in the land of the “strong.”

Turning Up the Volume in *Sinfonía en una botella*: Is this a Rock Concert or a Traffic Jam?

Similar to *El viaje de los cantores*, *Sinfonía en una botella* takes place along the US/Mexico border and speaks to another common, although less explored, experience in the border region — waiting in long lines of traffic to cross through border checkpoints.

The play is set at the world's busiest and largest land border-crossing of Tijuana/San Ysidro, which sees an estimated 41.4 million people, 15 million automobiles, and 110,000 buses pass northward through its gates each year (Bae 187). Chang-Hee C. Bae notes that this large volume of traffic quickly becomes congested because of the inadequate infrastructure. Among the problems are passing vehicles through a scant nine gates and 40 inspection areas, the "severe staff shortages in the Immigration and Naturalization Service [...], and increased emphasis on drug interdictions and terrorist threats rather than on illegal immigration" (187). Because of this inadequate highway system, crossing wait times run around an hour at peak times. Nevertheless, more than 40 million continue to cross each year for professional, familial, and economic reasons.

In "Demystifying the United States-Mexico Border," Jorge Bustamante reminds the reader that these border crossers come from a wide variety of backgrounds and social classes (489). Perhaps because of the media's attention to undocumented migration, many are unaware of the number of Mexicans, often residents of border cities, who enter legally into the United States on a daily basis for work, education, and shopping.⁴² Ghaddar and Brown highlight the significant economic impact of these crossings on US border states (California, Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona). In 1992, for example, a study of Mexican expenditures in the border region exceeded \$2.8 billion in California alone (6).

This slow daily movement toward the Tijuana/San Ysidro checkpoint certainly would be a familiar experience and sight for spectators in the border region — especially those in Tijuana where the play was written and premiered. In addition to its subject matter, the play is tied closely to this border city; it was written for the Centro Cultural

Tijuana as part of the *Programa Nacional de Apoyo al Teatro*, reworked and improvised by ten actors in the city, and later premiered on September 29, 1990 at the Center (*Sinfonía* 74-75). Although less popular than *El viaje de los cantores*, as its less frequent stagings⁴³ and lack of critical interest demonstrate, the play nevertheless touches on key issues for Mexican spectators in the border region that effect their daily lives. *Sinfonía* in particular complicates a monolithic vision of the US/Mexico border region as a place of transit where only undocumented migrants of reduced socio-economic means attempt to cross and instead signals a more plural socio-cultural landscape. My analysis of the play, similar to *El viaje*, also considers melodic mobility — especially through music and poetry — to be a viable tactic when physical movement is not possible in the border region. In this instance, I consider specifically how music and poetry can be deployed by the middle class in daily life.

Sinfonía en una botella, as the title signals, centers on music and the limited mobility of its characters, in this case caused by a traffic jam (*un embotellamiento de tráfico*). The play begins with four cars — a Topaz, a Valiant, a Rabbit, and a Toyota pick-up truck — among many others that line up at the border-crossing checkpoint of Tijuana/San Ysidro. The passengers of these vehicles, who make up the main characters of the play, belong to the middle class and travel north to go shopping, for work, or to visit family. According to the first note, music of various types blares out from the cars' radios, including classical music, *ranchera* music, and rock, among others. This chaotic mix of competing sounds — music, car horns, and hollers — produces what could be considered the antithesis of a symphony, signaling in this way the irony of the title. In addition to its use of the traffic jam, the play — similar to *El viaje de los cantores* —

creates a feeling of enclosure through the lack of physical movement on stage and through its plot structure which lacks narratological progress. In other words, the action centers on the conversations of the characters among other tactics they use to pass time as they wait for the checkpoint to open. At certain points minor traumas occur: a car breaks down, a woman feels faint, and the characters believe a passport and some cash from a vehicle have been stolen. Yet, the focus remains on the dialogue, which takes place around these issues as the characters wait for the border to reopen — only to find themselves in the same space at the end of the play where they began.

Similar to the characters in *El viaje de los cantores*, those in *Sinfonía* lack the ability to move freely. Although they have access to vehicles, the money necessary to travel, and the legal permission to cross into the United States, their travels are not characterized by freedom or comfort. This frustration is established near the beginning of the play, when Soco, a woman riding in a black Topaz with her husband and child, complains aggressively: “La misma línea de automóviles. La misma lata. [...] Ay, pinche güevonada. Aunque la palabra resulte poco elegante no hay otra palabra para expresar la aburrición. La mugre cola. Bola de coleros” (78). Her strong language makes certain that this is no quick and easy ride.

This lack of mobility becomes more pronounced in a debate over the windows of the small orange pick-up truck. The passengers — Margarita, Enrique, and Enrique’s sister — argue over the position of the windows, expressing feelings of suffocation within the cab and a similar inability to breathe when the windows are left open because of the exterior contaminated air:

LA HERMANA. (*A Margarita.*) Sube ese cristal por favor. (*Margarita la mira molesta.*) Por favor. (*Margarita lo hace.*)

ENRIQUE. Bájale. ¿A poco no sientes el aire sofocado? (*Margarita lo hace.*)

LA HERMANA. Súbelo. Está haciendo mucho polvo afuera. (*Margarita lo hace.*)

ENRIQUE. Que lo bajes, Margarita. (*Margarita lo hace.*)

LA HERMANA. Óyeme no. Dije que lo subas.

ENRIQUE. ¡Abajo!

LA HERMANA. ¡Arriba! (81-82)

The tension grows even greater when Graciela, the driver of a light blue rabbit who passes her time listening to English language instruction tapes, responds: “Arriba, up. Abajo, down. Izquierda, left. Derecha...” (82). The stage notes indicate that she is interrupted by the glares of Margarita, Enrique, and Enrique’s sister. As this scene elucidates, the characters experience no forward movement in their vehicles that literally trap them in a polluted environment. The situation is further exacerbated by the characters’ resulting frustration.

The characters’ restricted mobility comes to the forefront again when Jackie, a woman driving a Valiant, offers a ride to David, a young man headed to National City. David and Jackie chat in the car as they wait to cross the border, and he comments to her, “Creo que caminando llegamos más rápido” (85). Frustrated with the wait, David gets out and walks toward the checkpoint. Later, when Jackie sees him again and asks if he would like a ride, he replies once more, “Mejor me paso caminando. Así llego más rápido.”

(111). David's insistence on walking highlights the limited mobility of drivers along the US/Mexico border. Although they have the power and speed of automobiles in this particular space of the "strong," the border control checkpoint and resulting traffic slow drivers to the pace of a pedestrian. His insistence on walking also intensifies the feeling of being locked in the traffic jam when he visibally and verbally reminds the other characters of their already apparent situation.

But it is not only the traffic that inhibits the mobility of the travelers; the US Border Patrol also plays its part in limiting movement. When the characters near the border, a voice over a loudspeaker announces the closure of the checkpoint:

UNA VOZ. Your attention, please. To all drivers in line, we inform you that for Security Reasons, the International Border has been closed. We ask for your understanding. Thank you. (*Ahora con marcado acento norteamericano.*) Su atención por favor. A los conductores que forman fila en esta Puerta Internacional, les informamos que por Razones de Seguridad, hemos cerrado el Frontera Internacional. (*Sorpresas a todos.*) Esperamos su comprensión. Muchas gracias por su comprensión. (88)

In response to this announcement the characters become frustrated by the closure, by the lack of information about when the border will reopen and why it has been closed, and because of the implied cultural superiority communicated in this message and other similar experiences they have with the Border Patrol. In the agent's announcement the grammatical error in the Spanish version (i.e., "el frontera" as opposed to *la* frontera when referring to the border) stands out. The agent's inability to use Spanish correctly in official discourse, although a seemingly minor mistake, points to the control of this

geographic space by the US Government, and the lack of care (respect?) for accurately addressing Mexican citizens in their own language in what is politically their land. This sentiment of frustration with the disrespect of the powers to the north is echoed in the words of David Reyna, a young man headed to National City: “los gringos siempre encuentran pretexto para jodernos, nos tratan como delincuentes. Además, ya basta con el sistema opresivo de los gringos” (92).

As the time passes the characters become frustrated to the point that Soco relates their immediate experience in the traffic jam to that of incarceration and those around her discuss the possibility of filing a complaint with the officials:

SOCO. También cerraron la parte de atrás. Estamos peor que presos.

Como embotellados. Nadie puede salir.

ALBERTO. ¿Por qué? ¿Qué hicimos?

SOCO. Nadie sabe nada.

EL DE A PIE. Como siempre.

JACKIE. Saliendo de aquí pongo una demanda.

EL DE A PIE. ¡Muy bien! Esto es atentar contra la carta de derechos y deberes.

JACKIE. ¿Cuál carta?

EL DE A PIE. La que firmó México con todas y cada una de la naciones, para respetar las libertades de los individuos. Nom’bre, quien la haya escrito se sacó un diez y mi confianza.

SOCO. ¿Y de qué sirve si nadie la respeta?

EL DE A PIE. Eso es lo malo, la verdad es que sí. (106)

This scene becomes almost laughable because the characters are aware that their rights as Mexican citizens, which exist on paper, mean little when the powers that be pay them little or no heed. It is thus in *Sinfonía* that immobility has as much to do with being locked in by the traffic jam as it does with a lack of respect from those in power — in particular the US Border Patrol and US Government. Although these middle class citizens benefit from greater economic resources and social status in comparison to those migrants of *El viaje*, these resources do not necessarily ensure geographic movement. As de Certeau suggests, marginality is widespread and there are many who get “caught in the nets of ‘discipline’” (xiv-xv). In this case, the weak — although unexpected by many — might include those who have vehicles, passports, and enough money to make the journey north legally and safely, unlike those in the boxcars.

Although geographic movement is limited by traffic and the border control in *Sinfonía*, the characters experience another kind of movement through the use of music and poetry. Different from *El viaje*, the movement facilitated by the creative voice in *Sinfonía* does not serve as a distraction from imminent death but rather to survive the boredom and frustrations of daily life — such as the characters’ experience waiting to cross into the US. Through tactics — for de Certeau the “art of manipulating and enjoying” (xxii) and “poetic ways of ‘making do’” (xv) — the characters “move” emotionally to distinct places and thus take back the present situations in which they are locked. Rather than moving to a communal emotional place like the migrants and the women in *El viaje*, however, *Sinfonía* underscores the individuality inherent in the characters’ musical choices and consequent movements. In another way, my analysis of *Sinfonía* shows how in this case the middle class more commonly utilizes the voices of

others — through listening to recorded music and reciting poems from books — to move emotionally rather than employing their own voices like the migrants.

The play begins with a clash of sounds blaring from the different cars, foregrounding the diversity and individuality in the border region from the start. Ironically, rather than the symphony from the title, spectators hear a cacophony of sounds, as first note indicates:

Todos [los coches] tienen el volumen muy alto en sus radios y no podemos, a primera vista, darnos cuenta de lo que ellos platican. Hay de todas las melodías imaginables: desde la voz de Tony Aguilar que al ritmo de tambora interpreta “Tristes recuerdos”, hasta la música del grupo Depeche Mode canta su “Personal Jesús”. En el primer plan auditivo, las notas del Benvenuto Cellini, Op. 23 de H. Beriloz. (77-78)

The diversity of music — from the popular Mexican tambora rhythms of Tony Aguilar to the techno beats of the British group Depeche Mode, which was popularized in the US, to the classical opera of Beriloz — might be related, as Beardsell suggests, to the influence of globalization in the border region: “the choice of music contributes greatly to the audience’s overall sense that foreign cultures impinge on Mexican life, attract Mexicans, and are becoming inherent in national culture” (*Europe* 166). This presence of various genres also marks the heterogeneity of the border region which many understand as a monolithic zone. In another way it might speak to the desire of the middle class to demonstrate their individuality in a space in which they are locked and in which they experience little control.

In spaces governed by political powers and drug cartels, like the US/Mexico border region, deploying select kinds of music allows many to maintain their identity. The characters in the play, much like others in the border region, perform identity through the use of personal vehicles — the most popular mode of transportation for crossing the border⁴⁴— in conjunction with the music played in their vehicles. According to Michael Bull, in *Sound Moves: Ipod Culture and Urban Experience*,⁴⁵ music played on personal electronic devices is a common way of dealing with the alienating space of city streets. Bull suggests that the use of electronic musical devices allow listeners to reclaim and personalize their experiences in spaces not their own (4-5). This deployment of music in the border region might help the characters reclaim their space, as Bull suggests, and also might function as a performance of social identity. This is because the music the characters choose to listen to blares outside of their vehicles and into the city streets for all to hear.

The tactical choice of music also aids in maintaining a sense of control in a hostile environment. Later in the play Enrique and his sister argue over music selection in their car, underscoring again the role of music as an expression of individuality:

ENRIQUE. Pásame otro caset, ¿no Margarita? Ya me enfadó esta chingadera.

LA HERMANA. Mejor dale vuelta. Con esa música me acuerdo de los bailes aquellos. ¿Te acuerdas?

ENRIQUE. Mejor ni acordarse. Cámbiale.

LA HERMANA. Por lo menos déjalo que se termine.

ENRIQUE. Que lo cambies (*Margarita lo hace.*)

LA HERMANA. Egoísta. (79)

As this argument suggests, the type of music is key in inducing a person's emotional movement. This movement can only occur when the music matches the mood of the listener or their environment. As Bull indicates, "Music is an accomplice in attaining, enhancing, and maintaining desired states of feeling and bodily energy (such as relaxation); it is a vehicle they use to move out of dispreferred states (such as stress or fatigue)" (*Sound Moves* 53). However, he clarifies that the relationship between these is not harmonious; listeners will often turn the music off rather than continuing to listen to "incorrect music" (Bull, *Sounding* 19). The problem in the play ensues between Enrique and the women because of the different preferences in the car, indicating their different moods and desires and the need for appropriate music to go there. Unlike the characters in *El viaje* who sing and play the word/memory game together in the boxcar, the characters in *Sinfonía* value their individuality and autonomy and therefore move to distinct places, rather than a common place, through music.

This individuality is also emphasized in the character of Jackie who attempts to move via poetry. While Jackie does indeed experience melodic mobility in reciting a poem, the content of the poem as well as the response to it by nearby travelers speaks to the individual nature of melodic tactics in the play. As those around her grow impatient, Jackie reads a fragment from the poem: "Por el chingo de cosas que vivimos" by Mexican poet Raúl Bañuelos:⁴⁶

Nos faltan palabras vivas
 agua saludable en nuestras venas
 besos frescos y caricias necesarias

Estamos solos entre nosotros mismos
 Estamos enconchados como tortugas
 y no podemos ver nuestra consistencia
 ni personalmente ni pluralmente
 José no sabe quién es Pedro ni quién es José
 Si supiera de Pedro sabría de José
 La lluvia ama del río lo que tiene de agua
 y por eso llueve. (95-96)

As she reads the poem passionately, Jackie transports herself to a distinct emotional space, away from the traffic and noise around her. Yet she is unsuccessful in transporting those around her via her recitation of Bañuelos's poem. Rather than joining her in this emotional movement, Soco comments on how well Jackie reads and the conversation quickly turns to a discussion on pronunciation and then again to children. The others around her follow suit and disregard Jackie's recitation. Ironically, the poem touches on the lack of connection between people: "estamos solos entre nosotros mismos." To paraphrase the words of the poem, the characters are like turtles tucked inside their shells. They are tucked inside their individual cars and separate themselves further through the melodic tactics they deploy. Similar to the correct use of music that matches the listener's mood as well as the context, as Bull insists, poetry also might need to correlate with user, mood, and experience. While the poem functioned as a vehicle for Jackie, it did not for Soco and the other travelers nearby. In this way, *El viaje* and *Sinfonía* differ in their deployment of creative language; in *El viaje* music is communal, and in *Sinfonía* individual.

Sinfonía is a rich and complex play that resists a singular meaning. There are no significant events, no noticeable climax, and no clearly articulated messages. Instead spectators are confronted with booming stereos, clashing genres, and characters who do not listen to each others' words or music. In this chaotic space dominated by the strong, *Sinfonía* helps to provide an understanding of music and poetry as a vehicle for moving to alternate emotional spaces. The tactics of voice — while more commonly deployed through the use of print and electronic media in this case — are available as valuable tools to the middle class in the rough circumstances of ordinary days. The play also speaks to the heterogeneity of the border region as well as the desires for individuality and a lack of community among middle class Mexicans. The contrasting songs, the arguments over music choice, and the inability to listen to the poem Jackie recites, all underscore a lack of solidarity in the midst of their immobile chaos of the present. It is perhaps here that the playwright leaves an open end, an invitation for dialogue among border-dwelling spectators who find themselves frustrated with the control of the strong in their region, but who do little communally to work for change.

Considered in tandem *El viaje de los cantores* and *Sinfonía en una botella* signal the power of the creative voice as an alternate form of movement when geographic movement is not possible. Faced with a lack of resources and challenging situations, the characters in *El viaje* have little recourse other than their own voices to create this movement whereas in *Sinfonía* the characters appropriate the creative voices of others by listening to their cassettes or the radio or by reciting poems written by others. What stands out in these two plays is the power that the marginalized maintain through the use

of the creative voice which is true for lower- as well as the middle-class Mexicans in the border region. My analysis of the plays locates agency in the human body, offering practical tools to those with limited economic and social power. It is with voice that the marginalized can maintain desired emotional states and cry out for justice. This analysis thus complicates the idea that voice has no value unless it is heard. Melodic mobility, when heard by a group of people, urges social action and tangible social movements. In addition, they are able to create a better space for themselves, and in some cases for those around them, via their own voices or by appropriating the voices of others. As the characters in the play demonstrate, there is power in speaking — especially in creative ways — even when no one or few are listening.

Chapter 2

Narrative Motion and Agency in *Johnny Tenorio and González and Daughter Trucking Co.*

What does it mean to be on the road? To be a Chicano on the road? Or a Chicana? The answers to each of these questions are distinct and multifaceted; issues of race, ethnicity, nationality, class, and gender broaden an understanding of mobility. In the words of Tanu Priya Uteng and Tim Cresswell in their recent anthology, *Gendered Mobilities*, “Understanding the ways that *mobilities* and *gender* intersect is undoubtedly complex, given that both concepts are infused with meaning, power and contested understanding” (1). This complexity only increases when considering social and economic factors. Carlos Morton’s play *Johnny Tenorio* (1983) and María Amparo Escandón’s novel *González and Daughter Trucking Co.* (2005),⁴⁷ the two cultural productions analyzed in this chapter by authors of Mexican descent living in the US,⁴⁸ similarly complicate the idea of mobility as freedom by demonstrating multiple ways that larger societal forces impede the protagonists’ desired movement. This is the case for Johnny in *Johnny Tenorio*, a Chicano Don Juan who rides a Greyhound bus in search of “ladies,” as it is for truck-driving Libertad in *González and Daughter*, constantly on the run with her Mexican father from immigration authorities. In signaling the complexities of mobility, these works articulate specific challenges of many Chicanas/os on the road and thus the coded nature of “mobility.” These cultural productions, however, also evince strategic ways of thriving in limiting situations through the use of narrative techniques — code-switching in *Johnny Tenorio* and storytelling in *González and Daughter*. This powerful tool of language, what I term narrative motion, thus becomes a way of inducing an alternate emotional movement when geographic movement is not possible.

In both *Johnny Tenorio* and *González and Daughter* vehicles are essential parts of the characters' lives and identities. In addition to the geographic movement they offer, vehicles perform and mark various identities: social class, economic status, gender identity, ethnic belonging, and citizenship. As John Urry explains: "Cars provide status to their owners through their various sign-values" (116). This is true for those who own or have access to vehicles as well as for those who do not. Vehicles in these cultural productions must be understood, then, in light of the physical movement they offer and their sign-values. In Johnny's case, this lack of an automobile proves frustrating as he cannot move about freely to the places he desires. His lack of a flashy car also negatively impacts his Don Juan image and consequent ability to pursue women.

One of the most apparent sign-values of vehicles is economic and social status. The money required to purchase, maintain, fuel, house, and insure any vehicle often signals this status.⁴⁹ The hunger for the automobile — particularly for newer, faster, and better vehicles and their associated sign-values — has led to one of the most lucrative industries in the US and abroad. Urry considers the car as the "quintessential manufactured object produced by leading industrial sectors and iconic firms within twentieth century capitalism" (115). As evidenced in frequent automobile advertisements, the industry dedicates large portions of its budget to play off this need for status symbols. Those who do not have a vehicle thus face changes in access to movement — often needing to rely on inconsistent public transportation — as well as the lack of associated sign-values of social and financial success.

Vehicles also function to mark gender norms. In the US and much of the Western world, a walk through the magazine section makes clear how automobiles are associated

with masculinity. Men drive cars and repair them while sexualized women drape themselves over the hoods. Although in contemporary times women have better access to automobiles and often travel alone, the long-held idea that vehicles belong to the masculine domain continues to be perpetuated. This understanding may stem from the ways that vehicles have been associated symbolically with masculinity over the last centuries, as Sidonie Smith and Cotten Seiler underscore. Smith suggests that this association comes from the visibility men enjoyed in the public sphere through the use of the vehicle, while women traditionally remained in the private/domestic sphere (211). Seiler similarly notes that the road continues to be a gendered space: “As many feminist scholars have pointed out, the ‘open road’ celebrated by Walt Whitman and others is in fact a gendered space of — to borrow a high-way engineering term — ‘limited access’” (13).

The gendering of vehicles becomes more pronounced when considering semi-trucks and the trucking culture. According to Shane Hamilton in *Trucking Country*, it was not until the 1960s and 70s that women gained access to jobs formerly codified as male. Yet even though women entered the field of long-haul trucking their male counterparts did not often welcome them. As Hamilton explains, “wandering was at its core reserved for men. In the eyes of male truckers, women who worked not only outside of the home but *outside* were crossing a dangerous line” (197, emphasis in original). These men worried that women truckers would lose their femininity, “possibly threatening the gender hierarchy not only of trucking but of the entire nation” (198). These prejudices evidence themselves in beliefs about driving abilities and women’s place in trucking culture. Many critics of women truckers used biology in their reasoning and suggested

(incorrectly) that women of smaller frames would not be able to control a big rig. At truck stops women often were assumed to be prostitutes and thus not regarded with the same respect as their male counterparts.

Along with women truckers, other women have utilized vehicles performatively to break with societal gender norms. In the words of Uteng and Cresswell: “women have constantly upset gendered expectations about who moves, how they move, and where they move” (5). Stories of women driving cars in the early 1900s demonstrate how this act conflicted with societal understandings of gender. While occasionally women were “applauded for groundbreaking boldness” when driving for the first time or at greater lengths, more often they were marked as oddities or considered inept (Wosk 116). In contemporary society, some women drive vehicles not generally associated with their gender to draw attention to and to break with gender norms, a topic that is seen often in literature. In Erika Lopez’s *Flaming Iguanas: An Illustrated All-Girl Road Novel Thing* (1997), for example, the Latina protagonist, Tomato Rodriguez, takes a motorcycle journey across the country discovering herself and her lesbian sexuality. In stories like these, the use of vehicles not traditionally associated with women (large trucks, motorcycles, big rigs, lowriders) functions to contest traditional gender and sexual norms.

Vehicles also can be deployed as markers of masculinity. In many cases, they are understood as an extension of the body, performing gender and sexuality in public spaces. Lydia Simons, for example, notes how men often relate horsepower with sexual potency and the size of the car or truck with the penis (153). The sign-value of the vehicle thus becomes significant in purchasing decisions; one need purchase not just any vehicle

but a certain kind of vehicle to perform gender and sexuality. Urry similarly highlights the interconnection of driver and vehicle in the masculine psyche:

The machine hybridization of the car-driver extends into the deepest reaches of the affective psyche. A libidinal economy has developed in which subjectivities get invested in the car as an enormously powerful and mobile object. [...] There is a sexualization of the car as an extension of the driver's affects, carried to one extreme with the super fast sports car and to the other extreme with the ultra-dominant Hummer. The car is implicit within especially male driver's ego-formation as competent, powerful and masterful. (127-28)

Urry's words signal how this sexualization of the vehicle is taken as "normal" or "natural" to the extent that certain cars are understood as masculine (hot rods or pick-up trucks) and others as feminine (minivans). Other times men may understand a vehicle as feminine, signaling a kind of possession or dominance, for example commenting on a hot rod: "she's a beauty."

Certain uses of vehicles, such as recent trends of mothers driving SUVs, complicate these simple binaries, however. Women might use this particular vehicle as a way of increasing their societal visibility (through the size of their vehicle) or as a way of demonstrating the extent to which they value motherhood, as if the vehicle marked their number of children or commitment to them. For a soccer mom, it may mark her dedication to her children — a kind of "home" on the road — or her rejection of the traditional minivan-driving mommy image. As Uteng and Cresswell note, "The resultant interpretations of gender are also historically, geographically, culturally, and politically

different, enabling a certain slippage between the different realms in terms of how genders are ‘read’” (1). An awareness of the cultural context in which the vehicle is deployed is thus key to understanding the meanings of that act.

Automobiles also mark national identity and citizenship. This is especially true in the US, where the mass production of the automobile began in the country’s heartland with Henry Ford’s introduction of the assembly line in the early 1900s. Even today, automakers encourage the public to “buy American” when they purchase a car — thus making the act of purchasing an act of patriotism. The popularity of the automobile has grown over the past century to the extent that 60% of all families in the US reported having at least two cars as early as 1997 (Best 5). As Cresswell signals, “[t]o be American is to have a car” (*On the Move* 260) or in many cases, two cars.

This need for a vehicle is reinforced through the frequent representation of the automobile in popular American culture. The well-known *Brady Bunch* family and the Griswold family in *National Lampoon’s Vacation* both rely on their station wagons, to the extent that these become central to their plots (Cresswell, *On the Move* 260). For more recent immigrants to the US, vehicles often are thought of as an integral part of becoming American. Many have as one of their first desires the purchase of a vehicle. This may be because the automobile “speaks to powerful cultural dreams of adventure and freedom: the capacity to go anywhere, to move and dwell without asking permission, the self-directed life free from the surveillance of the authorities,” as Mike Featherstone notes (2). This freedom and unrestricted movement of the automobile would be attractive to many immigrants. Finding themselves policed by the authorities as well as by other

“concerned citizens,” the vehicle offers certain freedoms and the sign-value of belonging to America.

Beyond communicating American identity, vehicles mark specific group identities, such as Chicano cultural identity. This becomes apparent upon visiting any lowrider show in Chicano communities where individuals and families flock to check out the newest paint jobs and detailing of vehicles or looking through *Lowrider* magazine, a publication celebrating the Chicano “culture and lifestyle of lowriding” since 1977. Lowriders function in a variety of ways within Chicano culture, as Best, in her study of lowriders in Silicon Valley, California, signals. Lowriders provide young adults an entrance to community life, they offer people with few economic resources to make “something from nothing,” and they allow Chicanos to resist the mainstream view of American life (30-31). Pride and a sense of belonging come from building, painting, and detailing one’s own “ride.” However, as in American culture at large, in Chicano communities this vehicle is understood as part of masculine domain. It is mostly men who work on, show, and drive the vehicles. While some women work on cars, participate in car shows, and contribute to *Lowrider* magazine, as Denise Michelle Sandoval notes, they remain sexual objects at worst and a visible minority at best (183).

Drawing on these cultural understandings of vehicles and their various sign-values, this chapter considers how mobility is experienced in many Mexican-American/Chicano communities through an analysis of contemporary literary texts. It signals the intersections of gender, class, race, ethnicity, and nationality with mobility in *Johnny Tenorio* and *González and Daughter*, and how these result in distinct and often

challenging experiences of geographic movement. In this way, the complexities of what it might *mean* to be a Chicano or a Chicana on the road are central concerns.

In *Johnny Tenorio* issues of geographic mobility are particularly important given Johnny's limited access to transportation — especially as compared with earlier literary Don Juans. Despite his limited physical mobility, as the play demonstrates, Johnny possesses a kind of linguistic mobility through the use of tactical code-switching in his stories. This creative deployment of multiple codes allows him to manipulate his limiting circumstances and ultimately fulfill his destiny of winning over a multitude of women. The analysis of *González and Daughter* centers on gendered and migratory experiences of the road. It considers how storytelling — in becoming a kind of author/driver of one's own narrative — can function as a tool for moving oneself and others to a different emotional place and for critiquing larger societal narratives. Although the precise ways that Johnny and Libertad utilize language differ, each finds ways of utilizing story cleverly to find a kind of narrative motion — a way of going places with words.

Don Juan Takes a Greyhound?: Alternate Mobility through Code-Switching in *Johnny Tenorio*

Johnny Tenorio (1983), an adaptation or *refundición*⁵⁰ of the Don Juan legend by Chicano playwright Carlos Morton, places this infamous literary and cultural character within the context of a contemporary Chicano community. As Johnny, the Don Juan figure in the Chicano version, lives in San Antonio, Texas in the late 20th century, he varies greatly from his literary predecessors in Tirso de Molina's *El Burlador de Sevilla* (c. 1630) and José Zorrilla's *Don Juan Tenorio* (1844). In addition to the apparent

variances due to historical time, culture, and language, Johnny's geographic and cultural mobility differ from the earlier Don Juans. A comparative analysis of various modes of mobility — geographic, cultural, and linguistic — in the plays reveal Johnny's limitations, and by extension challenges faced by many in Chicano communities. However, the play does not leave Johnny without the possibility of agency. Rather, in my reading, it presents code-switching, the practice of moving between languages, as a tactic for experiencing a kind of alternate mobility. Instead of presenting this mixed use of Spanish and English as marker of linguistic inferiority, the play signals how deploying multiple codes allows Johnny to maintain agency within limiting social structures. It is indeed through the way that Johnny tactically moves between codes that he ultimately succeeds in becoming a Don Juan.

Although written in the 1980s, the play has enjoyed numerous stagings over the last decades in San Antonio (1983, 1995, 2004), Austin (1984, 1986), Dallas (1986, 1990), College Station, (1989), New York (1984), Boulder (1992), Chicago (1992, 2002), Pittsburgh (1999), and Ithaca (2001),⁵¹ not to mention those stagings which, as Víctor Hugo Rascón Banda explains, occur frequently in the small towns of California, Arizona, and Texas without the knowledge of the playwright (10-11).⁵² In its most recent representation by an independent student group at the University of Texas at El Paso, under the direction of Orlando F. Rodriguez (June 2010), spectators filled the theater each night even though the play did not receive external funding, much publicity, or reviews by area news agencies (Rodriguez). These frequent stagings continue the tradition of earlier representations in particular, Zorilla's version, represented annually on Spain's *Día de los difuntos* (Reed 67) and Mexico's *Día de los muertos* (Huerta 93).⁵³

Although there is much continued interest in the Don Juan figure and the broader cultural issue of *donjuanismo*,⁵⁴ the popularity of the Chicano version also might speak to the interest in Chicana/o spectators in dealing with the challenges of limited mobility.

Much like Johnny, Chicana/o spectators⁵⁵ in his region, who make up a large part of the population in cities like San Antonio, Houston, and Dallas, have dealt with limitations on their social and educational mobility, especially in struggles for racial and ethnic equality.⁵⁶ Their cities comprise key locations in the Chicano civil rights movement. In Houston, for example, a boycott of schools by over 3,500 Chicana/o students in August and September of 1970 marked an importance success for such rights. This boycott led to several significant changes: Mexican-Americans were by law no longer to be segregated to low-income schools, more Mexican-American teachers were hired, and the image of Mexican-Americans in the curriculum was improved (Phillips 167). Chicanos also responded to unfair police and governmental actions with public protests and riots in the streets. In 1973 after Santos Rodríguez, a 12 year-old Mexican-American boy suspected of robbing a Dallas gas station, was proven innocent, over 1,000 people of color marched in the streets, resulting in something like a race riot (Phillips 164). Similarly, on May 7, 1978 Chicanos protested the light sentencing of police officers that beat a Chicano to death the previous year (Chávez 154). Staged in the socio-historic context of Texas in the 1980s and 1990s, *Johnny Tenorio* conjures up these social struggles and successes for spectators. In more recent stagings, I suggest the play might evoke current immigration debates, increased policing of the US/Mexico border region, and racial discrimination — present concerns for many Chicanas/os.⁵⁷ These social issues

can be characterized linguistically through verbs that connote action: to progress politically, to access social services, to participate in public debate.

The limitations on Johnny's geographic movements become more visible when contrasted with earlier Don Juans. This iconic figure in Chicano culture, as in the Spanish-speaking world at large,⁵⁸ has long been associated with rampant sexuality and overt masculinity. In her study on Don Juan as cultural trickster, Catherine Connor asserts: "Don Juan's fame as a literary hero [...] is always defined by sexuality and hegemony" (83). Indeed, he is one of the most strategically masculine characters in Western literature, and his masculinity is constructed through his sexual prowess and power relations. The role of mobility in Tirso de Molina's and José Zorrilla's plays establishes Don Juan's virility and prowess — in essence his power. Through his movements, especially his crossing of geographic borders in Tirso's and Zorrilla's works, Don Juan could be thought of as becoming more masculine in contrast to women who traditionally remain close to home. In a sense, his masculinity is constructed through his movements or transgressions of women's bodies and of geographic spaces.

Don Juan experiences vast geographic mobility in Tirso's play and constructs his masculinity through these movements. The play begins with the seduction of Doña Isabela in Naples. With this dishonoring discovered and in fear for his life, he discusses the situation with his Uncle Pedro, who reprimands his seduction of women in various locations:

Di, vil, ¿no bastó emprender
con ira y fiereza extraña
tan gran traición en España

con otra noble mujer,
 sino en Nápoles también,
 y en el palacio real
 con mujer tan principal? (v. 77-83)

Although Don Juan does not heed these words, he follows his uncle's advice to flee the city and live "encubierto" (v. 109). Thus, Don Juan heads off to Tarragona on the coast of present-day Spain where he seduces a peasant girl, Tisbea. He then travels to Seville at the request of his father and there seduces Ana, a woman who is engaged to another man. Lastly, he travels to the little town of Dos Hermanas where he leads Aminta to believe he will marry her and then, as can be expected, leaves her. Don Juan remains in Seville for the duration of the play and this lack of movement coincides with his demise; it is precisely when he remains in one place that he is eventually held accountable for his actions. The events of the play emphasize how mobility both engenders him and allows him to escape accountability.

Zorrilla's version of the play likewise begins in Seville, but with a detailed description by Don Juan to Luis of his previous conquests "on the road." In his adventure narrative Don Juan constructs his masculinity through specific references to his mobility and his appropriation of the masculine cultural traditions of travel and war. By setting Don Juan in Italy, a land that has produced centuries of great men, and connecting his conquests with the Spanish military abroad, the play paints Don Juan as a great warrior. The saga begins when his virility is emphasized by his following of the Spanish military abroad in a war against France:

Pues señor, yo desde aquí,

buscando mayor espacio
 para mis hazañas, dí
 sobre Italia, porque allí
 tiene el placer un palacio.
 De la guerra y el amor
 antigua y clásica tierra
 y en ella y con Francia en guerra
 dígame: “dónde mejor?” (35)

The war against France, a great political power at the time the play was written, makes an even stronger case for Don Juan’s power, whose country fought against a respectable enemy. By describing the ancient and classical land of Italy, Don Juan appropriates the physical glories of the land and its people. Additionally, through his use of the word “hazañas,” good acts or deeds often completed on a journey by chivalric knights, he again creates himself as masculine, powerful, and virile.

The play parallels geographic movement with masculine sexual prowess in its focus on Don Juan’s physical transgressions — both of spaces and of women’s bodies — during his travels to Rome and Naples. In his long list, as if to emphasize his virility, Don Juan enumerates women’s virtue along with several buildings whose walls he trespassed:

Por donde quiera que fui
 la razón atropellé,
 la virtud escarnecí,
 a la justicia burlé,
 y á las mujeres vedí,

yo á las cabañas bajé,
 yo á los palacios subí,
 yo los claustros escalé,
 y en todas partes dehé
 memoria amarga de mí. (37-38)

By listing women and buildings together as sites of transgression, Don Juan draws a parallel between entering women sexually and invading new spaces such as a cabin, palace, or cloister, both of which proves his masculinity.

In Tirso's and Zorrilla's plays, Don Juan's conquests of women extend beyond geopolitical borders. He travels about the continent with ease and delights in the variety of women that his geographic mobility allows. His mobility contrasts with the confinement of women in the play to a domestic or at least fixed social space, a space they are not able to leave. In Tirso's version, after Don Juan seduces Tisbea in a seaside cabin, he escapes on horseback. Rather than chasing after him, she calls out to her fellow fisherman to go after Don Juan: "Seguidle, Seguidle todos" (v. 1025). Similarly, the other women in the play are culturally confined to their home space while men possess the ability (and mobility) to avenge their honor. The plays thus doubly emphasize Don Juan's mobility in contrast to the limited mobility of the women he pursues. Don Juan becomes more masculine through his "mobile sexuality"; he is able to move in pursuit of women and to escape the consequences of his actions.

In contrast, Morton's contemporary Johnny does not enjoy the same ease of movement, especially when it comes to national borders. In comparison to the Spanish who were able to travel across the ocean in conquest of the "New World," he remains

within national borders and rejects the idea of returning to Mexico. This becomes apparent in a discussion between Johnny and Louie, an echo of the conversation between Don Juan and Luis in Zorrilla's version:

LOUIE. Cuando me largué del high school me fui directamente para México.

JOHNNY. When you crossed the Rio Grande, did you do the backstroke?

LOUIE. No hombre, I drove across the bridge in my Low Rider con mi Zoot Suit. The batos went babas, and the huisas went wild. Me fui hasta el D.F.— tú sabes, la mera capirucha.

JOHNNY. What the hell's a "capirucha?"

LOUIE. It means the CAP, the capital. Dig, México is shaped like a huge pirámide, desde la costa hasta la capital. You should check it out.

JOHNNY. Puro pedo. Nunca fui and I ain't going. My folks worked like dogs para largarse. (33)

The primary reason that Johnny mentions that he does not return to Mexico resides in his parents' economic hardships and difficulties crossing the US/Mexico border as undocumented migrants. Although Johnny was born in the US after his parents migrated from Mexico City (45) and thus it can be inferred that he has US citizenship, he does not envision himself moving beyond the US borders because of his parents' struggle to come to America and his familial ties.⁵⁹

Returning to Mexico as a Chicano evokes the discrimination that Johnny might experience in his travels through the US/Mexico border region, even as a US Citizen. Marmon Silko, a writer of Native American, Mexican, and Anglo descent, signals these

challenges facing people of color — specifically those with brown skin and indigenous features — especially since the government’s increased patrolling of the border from the 1980s on. Silko describes the discrimination and harassment of Chicanos by Border Patrol agents: “Two men, both Chicanos, were detained at the same time, despite the fact that they too presented ID and spoke English without the thick Texas accents of the Border patrol agents. While we were stopped, we watched as other vehicles — whose occupants were white — were waved through the checkpoint” (118). In addition to unequal enforcement and detention, she cites canine harassment, gun threats, and verbal and physical abuse in the area in which the fictional Johnny lives. While people of color can face discrimination regardless of location, Marmon Silko emphasizes how these discriminatory practices take place specifically “on the road” (118). Racial profiling, in this way, might function to literally and figuratively keep Chicanas/os like Johnny “in their place.” In this way, the threatening environment of the US Southwest — even more intensified along the US/Mexico border — impedes Johnny’s desire to travel south.⁶⁰

Despite his lack of a vehicle and perhaps because of his disinterest in returning to Mexico, Johnny utilizes his limited resources to venture north by bus. After hearing about Louie’s travels to Mexico in his lowrider,⁶¹ Johnny boasts to Louie: “I took the Greyhound al norte — to the Big Manzana. New York, New York — so big you gotta say it twice” (34). Utilizing a Greyhound as a mode of transportation, rather than a private car, signals Johnny’s lack of financial resources.⁶² His shortage impedes his ability to travel, influencing how he will travel (by Greyhound), where he will travel (to places on the Greyhound route), and how often he will travel (not frequently). Indeed, Johnny limits his ventures to areas dominated by those of similar heritage and within his

same country, preferring regions and cities where Latinos live (New York, Texas, Arizona, and California). By calling New York, “The Big Manzana” (34), translating “Apple” into Spanish, he underscores the primacy of his experience as a Chicano and that of other Latinos in this city associated with immigration and numerous cultures.⁶³ This limited mobility differs greatly with the economic mobility enjoyed by Tirso’s protagonist whose servant, Catalinón, readies his ship or horses so that he can flee to another city with ease (v. 521).

Johnny’s comparative immobility is less physical than it is cultural and economic; he lacks the social privilege of his predecessors, who move about the continent with relative disregard to national borders and with the funds necessary to ease their journeys. In fact, Johnny’s limited geographic mobility recalls the women in the earlier versions who are confined by society to a certain domestic space. This is not to imply that *Johnny Tenorio* “feminizes” its protagonist, but rather that like Don Juan’s female victims in the earlier versions, Johnny is confined by certain cultural limitations that impede his travel. In the case of the women, such as the aforementioned Tisbea, the code of honor permitted only male members to seek and to vindicate a woman’s honor. For Johnny, although mobile, larger forces of a dominant culture, such as social, economic, and education systems, also inhibit his movements.

These larger forces also challenge Johnny’s intercultural mobility — his ability to successfully interact with people of distinct cultural backgrounds, thereby reaching intended personal, financial, or other goals. As Johnny’s interactions demonstrate, issues of race and ethnicity also come to the forefront in dealing with people of other cultural background. While Johnny succeeds in wooing women of many races and ethnicities, his

cultural mobility is limited in other realms; his intercultural experiences remain sexual (in the private realm), rather than social, professional, or political (in the public realm). Near the beginning of the play, Berta the bartender/curandera shares a long list of Johnny's sexual conquests:

Among them you'll find
 camareras, cantineras
 farmer's daughters, city girls
 abogadas, tamaleras
 there are women of every grade
 every form, every stage.

To him blondes are sexy
 Asian women, quite perplexing
 English gals are domineering
 and Latinas so endearing. (30)

Johnny later tells Louie that he “ate up” the white girls who had “never laid — and I do mean LAID — eyes on such a handsome Chicano like me” (34) and boasts about his conquests in New York, among these “Anglos, Jews, Czechs, Irish, Italians, Swedes... it was like the United Nations” (34). Due to his ability to win over women of many races and ethnicities in the US, the play seemingly signals a vast cultural mobility for Johnny when considered in connection with his sexuality. However, Johnny's sexual mobility negatively impacts the cultural mobility of Ana, his girlfriend, and endangers that of other Chicanas. In a discussion between Berta and Johnny, it becomes clear that Ana

never finished high school, attended college, or started a career. This was because, according to Berta, “La dejaste embarazada,” to which Johnny replies: “Pregnant — yes! That’s what she wanted!” (41). While Johnny angers many gringo husbands for cuckolding their wives, it seems that the Chicanas are the ones to whom he does most damage, leaving them much like Ana, pregnant and unable to continue in their education or pursue careers. In terms of cultural mobility, Johnny’s attempts at mobility are primarily sexual, although imbued with desires for power and self-expression. These desires lead to Ana’s limited mobility when she becomes pregnant, and his sexual prowess that impedes the socio-economic mobility of the Chicana members of his community. Thus, while he is mobile, his sexual mobility creates a less stable ethnic group, plagued by teenage pregnancy and “deadbeat” fathers.

The play further emphasizes Johnny’s lack of cultural mobility outside of the sexual realm in his experiences with Anglos in New York. Rather than allowing him entrance, the dominant culture exoticizes Johnny, like many other Chicanos, thereby making him “other.” This exoticization at first glance appears positive in comparison to Johnny’s description of the treatment of Puerto Ricans in Spanish Harlem.⁶⁴

JOHNNY. One thing I noticed, if I told people I was Puerto Rican they treated me like dirt.

LOUIE. ¿No quieren a los puertorriqueños allá?

JOHNNY. Nope, the gringos treat them like “Mescins” in Texas.

LOUIE. ¡Qué gacho!

JOHNNY. But if I told the bolillos I was Chicano, they were really nice to me.

LOUIE. ¿Por qué?

JOHNNY. I don't know, something to do with "good karma."

LOUIE. Karma? What's karma?

JOHNNY. I don't know, something to do with the Indians. I think it has to do with Mexican food and pyramids. (34)

While exoticism might seem better than other forms of racism, this view of Johnny is merely another way of marginalizing him. In making light of the Chicano connection to an indigenous past, Johnny emphasizes the difference between how he envisions himself and how others see him. Curiously, the "bolillos" relate Johnny with good karma — an Indian religious concept — as if all people with brown skin were the same, and Johnny does not understand them. By exoticizing Johnny the dominant culture disregards his social and economic situation, preferring a romantic vision rather than a practical understanding of the challenges facing minorities. In other words, while Johnny has "good karma" (34) according to white people he meets in New York, his desire to "start a new life" (41) cannot succeed because of his the debts he owes to drug lords and the lack of social and educational resources.

In addition to issues of geographic and cultural mobility, spectators of *Johnny Tenorio* cannot help but notice the variety of languages spoken. Throughout the play, Johnny moves between several language forms: English, Spanish, Spanglish and Caló (a Chicano argot or slang). Johnny's code-switching enacts the linguistic experiences of many Chicano communities in the multicultural Southwest where languages frequently come into contact. Michelle Hall Kells explains in her study on *Tejano* code-switching, for example, that this practice is common among both Spanish-dominant and English-

dominant bilingual Chicanas/os in Texas (26). The use of multiple language forms in the play has contributed to its popularity in Texas and the US Southwest. Rodriguez, commenting on his decision to stage *Johnny Tenorio* in El Paso, notes that he chose this play in particular “to allow the Spanish-speaking community to get a chance to be on stage and as well to view a show in their native language” which is a mixture of many codes (Rodriguez). Although many view code-switching negatively as “evidence of laziness” and inferiority (Bentahlia 113,116), Johnny’s strategic use of language in the play calls for a more complex understanding. As this analysis will show, his clever deployment of various codes depends upon his audience and his desired outcome. Changing codes allows Johnny to maneuver within limiting cultural systems and ultimately to succeed in his romantic conquests. Despite Johnny’s limited geographic and cultural mobility, it is via code-switching — moving between languages — that he maintains agency and experiences agential linguistic movement.

Rather than code-switching on home soil as in *Johnny Tenorio*, Zorrilla’s⁶⁵ Don Juan travels to different spaces where other languages are spoken. At the beginning of the play, before the main action begins, Don Juan demonstrates linguistic and cultural competence by initiating a conversation with Buttarelli, the tavern owner, in Italian:

DON JUAN. Christófono, vieni qua.

BUTTARELLI. Eccellenza!

DON JUAN. Senti.

BUTTARELLI. Sento. Me ho imparato il castigliano, se é più facile a signor la sua lingua...

DON JUAN. Sí, es mejor: lascia dunque il tuo toscao, y dime: ¿don Luis Mejía ha venido hoy? (12-13)

Although Don Juan speaks few lines, his use of verbs in complete, intelligible phrases, as well as Buttarelli's understanding, show off his linguistic abilities. When Buttarelli asks in Italian if they might speak Spanish, Don Juan's native language, because it would be easier for him, Don Juan agrees and switches between the codes comfortably before returning to his mother tongue. The willingness of Buttarelli to communicate with Don Juan in Italian marks Don Juan's linguistic capabilities and his acceptance by speakers of that language.

Italian also appears in non-central scenes making the play verisimilar and pleasing to erudite spectators who take pleasure in hearing another language on stage, thus speaking to the Romantic aesthetic of the exotic. Buttarelli, for example, converses with Miguel, a minor character in the play, in Italian. Miguel asks, "Che comanda?," to which Buttarelli responds, "Presto, qui servi una tovola, amico: e del Lacrima più antico porta due bottiglie" (16-17). That Don Juan speaks Italian also highlights his own elitism and cultural prestige — the language of opera and classical art. Don Juan values and celebrates the Italian culture as one of greatness in its age, in its wars and as a land of love. It is thus through his linguistic abilities, gained by way of the privileges of education and travel, that Zorrilla's version underscores Don Juan's social position.

In Morton's rendition of the play the use of another language is not limited to a few scenes; rather, the entire play is a mixture of various language forms. Johnny's use of various codes, however, is not a sign of his international cultural capital as it is for Don Juan in Zorrilla's version. By juxtaposing Johnny's experiences with language in

elementary school with his linguistic dexterity in later adolescence, the play underscores how Johnny's linguistic experience evolves over time. As a child his lack of English is a mark against him while as an adult his linguistic ingenuity allows him to manipulate situations to benefit his desires. *Johnny Tenorio* thus does not shy away from the linguistic challenges of Chicanos; at the same time the play demonstrates how code-switching can be used tactically as a way of functioning within an oppressive cultural system. In this way, rather than understanding code-switching negatively, this analysis focuses on the way moving between languages offers a speaker power in limiting circumstances.

In one of Johnny's flashbacks, he remembers not wanting to go to school — a place of fear and verbal abuse — because his teacher mocked him for not speaking English well. This experience is common for native Spanish speakers, as Debra Castillo notes. While Spanish is considered a disadvantage for poor Latino children, it is an asset for white children of higher socio-economic classes (*Redreaming America* 190). School, rather than a place of learning and support, often becomes a place of fear and discrimination, as Johnny's flashback demonstrates:

JOHNNY. No quiero ir, Papá, hacen fun de mí — especialmente la
“tee-cher.”

DON JUAN. La “tee-shirt?” ¿La camiseta?

JOHNNY. No, la tee-shirt no, la “tee-cher,” Mrs. Blaha.

DON JUAN. (*Laughing.*) ¡Oh, la maestra, la Señora Blaha!

[...]

JOHNNY. Y un día la tee-cher me llamó un bad nombre—me llamó
 “spic”

DON JUAN. ¡No me digas! ¡Conque te llamó “spic”?

JOHNNY. Sí, dijo. “Johnny, you no no how to spick good English!” (43)

Spanish dominates Johnny’s discourse and thus the words he chooses to switch into English: “fun,” “bad,” “spic,” “no” and the mispronounced “tee-cher” stand out. What is curious about these particular words spoken in English is that they are all learned at school. In a sense, Johnny’s education, rather than helping him to acquire English, has consisted in learning words in the language of power that mock and defeat him.

Language is thus utilized to demonstrate cultural superiority by those in Johnny’s school as if the only valid way of knowing (“no”ing) the world was through the words of English language speakers. Ana Antón-Pacheco, among other scholars, understands Johnny’s speech as “far from correct” and notes negatively, “neither his English nor his Spanish are lexically free from linguistic loans” (113). This reaction to the use of language forms other than English (including Spanish, Spanglish, or multiple codes) is not uncommon according to Ilan Stavans, who writes that the mixture of languages in “the United States has given way to an atmosphere of anxiety and even xenophobia” (“Spanglish” 556). Out of the fear of the other who speaks a different language, Johnny is teased and persecuted for his lack of knowledge and lack of ability to speak English “properly.”⁶⁶

This linguistic trouble of Johnny’s childhood is contrasted with his finesse when Johnny code-switches when speaking with women. In this way, Johnny strategically chooses a code based on his circumstance and desires. Recent scholarship on code-

switching has shown that code-switching depends upon grammatical as well as extralinguistic elements (Milroy and Mysken 9). Audience, location, topic, levels of intimacy, and desired outcome all influence a person's use of codes. The deployment of certain codes may therefore function as a way of creating community or of creating distance.

As his interactions with various women demonstrate, Johnny is aware of his audience and uses language accordingly to gain women's trust. With the Anglo runaway woman he meets in New York, he uses only English and chooses expressions that would be familiar and comforting to her. He tells her, "You're my homegirl. Hey, you wanna go party? I got some marihuana. You look hungry. You wanna go get a hamburger?" When he finds out she is a runaway from California, he adds: "I got a nice pad you can stay at" (34-35). He speaks differently with Ana, his Chicana girlfriend, using a variety of language forms common to their Chicano community. He thus pursues Ana by strategically choosing words in English or Spanish. His awareness of audience — typical for code-switchers — allows him to work with language to arrive at his desired outcome. In this way Johnny can be compared to Don Juans in earlier versions; he utilizes language tactically to woo and work through challenging situations with women. As Shoshana Felman indicates in her study of Don Juan's language use, "The scandal of seduction [...] consists in a skillful and lucid exploitation, by Don Juan, of the [...] capacities of language" (32). The only difference is that Johnny uses multiple codes to deploy his seductive words.

In a conversation with Ana which occurs after Johnny has succeeded in making love to her for the first time, he moves between codes, using Spanish to express emotion. His strategic use of Spanish, in this particular, builds intimacy and trust with Ana.⁶⁷

ANA. (*Entering, buttoning her blouse.*) Well, it's over. You got what you wanted, right?

JOHNNY. I want more than that, Ann.

ANA. Like what?

JOHNNY. Your alma.

ANA. (*Turning to go.*) Adiós.

[...]

JOHNNY. Stay here. You don't have to go home. You're a woman now, mi mujer.

ANA. I don't think so, bato. And stop calling me "Ann." Mi nombre es Ana.

JOHNNY. ¡Ana, pues! Ana, you've touched me somewhere I didn't know existed, here en mi corazón. When you're not around me duele. (39)

Distinct from the English words that underscored his rejection in school by his teacher and peers, Johnny — now English dominant — uses Spanish (“alma,” “mi mujer,” “en mi corazón,” and “me duele”) as his tool to convince his girlfriend of his love. Marta Fairclough notes that this use of Spanish to give “un tono personal, más afectivo a lo que se dice” is a common characteristic of code-switchers (193). In Johnny’s case, the frequency of code-switching intensifies as the conversation becomes more heated and Johnny needs more resources to convince Ana. In the first line he uses all English, then he moves to single words, to phrases in Spanish, to what could stand on its own as a complete sentence, “me duele.” By using Spanish to express emotion, Johnny invites Ana into his world and grows his solidarity with her.⁶⁸

In this scene Johnny's language is English-dominant to the point that he begins to call his girlfriend "Ann," a name that she rejects, preferring the Spanish "Ana." By calling her Ann, it is as if Johnny asks Ana to join him on his conquest of America and English. As he is Johnny and not Juan, it is possible he desires that she become more a part of the mainstream US culture. However, by repeatedly insisting that Johnny call her by her name in Spanish, Ana demands that he bring her back into part of his inner world of love and care. In this linguistic negotiation, culture comes to the forefront. When Johnny then calls Ana by her Spanish name, he increases his intimacy with her and communicates his willingness to accept her as she desires. This use of language to grow a connection with Ana becomes more apparent when Johnny expresses why he wants her in particular: "Look, I used to run around with las gringas. They wanted to get down, tu sabes, get married and have kids. But I couldn't. I was searching, sin saberlo, for a Chicana. [...] Someone from my own Raza..." (39-40). In this way, Johnny's message works together with his medium to create a stronger linguistic experience between him and Ana. Literary critic Juan Bruce-Novoa describes this combination of Spanish and English as a kind of "interlingualism" which allows people to creatively work with "reservoirs of primary material [language forms] to be molded together as needed" (50). In this molding together, as Johnny's words demonstrate, the whole becomes more than the sum of two parts.

Johnny's movement between languages also demonstrates his capability of negotiating identity in a hybrid cultural context. Although he can express himself completely in one language, as demonstrated in his conversation with the runaway in English, his preference for multiple language forms signals his ability to live effectively

in various cultures: Chicano culture, the larger American culture, and in the places where these cultures come into contact. Johnny's use of language thus does not mark him as incompetent as some would suggest, rather his deployment of various language forms speaks to his apt adaptation to his context. In their introduction to *Telling Tongues: A Latin@ Anthology on Language Experience* Louis Mendoza and Toni Nelson Herrera write: "language is shown as something that helps people to connect and transcend limitations which we believe has huge political implications" (19). Similarly, via code-switching Johnny finds a way to maintain agency in his community and in the larger US. It is with language that he becomes Don Juan.

While Johnny — perhaps like many Chicana/o spectators who view the play — moves geographically, culturally, and linguistically, his mobility is not always marked by ease. What mobility Johnny possesses highlights his strategic use of his resources, specifically multiple language forms, within the context of a dominant culture that does not always value his ethnicity or language. Through witnessing Johnny's own agency, Chicana/o spectators likewise may recognize ways of becoming strategically mobile, specifically through language, in the context of their own experiences. Perhaps most importantly, this quotidian use of language signals the possibilities of small creative actions for maintaining agency in everyday life.

The Freedom of Driving and Authoring in *González and Daughter Trucking Co.*

In *Migrancy, Culture, Identity*, Iain Chambers notes that "to write is, of course, to travel. It is to enter a space, a zone, a territory [...] but everywhere characterized by movement" (10). María Amparo Escandón's novel, *González and Daughter Trucking Co.*

(2005), likewise associates authorship with travel as evidenced in the novel's subtitle, "a road novel with a literary license." In the novel *Libertad* recounts trucking ventures with her father to a captive audience⁶⁹ of inmates at the Mexicali Penal Institute for Women — taking them on a road trip of some twenty years through the highways and back roads of the US and into her father's homeland of Mexico. In contrast to earlier (male-authored) road novels — such as Jack Kerouac's *On the Road* (1957) and Oscar Zeta Acosta's *The Autobiography of a Brown Buffalo* (1972) — *González and Daughter*, one of the first and few Latina road novels,⁷⁰ poses questions about the meaning of the road in regards to migrancy and gender. As signaled in the analysis of *Johnny Tenorio* and earlier Don Juan texts, conventional Western ideas about mobility — among these freedom of movement and transgression of social norms — commonly are associated with masculinity.⁷¹ *González and Daughter* reworks the male-coded road novel from the perspective of a female truck driver and gestures to the intersections of identity and geographic movement. By focusing on Libertad's authorial role as a kind of Latina Scheherazade, my analysis demonstrates the novel's emphasis on story as a tool for creating a homeplace with language and for critiquing larger societal narratives. *González and Daughter* thus foregrounds the connection between narrative tactics (authoring) and agency (driving), and underscores the uses of these tactics for going places personally and politically.

The novel begins with Libertad reading to the inmates from *The Three Musketeers*. More accurately, she tries to read but hears her own story of trucking ventures with her father emerge from her mouth. The inmates enjoy her "reading" so much that the warden allows for a weekly prison book club during which Libertad

continues the story of how her father, a former literature professor at the University of Mexico, fled the country after the Massacre of Tlatelolco in 1968 and disguised himself as a trucker out of the fear of being found and persecuted by the authorities for a murder he did not commit.⁷² She goes on to tell of his romance with her mother (an Anglo trucker), of her mother's death, of her schooling with her father on the road, of her first romance and sexual encounter with a construction worker she meets named Martin, and, of special interest to the inmates, how Libertad ended up in the penal institute. After much anticipation, and believing Libertad to be a murderer, the inmates learn that she failed to tie down a crane on the back of the rig, causing the deaths of several people when the crane swung into their traffic lane. The novel relies on Libertad's story as a narrative thread, to the extent that this interactive storytelling could not be removed from the novel without a large-scale revision.⁷³ Libertad's tale is interrupted by the prison audience and interspersed with other prison events narrated by an external, non-participating narrator, truckers' radio conversations, Libertad's journal entries, and unmediated dialogue. The novel also includes a glossary of trucking terminology to help the reader better understand this possibly unfamiliar code.

Although Libertad's name means *freedom* and her trucking profession connotes mobility and independence, she does not understand her life in these terms. Living a migratory lifestyle, with the family's economic wellbeing and her father's life dependent on their continued mobility, she must remain ever on the move, even while desiring a permanent home. In this way, her mobility is not agential but compelled, as she explains: "my father chose my destiny. [...] There was never an option for me, nor did I ever think of the possibility of being anything else. My profession was written all over my DNA,

and there was nothing I could do about it” (121). Her lack of choice echoes the experiences of other children born into migrant families who follow their parents’ work and are unable to leave the family “profession.”⁷⁴

Migration has become an increasing reality for many both in the US and worldwide. Between 1960 and 2005, the number of international migrants doubled to 190 million people who now live outside of their birth country, half of these being women (Morrison 1). Many of these have low-paying and transitory jobs; according to the US Department of Labor,⁷⁵ these jobs are concentrated in the agriculture, hospitality, construction, and manufacturing industries (Kochhar). Some less common migratory positions — electricians, truck-drivers, wild-land firefighters, and temporary consultants — may offer better wages. Others who migrate include refugees that relocate because of wars and conflicts in their countries, and exiles that move out of fear of persecution and violence for their political, religious, or other beliefs. In each of these cases, the impetus for moving and the social class may vary. Libertad’s father, who flees Mexico in fear of the Mexican authorities, would most likely be considered an exile by many, thus differentiating his and Libertad’s experience from other migrants of lower economic and social class. Nevertheless, their experiences of movement in the US, conjure up other contemporary experiences of migrancy.

This connection between Libertad’s experience and that of migrants is further developed in the father’s struggles with his legal status. Like many migrants,⁷⁶ Libertad’s father does not have permission to be in the US because of his clandestine entry while fleeing political persecution in Mexico. Although Libertad’s father differs from the majority of these migrants because of his social class and his educational level, his fear

does not. To keep from being discovered, Libertad's father changes his name frequently. Instead of his given name, Joaquín González, he goes by: "Pantaleón González, Juvenal González, Pascual González, Severo González, José Arcadio González, Aureliano González" (61) or another trucker handle or pron (code-name) such as "El Hippie" (75). Curiously, Joaquín highlights his inventive tactics by choosing the first names of several well-know literary characters from García Márquez's *Cien años de soledad*, among others.⁷⁷ He also dresses in disguise as a typical US truck driver in "cowboy boots, clad jeans, a yellow *CAT* hat, and a leather belt with a big ol' longhorn buckle" to avoid discovery (110). However, this disguise does not completely rid the father of his worries:

Your mom didn't know how relentless the Mexican authorities are when they want to be. They will find me, eventually. By hiding on the roads in the United States I'm just stretching my luck. What if they cross over looking for me? What if the American authorities help them track me down? All I hope for is that they find me after I've raised you and you can live on your own. If I get captured before you grow up, you'll go straight to foster care [...] And even if you went back to Mexico to look for my mother, she'd never believe you're her granddaughter. (110)

Constant mobility becomes the only way for the family to stay together. According to Urry, "once people are forced to migrate, they then encounter the legal and social systems of the developed world which set up many restrictions and limitations upon their migration and upon their capacity to stay" (36), I would add, stay in one place. However, this does not make for a guaranteed positive experience, as fear of the authorities and constant movement turn the father into "a paranoid wreck" (75). In establishing these ties

with migrant experience, I suggest that *González and Daughter* opens a space for dialogue on migrancy; it speaks to issues of movement and legality of the undocumented and exploited within US borders. Soren Frank explains how the increased migrancy in recent years has become central in literature: “the main protagonist in the twentieth century turned out to be a migrant. No longer looked upon as anomalous, migration has actually become the norm and has resulted in a profound negotiation of the concepts of identity, belonging and home” (1). It is through Libertad and her father’s struggle to live a migratory lifestyle that the novel gets at the meaning of the road, specifically for migrants. As Frank explains, issues of belonging and home become central concerns. *González and Daughter* not only brings up these issues but also leads readers to consider ways of dealing with coerced movement and the lack of a physical home through the creative use of story.

In addition to migrancy, the novel also brings into question what it means to be a woman on the road. According to Shane Hamilton in *Trucking Country*, women in the 1960s and 70s saw “trucking as a means of liberation from the confines of the home” and sought to gain access to jobs formerly codified as “men’s jobs” (196). A woman driving a big-rig appears liberating, especially as women have long been associated with and restricted to the domestic sphere. However, Libertad differs from some women truckers in that she does not set out on the road as a way of escaping domestic confines or rebelling against gender norms. As she explains: “[w]e started the business together when I was born, my father and I. The sign on the door read González and Daughter Trucking Co.” (6). Libertad also tells the inmates how she enjoys being her father’s co-pilot, navigator, and assistant — understanding herself as his respected companion. Her father

seemingly considers her role as vital to the success of the family business, calling her a “business partner” and refusing to drive without her aid (140). Libertad most clearly articulates the mutuality of their business relationship when she explains how the business and truck belong to both of them, even since her birth:

Our business was to haul heavy-duty construction and farming equipment. Bulldozers, cranes, wheel-loaders, mass excavators, compactors, combines. But what set us apart from the rest of our competitors was not the fact that we were a father-daughter trucking team and that one of the two partners — me, that is — was two months old; it was that we had a niche in the market that no one catered to. (64)

Her use of “our” as opposed to “his” elucidates the extent to which she shares in the company. In addition, the quoted text signals Libertad’s dexterity with the precise terminology of the product she hauls with her father. This command of the lingo is reiterated in her use of trucker argot throughout the text, so much that the novel includes a glossary of trucker terminology.

However, while Libertad as a child envisions herself as an equal partner in the trucking industry with her father, this relationship is not one of complete equality. As Hamilton signals, it is difficult for women to be accepted as part of the male-dominated trucking culture. Male truckers often only described their female counterparts in patronizing and chauvinistic terms (197). Women are more accepted into the culture when they are part of male/female teams (usually a husband and wife), according to John Peter Rothe in *The Trucker’s World* explains. When women join their husband, father or

male partner, however, they generally are not considered as equals. Rothe's use of gender binaries demonstrates this commonly held view:

Through husband and wife teams, alternate views of professional drivers are slowly gaining an audience. The female is being recognized as professional, on the basis of being competent, levelheaded and by retaining enough femininity to make the husband "feel proud." Similarly, the male driver of a spouse team is aware of the woman's expectations. He becomes more professional, skillful, and safe, besides being clean, shaven, and looking presentable. (106)

A woman's place in the trucking community can require that she conform to gender norms by being "feminine" and having certain female "expectations." In a sense, the woman domesticates the truck cab and her fellow male driver by ensuring cleanliness and order. Rothe's words also suggest that to be a woman truck driver without a male companion would be difficult, as the woman's acceptance and "authority" in the trucking community ultimately comes through her male partner. Many outside of trucking culture also share this understanding of women's place. Law officers, for example, "reasoned that women moderate male aggressive driving tendencies, they check men's possible adventures with drugs and prostitutes, they are better organized with paperwork, and they are more empathic about driving clean tractors — inside and out" (105). In this way, it may not be accurate to interpret Libertad's experience as a female trucker as a subversion of gender norms. Rather, her father and the trucking culture may see her, as it does many other women in male/female teams, as the lesser partner who merely aids the male driver. In addition to gender, Libertad experiences the changes of being a racialized woman on

the road. In other words, she suffers discrimination for both being woman and a person of color.

As Libertad enters puberty — becoming a woman — the big rig becomes a key site in her understanding and questioning of gender norms. In a story she tells to the inmates about getting her first bra at age 14, this increasing tension with her father surfaces. In the story her father assists a broken down motorist while Libertad marvels at the merchandise of the man, a lingerie salesman: “I couldn’t help but stare at all that wonderful merchandise. For months I’d had a dream in which I tried on a green bra in front of a mirror. I cupped my hands and placed them carefully over my breasts as if sizing them, and suddenly, when I looked at my reflection again, my face had become my mother’s” (146). When her father finishes fixing the vehicle, the salesman offers him a bag of undergarments for Libertad. The scene becomes humorous as Libertad’s father responds: “What the hell do I want bras for?” while Libertad stands next to him with “growing breasts” and “nipples sticking to [her] drenched T-shirt” (147). The father’s denial of his daughter’s physical maturation becomes more pronounced when the salesman sizes up Libertad as a 34C, far beyond any training bra. His rejection of Libertad’s developing body exemplifies his lack of comfort with her becoming a woman. In one sense, he may fear her now more visible sexual self, and in another, he may struggle with viewing her as his equal. The novel thus treats the way sexuality and gender, while different facets of human experience, become intertwined for Libertad and her father. Her physical coming-of-age marks how her father and society at large perpetuate gender norms.

Libertad realizes her inequality with her father more fully when the two purchase a new rig and she notices the painted words of their company on it: “There was a gleaming airbrushed sign on the door: González and Daughter Trucking Co. [...] I was the daughter. The one with no name. In those words lay my very identity. Was I anything without my father? No, I was not. Could a company be named Daughter Trucking Co.? No, it could not” (156). When she ventures inside the new truck, she does what little she can to mark her territory, penning the words “Mudflap Girl,” a nickname she gives herself, on the wall with a large black marker. Libertad understands this subversive marking as a reclaiming of space in the male-coded vehicle: “From that day on, that would be my handle, my pron, my name. And so I marked my territory with my new identity, just as my father had marked the rest of the truck with his philosophy” (157). This marking might function as resistance to her father’s authority and an emotional coming-of-age. According to Shirley Fedorak, graffiti, and I would propose Libertad’s tagging, is “used to challenge and transform power relations” and is commonly “used as a rite of passage into adulthood” (70). While it is generally true that in any business model, the father has more power than the son, Libertad realizes that her gender further distances her from a desired equality. The truck, rather than an extension of her own body, functions an extension of her father’s body and thus controls her. Marking the truck with her self-given name demonstrates her desire for a distinct relationship with the vehicle, the business, and most notably with her father — and the tactics she employs to fulfill it.

This inequality becomes more pronounced as Libertad observes her father’s sexual double standard. While the father frequently stays the night with women at truck stops, he refuses to allow Libertad contact with men. Libertad, aware of her father’s

numerous sexual encounters, begins to keep count on what becomes a very long list (160). Shortly after his overnight stay with Linda in *Truth and Consequences*, she asks her father, “When I am I going to start sleeping with men I meet on the road?” (160). The father slams on the breaks, halting in the middle of the highway and nearly causing an accident. He then proceeds to ask her if she is a “whore” and yells out: “Women don’t go around sleeping with men they meet on the road. Only men do that!” (161). When Libertad responds, “So, if only men sleep around, who do they sleep with, cows?” her father becomes so enraged that he tells her to get out of the truck (161).

The truck, an extension of his virile masculine body, provides him with what Smith would call a mobile cabin in which to pursue women (183). The presence of his daughter complicates the gender norms he takes for granted. Libertad’s questioning of her father in the masculine vehicle thus disrupts his view of gender because if he regards her as he does other women, she must conform to the virgin/whore paradigm. Jacobo Schifler explains in *Latino Truck Driver Trade* a view held by many but not all Latino truckers: “Men are sexually active by nature, larger in size and stronger than women. Activity, strength and size are superior to passivity, weakness, and smallness” (77). Schifler signals how this plays out: “women who are penetrated have less value, unless they are married. Men who have multiple sexual relations with different women are more macho. Women who have many partners are dishonorable and whores” (77). In comparison to the Don Juan characters whose masculinity is demonstrated in their sexual prowess, Libertad’s femininity must be showcased through her virginity.

After pointing out this double standard to her father with her words, Libertad questions it with her actions. While her father is off in search of a part to fix their truck,

Libertad meets and falls in love with Martin, a builder of round houses. Even though this man is loving and respectful, Libertad's father does not allow Martin and Libertad to see each other. In one instance he yells at Martin, shoves him several times, and takes Libertad with him back into the truck (234). In the conversation that follows, the father's anger grows as he learns about their sexual encounter:

“You gave it to him!” He spat out those words as if they were drops of cyanide on his tongue. I didn't know what he was talking about. My address? My phone number? We didn't have any of that. How could I give it to him? “You gave the goddamn fucker your virginity!” My father couldn't keep his eyes on the road. “Answer me! Did you?” I had. I had wanted to. Should I feel any guilt? How could something so magnificent be so horrendous? (235)

Libertad thus exposes this double standard inherent in gender norms. Where he sees her virginity as an object to be given, Libertad understands it in terms of experience. The novel reiterates this distinction when Libertad's father suggests that her deceased mother would think ill of her because of her sexual encounter with Martin. Libertad again reminds him of the inconsistencies of his viewpoint, as her mother and her father had a similar relationship on the road.

Given the limitations of gender norms and migrancy that Libertad — like many others — experiences, *González and Daughter* offers ways for dealing with these challenges, specifically through the tactic of storytelling. It is important to remember that the aforementioned stories about Libertad and her experiences on the road all take place in the context of her weekly prison “book club.” During these times, Libertad's fellow

inmates at the Mexicali Penal Institute for Women gather around to hear the stories that she “reads” from books. By placing her stories within the novel — a kind of book within a book — *González and Daughter* highlights the construction of stories. This technique, among others, points to the artifice of societal narratives — such as beliefs about women, prisoners, and migrants. One of the results of foregrounding the creation of stories might include a critique of certain privileged narratives that are understood as natural (not-constructed), such as the father’s beliefs about gender. The novel also underscores the potential of story through the way Libertad tells her stories to the inmates, in a kind of literary salon performance. In this case, storytelling becomes a way of constructing and moving to a better homeplace especially for those in limiting physical situations, like prisoners and migrants.

In *Metafiction: The Theory and Practice of Self-Conscious Fiction*, Patricia Waugh defines metafiction as “a term given to fictional writing which self-consciously and systematically draws attention to its status as an artifact in order to pose questions about the relationship between fiction and reality” (2). There are of course many techniques used in metafictional writing that draw attention to the constructed nature of narratives, such as references to the writing/creation of the story (framing, story within a story, rejecting a conventional plot, defamiliarization), direct address to reader (breaking the fourth wall), and references to other literary works (intertextuality), among others. Metafictional techniques, as Waugh mentions, highlight the relationships between the work and real-time lived experiences. They encourage readers to reflect on their experiences with a text within a larger system of texts, rather than viewing texts as mere representation of “reality.” In this way, as Linda Hutcheon signals, metafiction highlights

the role of the reader, in addition to the author, in the creation of meaning (*Narcissistic Narrative* 37).

From the very beginning, *González and Daughter* points to its constructed nature through a dialogue between storyteller Libertad and her bunkmate, Rata, on the veracity of Libertad's stories. When Rata cannot sleep, kept awake by questions left by the book club earlier that day, she asks Libertad: "You said your dad never put you in school, is that right?" Libertad responds: "It's not me. It didn't happen to me. It's a fictional character [...] It's all made up" (17). Rata, like many of the other inmates, insists that the story be a factual recreation of the past and that it be Libertad's story if she is indeed its author. As the novel develops, this debate over veracity and authorship intensifies as the inmates talk among themselves: "You won't believe this, Maciza. You know the stories Libertad is reading to us at the library? [...] None of that happened to her. She's made up all that shit" (30). These conversations within the novel open a space for readers, along with Libertad's audience, to consider the artifice of story. The novel does not allow readers to enter easily into it, as if into another world, because of the inconsistencies in the narrative voice. Jolted between stories, readers constantly are reminded of the construction of narrative.

The prisoners' debates also signal the limits of story to faithfully replicate lived experience. This faithfulness is not possible because of the gaps left by death, movement, perspective, and the inability of memory and narrative to capture the past. Their debate underscores how narratives, even stories that may have been lived by that author, are imbued with perspective and blurred by time. By extension, this focus on language elucidates the construction of larger societal narratives, for example, beliefs about gender

norms. In the words of Inger Christensen, an analysis of metafictional techniques “reveal[s] not only the writer’s relationship to art, but to reality as a whole” (14). These linguistic moves might be thought of as tools for pulling apart larger social systems, such as conventional gender norms.

The use of intertextuality in *González and Daughter* also emphasizes the constructed nature of Libertad’s narrative. The novel references several literary works which Libertad reads in the big rig and then tosses onto the highways for lack of room in the cab, or which she pretends to read from during the prison book club: *The Kiss of the Spiderwoman*, *Crime and Punishment*, *Hamlet*, *Don Quijote*, *What We Talk About When We Talk About Love*, *Little Women*, *A Brief History of Time*, and *How to Build Your Own Earthen Home*. In a clever way, the author draws on literary works, *The Kiss of the Spiderwoman*, *Don Quijote*, and *Hamlet*, that are cited frequently by scholars as classic examples of metafiction. The first two works were also penned by narrators in a prison, like *González and Daughter*, adding to the novels play with this technique and involving readers who may recognize these intertextual connections.

Intertextuality becomes especially apparent when, at one point in her story, Libertad makes a longer, more specific reference to the performance of *The Merchant of Venice*. Her father’s class was putting on this play while he was working at the University of Mexico in 1968. In the story Libertad tells how soldiers, who among other things were searching for her father, came into the room to take the students whom they considered revolutionaries. There is some confusion over characters, and one of the inmates, Chapota, interrupts to ask: “Excuse me, Libertad, what was the Prince of Morocco doing at the university?” Libertad responds, “It wasn’t the actual Prince of Morocco. It was a

student dressed like him for the play.” Chapota then asks, “An imposter? Is he gonna do a number on that Shylock motherfucker?” Another inmate, Maciza, responds, “That’s not important right now [...]. The ones in deep shit are the actors in the play” (42). Through the use of metafictional techniques — placing *The Merchant of Venice* within Libertad’s story and within the novel as well as highlighting the interruptions by the soldiers and by the inmates comments — *Gonzalez and Daughter* emphasizes the centrality of the reader/audience in the creation of meaning. As Hutcheon emphasizes: “Reading and writing are both active, creative exercises and always have been [...]. In metafiction the reader or the act of reading itself often become thematized parts of the narrative situation, *acknowledged* as having a co-producing function” (*Narcissistic Narrative* 37, emphasis in original). It is thus through the use of self-referential techniques that the novel exemplifies not only creation with language, but also the linguistic power of the audience. What the audience chooses to do with the words they hear — accept, disagree, argue, interpret — signals their role in producing meaning. In other words, without an audience the text ultimately has little or no meaning.

The novel likewise showcases narrative and its possibilities in Libertad’s performance of her stories for her audience — another example of metafiction. During her weekly book club, Libertad sits on a stage in the library, with the inmates around her, recalling an actor on stage or at the very least a staged reading. The novel frames Libertad during her weekly book group, to use Erving Goffman’s term, and through her placement envisions her into a performer. Goffman suggests that it is this arrangement of a person on stage “looked at round and at length without offense, and looked to for

engaging behaviour, by persons in an ‘audience role’” that makes for an artistic performance (124).

In addition to her location on stage, the novel highlights Libertad’s storytelling by marking the distance between Libertad and her words. According to Richard Schechner, a performance is a kind of “restored behavior” in which a certain distance between a person and a behavior exists, such as an actor in a play⁷⁸ or a participant in a ritual. Libertad frequently points to this distance by reminding the audience that the stories are made-up. During one book club she tells her prison audience of writing her deceased mother into existence, using words as the building blocks for her life narrative:

Since I never knew her, I made her up. I spent the whole year riding next to my father, scribbling definitions of my mother. Then I’d tear out the pages filled with poems and throw them out the window. Writing was the only way I could leave tracks on the pavement [...] Tossing these poems was a way to claim the space where they landed as mine. This rite [...] gave me a sense of place. The road was my home and it was eighty feet wide and six-point-four million miles long and had no furniture. (166)

Libertad’s confession that she made-up her mother echoes her larger invention of the story for the inmates. This leads her audience to recognize the artifice of her stories and to question their veracity. By exposing the construction of this story, the novel points to its own artifice, a concept that Yael Halevi-Wise describes: “when a storytelling event dramatizes the cogs and wheels of creative communication, it exposes the framing narrative’s generic struggles” (7). In other words, that Libertad reveals her invention of story points to the invention of the novel, and perhaps, by extension, other larger societal

narratives such as beliefs about gender. Like the audience that questions Libertad's stories, readers too can question larger systems of discourse.

Victor Turner suggests that in ritual performances participants enter into liminal spaces. In this liminality, "the possibility exists of standing aside not only from one's own social position but from all social positions and of formulating a potentially unlimited series of alternate social arrangements" (12-13). Power dynamics are suspended in these liminal times and the possibility for different ways of being become more pronounced. Libertad's stories might function as a liminal space for herself and her audience. During the book club, powers are temporarily suspended in many ways. For example, the guards allow the women a break from their regular prison schedule, and Libertad is given a position of authority on stage. Shari Stone-Mediatore explains that stories are a "central means by which such [marginalized] people can take control over their own representation" (23). They can "problematize the institutions and ideologies that shape all our lives" (3). During the bookclub Libertad begins to see herself differently from her father and society, who envision her through the veil of gender norms. However, this envisioning is a process; it is through the telling of the story that Libertad and others are able to rethink and work out a distinct understanding their experiences. As Langellier and Peterson suggest, "Performing narrative involves a struggle for agency rather than the expressive-act of pre-existing, autonomous, stable self that serves as the origin for or authority on experience" (238).

In another way, the novel's focus on Libertad as storyteller signals the possibility of language for *doing*. That is, given the physical limitations of the inmates, story can be used as a tactic for going places. It is through Libertad's literary performance with the

prison inmates that the penal institute becomes as if a literary salon and the characters are transported to a distinct space. This happens in two ways. First, a physical community between teller and listeners is formed. Second, the teller and audience are moved imaginatively to an alternate space through the teller's words. Kirsten Langellier and Eric Peterson, in their study on the connections between storytelling and performance, signal how storytelling events become a kind of space people can inhabit. The space depends upon the interaction between the teller and the audience, and is not limited to a theater or other specialized location. The authors highlight the importance of embodiment, interactions with spectators, and self-reflexivity for a storytelling event to successfully create a kind of performance space in which language *does* (2-3).

For Libertad and the inmates, in the telling of stories, words become the building blocks of an imaginary place. This use of words becomes most apparent when Libertad tells her audience of her desires for home — thereby creating that home through her words for them.⁷⁹ She tells about how as a child she and her father passed through a neighborhood: “in secret, I wished to live in one of those houses. I’d keep the lawn mowed and very green, as green as a lawn in heaven must be. [...] Maybe there was a home in my future. I was hopeful even at eleven and a half” (25). After sharing with her father her desires for a physical home, he tells her that a home is not made of materials: “drywall does not hold a family together” (26). This idea of imagining a home and recognizing it as intangible is pertinent. In this vivid description the novel suggests that home can be something other than a physical shelter. This idea of home would be helpful to the inmates and to migrants who lack a physical home.

Libertad tells again of her desire for homeplace in a later book club meeting. She explains how, at age 16, she and her father lose their transmission in Las Animas. While he goes in search for the part, Libertad uses this time to explore a house across the street under construction and sketches out her dreams with chalk:

I found a piece of blue chalk used by the workers to mark measurements on the walls. I picked it up and drew a throw rug on the particleboard floor. I traced a bed where a real one might sit in the future, pillows and all. A dresser by the door. Drapes on the sides of the window. A self portrait [...] I imagined it full of real furniture, wallpaper, and translucent curtains. (206)

The process of using words to create a home continues and even intensifies; she moves from imagining home from a distance as a child in the first part of her story, to stepping into a home and drawing the images of her mind in the latter part of the story. While Libertad does not physically inhabit a home with a street address, the creation of her reality through words becomes, in those moments, a space large enough for her to live in.⁸⁰ In “Spinstorying: An Analysis of Women Storytelling,” Elizabeth Fine and Jean Haskell Speer theorize the way women use strategies to “create closeness, inclusiveness, and equality among members” (166). These include positive minimal responses of support, signs of interest and attention through questions and comments, sharing of similar experiences, and humor (166). In this way, her performative storytelling together with the audience’s responses function to provide a homeplace for herself. Those confined to an institutional place, like Libertad and her audience, struggle to find belonging and comfort — just like migrants on the road. The motion Libertad’s narrative

provides then, takes the inmates to the place they most desire, a comforting home. In creating a home space through the use of performed language, Libertad is no longer confined to desiring a domestic space, to living in the suburbs or a barrio within the boundaries of drywall, so to speak. She truly does gain *libertad* by being able to construct a home space wherever her words (as driver of her own story) might take her.

Upon her release from the Mexicali Penal Institute, Libertad meets with her father and Martin. Outside of the prison, she sees a change in the company name on the “brand-new, gleaming red Kenworth T800 truck with a studio sleeper” (283). Whereas on their old rig it read “González and Daughter Trucking Co.,” now it reads, “González and Father Trucking Co.” in glittery silver letters with a purple border (283). As the words indicate, Libertad comes to be recognized fully as a trucker and woman. This, however, is not a mere inversion of gender roles, for the new truck will not become an extension of Libertad’s body as it was for her father. Instead, the final scene with the presence of her homebuilding love, Martin, suggests Libertad’s ability to live up to the distinct understanding of herself that she articulated in her book club. Through critiquing gender norms and reinventing herself, Libertad finds a way to be both/and. She can be at once on the road and at home, a sexual woman and not whore, a truck driver and a woman. Although the letters on the truck signal this change in relationship with her father, the novel demonstrates how Libertad’s own words enact this change through the authoring (driving) of story. The novel’s end recalls again how Libertad’s story is as much about being the driver as it is about authorship and the creation of one’s own place. Through her stories Libertad moves the inmates to a place of freedom — from the prison walls and

gender norms. Through her words home is found, perhaps not the physical reality of bricks and mortar but certainly in the community of stories.

Both *Johnny Tenorio* and *González and Daughter* complicate the idea of mobility as freedom and temper the term's conventional positive connotations. For Johnny and Libertad alike, movements on the road are often met with difficulty. My analysis of both works points to the ways people's experiences of mobility vary because of race, ethnicity, nationality, gender, and class, among other factors. In the case of *González and Daughter*, mobility does not serve as a marker of freedom and social transgression, as in earlier male-authored road novels. Rather, constant mobility becomes the only way to keep a family together. In this way, the novel suggests the need for a more complex understanding of the road that it is as much about freedom as it is about migrancy. *Johnny Tenorio* and *González and Daughter* both signal how mobility means living in fear of immigration authorities, showcasing the implications of race and movement for Chicanas/os, Mexican-Americans, and undocumented Mexicans in the US.

Gender also becomes a primary part of the experiences of mobility in both works. While Johnny's masculinity is limited by his lack of access to "masculine" vehicles, Libertad in *González and Daughter* struggles to find out what it means to be a woman and a trucker — an equal with her father and outside of the virgin/whore dichotomy. Each demonstrates how gender constitutes an important part of experiences of mobility, even across national and ethnic lives. By considering the works in tandem, my analysis signals changes in how authors of Mexican descent living in the US have worked with limiting social forces over the last decades. *Johnny Tenorio*, written in the 1980s, speaks

primarily issues of cultural identity at large, while only treating gender in relation to the Don Juan figure. In this play, Johnny deploys language — specifically code-switching — as a way of navigating within the given cultural systems. The play thus offers specific ways that Chicanas/os might use code-switching to maintain a sense of power within daily life. By contrast *González and Daughter*, written in the 2000s, centers on Chicana experiences and deals, in addition to migrancy, with the struggles of Chicanas with gender norms. This novel proposes language both as a way of surviving limiting personal circumstances within the prison walls and as way of questioning gender norms. This move toward considering issues facing Chicanas as well as of critiquing larger cultural systems is common in recent Chicana literature; according to Phillipa Kafka, Latina writers “seek to upset the perpetuation of a traditional ‘feminine world,’ both in their own native culture and in the colonizing culture” (3). Nevertheless, both cultural productions highlight ways for Chicanas/os, alongside Johnny and Libertad, to consider contemporary challenges of mobility as well as the narrative motion they can create to treat larger societal forces.

Chapter 3

Vocal Derailments: Critiquing the National Narrative of Progress in *Yo también hablo de la rosa* and *El tren que corría*

Emilio Carballido's play *Yo también hablo de la rosa* (1966) and his novella *El tren que corría* (1984) both center on trains to the extent that this powerful transport technology becomes a main character.⁸¹ Rather than providing limitless mobility to Mexican citizens, however, the trains in these literary works export Mexico's economic bounty to foreign markets while deserting impoverished people and leave behind middle-class passengers. Despite its significance in Carballido's work,⁸² the train has received little scholarly attention and simply has been interpreted as a symbol for life.⁸³ Given this lack of critical inquiry, this chapter considers the train in *Yo también hablo de la rosa* (hereafter referred to as *Yo también*) and *El tren que corría* (*El tren*) in its socio-historical context to demonstrate that it stands in for a narrative of national progress that does not include all citizens. To counter this exclusive narrative, I study the use of language — specifically orality and parody — in the literary works to symbolically “derail” national discourses. In *Yo también* this derailment occurs through the juxtaposition of the train with the orality of a *mestiza* medium and in *El tren* through parodies by a speechwriter and an actor. By utilizing voice, characters rendered immobile by circumstance find alternate agentive movement — signaling the possibility of all people to critique larger discourses of power with creative language.

The trains in *Yo también* and *El tren* evoke the history of the Mexican railway that is tied to a narrative of national progress. According to Alan Trachtenberg in *Railway Journey: The Industrialization of Time and Space in the 19th Century*, “Nothing else in the nineteenth century seemed as vivid a sign of modernity as the railroad. Scientists and

statesmen joined capitalists in promoting the locomotive as the engine of ‘progress,’ a promise of imminent utopia” (xiii). This modern technology offered progress in the forms of increased trade with foreign markets and rapid travel, leading many to invest in rail infrastructure in England where the locomotive was born during the Industrial Revolution, in the United States with the construction of the Transcontinental Railroad, and in Mexico when it arrived there in 1837 (Schivelbush 33).⁸⁴ The inauguration of a rail line from Mexico City to Puebla in 1869 during the presidency of Benito Juárez (1858-72) demonstrates the sense of advancement and national pride that the government associated with the railroad. The train’s arrival in Puebla was met with a large celebration that included patriotic speeches, toasts to a restoration of Mexico’s national greatness, and an original song, “La locomotiva,” composed by Puebla’s Melesio Morales and requiring new instruments imitating the sound of the train (Beezley 134).

During the rule of Porfirio Díaz (1876-1911) the association of the train with national advancement only increased. Following his motto of “orden, paz, y progreso,” Díaz ordered the construction of 18,643 new kilometers (11,584 miles) of rail track crisscrossing the nation.⁸⁵ According to Mexican historian Enrique Krauze, “On the path of *progress* [...] there had been no stopping of Don Porfirio. The first and most decisive step he took was to construct a network of railways across the nation. ‘The railway has played a great part in bringing peace to Mexico,’ Díaz used to say” (10, emphasis in original). By peace, Díaz referred to his desire to create a “civilized” nation with little internal conflict; however, in his view this necessitated the oppression of many indigenous and others deemed uncivilized. The diaries of Rose Kingsley, a European participant in the Mexican National Railroad reconnaissance team in 1872, evince the

role of the railroad in aiding with Mexico's two largest "problems": the "inertia of the people" and political disturbances (Morin 116). By putting to work many indigenous, prisoners, and other undesirable inhabitants, Díaz controlled their lives and lands. These people included the indigenous groups of the Yaqui [Yoeme] of Sonora and the Maya of the Yucatan whose previous autonomy had threatened those in power (Van Hoy xvii). The conception of peace and progress thus connoted advancement for those in power and not for those the nation sought to control through the strategic use of the railroad.

By laying new rail track, Mexico also sought to establish itself as a modern nation — politically, economically, and culturally — in the global marketplace; as Edward Pease, one of the great promoters of railways in England exclaimed, "Let the country make the railroads, and the railroads will make the country" (Carter 29). Stemming from the doctrine of positivism, the belief in the triumph of science and the scientific method, Mexican elites desired to conquer what Daniel Lewis terms "disorder, 'backwardness,' and underdevelopment" (11). By taking over untamed regions through the construction of railroads Mexico proved its status as a modernized nation. The government utilized this image of the railroad to demonstrate its advancement and to entice foreign investors by commissioning artist José María Velasco to paint the Veracruz railroad for the world fairs in Paris in 1889 and 1900. These paintings showcased "a steel track over wild and untamed nature" that according to Mauricio Tenorio Trillo "was unequaled as a symbol of progress" — echoing the discourse of *civilización/barbarie* of 19th century Latin America (115-16).⁸⁶

As the examples of foreign involvement with the railroad show, Mexico's modernity was tied to the United States and European countries. In *Rails, Mines, and*

Progress: Seven American Promoters in Mexico, David Pletcher highlights the significant role the US played in investing in Mexico — particularly in railroads and mining — during the Porfiriato: “the total figure of American investments in Mexico rose from a few million dollars to about a billion dollars [...] By 1911 Mexico was truly an economic satellite of the United States” (3). American Ambassador to Mexico William S. Rosecrans, for example, promoted the construction of railroads with the goal of creating a Mexican version of the Transcontinental Railroad, connecting Kansas City with Mexico City and allowing for the inexpensive movement of goods between the nations (Borneman 244). Drawing on the ideals of Manifest Destiny and claiming that the “railroad would inaugurate a new era of greater prosperity and friendlier relations than ever before,” Rosecrans sought funding for this project from the US congress, investors, and railroad promoters (Pletcher 54).⁸⁷

Although foreigners primarily financed Mexican railroads and reaped their benefits, the labor that built them was largely domestic.⁸⁸ E. Bradford Burns notes in *The Poverty of Progress* that many of Mexico’s indigenous suffered incursions by the railroads that took their land, raw materials, and demanded labor under the Federal Expropriation Law of 1882 (136). These included the aforementioned Yaqui [Yoemi], Maya, as well as the Tarahumara [Rarámuri] who constructed the Chihuahua-Pacific railway (Grant 57).⁸⁹ Many died from landslides, cave-ins, and accidents on the job. Díaz, and other politicians justified these abuses claiming the benefits of the railroad for the “common good” (Van Hoy 180).⁹⁰

While the train as symbol of national progress is tied to modernization, foreign influence, and exploitation of the indigenous, the train’s derailment conjures up a critique

of this exclusive narrative. During the Mexican Revolution (1910-20) many rose up against Díaz with desires for equality and freedom. According to Francisco Madero, one of the Revolution's leaders and later president of Mexico (1911-13), the failure of Díaz's rule was the creation of "peace" through absolute power. In a letter to Díaz on February 2, 1909, Madero critiques this abuse of leadership and notes the people's desire for democracy: "To develop your political program, principally based on the preservation of peace, it was necessary for you to assume the absolute power you call patriarchy... The entire Nation hopes that the successor to yourself will be the Law" (Krauze 253). In their battles many revolutionaries tactically appropriated the railroad as a form of resistance — derailing train cars, hijacking locomotives, shooting and robbing train crews and passengers (Knight 358). In one of the most well known appropriations of the railroad, Pancho Villa entered Ciudad Juárez with his troops loaded into railcars in a surprise attack (Urías 111-15). According to Jorge Ruffinelli, many revolutionaries considered the train a more effective and less expensive weapon than horses or traditional arms: "A veces el tren se volvía el 'caballo de hierro', otras era el poderoso y temible ariete que servía para destrozarse las filas enemigas" (290).⁹¹ The effects of the hijackings and attacks were many: they halted construction along the lines, interrupted the delivery of mail and goods, and cost the government and rail companies time and expense; it would take days or weeks to get the locomotives and cars back onto rail lines. Thus, while a locomotive represented national progress and modernity, a derailed train enacted a critique of hegemonic power by the masses.

The trains in *Yo también* and *El tren* evoke this polemic history of the Mexican railroad in which modernization succeeds at the cost of indigenous life and in which

foreign needs are privileged over domestic ones. I suggest that Mexico's narrative of progress does not include all of its citizens on its journey to technological modernization and social advancement; rather, it exploits and leaves many behind. However, as this chapter signals, characters in *Yo también* and *El tren* tactically deploy voice — specifically through orality and parody — to derail this national narrative of progress. By using language they find alternate ways of moving out of their situational immobility to a place of agency, much like the many indigenous who protested against their exploitation along the rail lines (Burns 9).

Both orality and parody, although distinct uses of voice, draw attention to differences between realities (oral/written, text/context); in doing so, they function in *Yo también* and *El tren* as weapons for critiquing the exclusive discourse of progress. By orality, I point to the primacy of oral as opposed to written expression in a given culture. Walter Ong in *Orality and Literacy* underscores that language is an oral phenomena. However, almost all cultures are now literate and thus it is more precise to speak of cultures there is a “mind-set of primary orality” (11). In these cultures — the majority of which are indigenous — words are considered powerful and capable of producing movement. This formidable movement occurs when sound and thought are united in speech:

There is no way to stop sound and have sound. [...] All sensation takes place in time, but no other sensory field totally resists a holding action, stabilization, in quite this way. Vision can register motion, but it can also register immobility. Indeed, it favors immobility, for to examine something closely by vision, we prefer to have it quiet. We often reduce

motion to a series of still shots the better to see what motion is. There is no equivalent of a still shot for sound. (Ong 32)

Echoing scholarship on performative language, spoken words in oral cultures might be thought of as a kind of doing, “a mode of action, not simply a countersign of thought” (32). As Jo-Ann Episkenew in *Taking Back Our Spirits: Indigenous Literature, Public Policy, and Healing* notes: “Indigenous peoples understood that language has the power to change the course of events in both the material and spiritual worlds” (4). The emphasis on the power of oral language emphasizes again the ways people can move through language against injustices.

In addition to doing with language, oral cultures utilize language as a way of resisting oppression. Given the exploitation and attempts at exterminating many oral cultures, orality aids in preserving group history and identity because memory and speech are difficult to destroy, unlike the physical archive of literate cultures. For Diasporic Jews, as Doris Sommer explains, learning the Torah was central to their preservation as a people because “learning is one thing that cannot be confiscated” (*Proceed* 255). In addition to preservation, orality aids in resisting dominant narratives; by modifying memories of the past to the present context, oral cultures are able to uncover patterns of injustice, as Jean Franco writes: “Oral communications and performances are revised as they are passed from person to person, so that the variants tap particularities and local nuances that the universal project of history forgets” (*The Decline* 237). The adaptability of oral cultures also recalls what Diana Taylor refers to as the repertoire or acts of “ephemeral, nonreproducible knowledge” (*The Archive* 20). For Taylor, the repertoire allows for agency because it both stores and transforms meaning according to context and

need. Orality can thus serve as a tool — or a “political weapon” to use Franco’s words (237) — for resisting power and control.

Despite the ways that oral cultures use language tactically, many consider these cultures to be inferior. Ong and Episkenew explain that this tendency results from different understandings of intelligence. In contrast to literate cultures that privilege empirical knowledge, oral cultures tend to be reflective and holistic in their worldview (55-57; 3-4). Through the use of Navajo storytelling practices, Ong clarifies that the primacy of orality or literacy does not mark intellect, but rather signals the kind of knowledge a culture esteems. For the Navajo, as in many other oral cultures, the ability to understand connections between story and the larger world marks intelligence: “Navaho narrators of Navaho folkloric animal stories can provide elaborate explanations of the various implications of these stories for an understanding of complex matters in human life from the physiological to the psychological and moral, and are perfectly aware of [...] the need to interpret elements in the stories symbolically” (57). As Ong’s example demonstrates, oral cultures value making interpretive connections rather than rote memorization of facts.

The ability to make connections is also valued in the way oral cultures unite people through the telling of stories. The creation of strong communities through oral language aids in preserving culture and resisting oppressive circumstances. Language in oral cultures is a communal rather than an individual act, as Ong suggests: “Oral communication unites people in groups. Writing and reading are solitary activities that throw the psyche back on itself” (69). Taylor similarly notes: “The repertoire requires presence: people participate in the production and reproduction of knowledge by ‘being

there,' being part of the transmission" (*The Archive* 20). In this way, the words of a single storyteller evoke an entire community; the stories carry with them voices of the past as well as the presence of the contemporary listening audience. This community presence in the speaker's voice makes the act of speaking more powerful because words contain the story of the people.⁹²

Like orality, parody relies on the presence of a listening community and can serve as a weapon to critique discourses of power. For the purposes of this study, I understand parody to mean the repetition of language with the goal of signaling a particular difference to a critical end — drawing on Linda Hutcheon's *A Theory of Parody* and Simon Dentith's *Parody*. Hutcheon underscores parody as a primary form of modern self-reflexivity, defining it as "a form of imitation, but imitation characterized by ironic inversion" or "repetition with critical distance which marks difference rather than similarity" (6). Dentith similarly notes that parody requires distance between the original text and the parody "for evaluative purposes" (6). As each of these definitions elucidates, repetition and critical distancing are necessary elements of parody. This distance — which distinguishes parody from mere imitation — allows for questioning hegemonic narratives, thus demonstrating the power of this creative use of repurposed language.

Parody has been theorized both as an authorized transgression which does little to change a situation — a kind of carnival in the Bakhtinian sense — and as a weapon for critiquing those in power. According to Mikhail Bakhtin, during the Middle Ages authorities allowed parodies of religious and political figures as a kind of release valve — knowing that the masses would return to social order. However, parody can also serve as a weapon in the space they create for subversive laughter that "overcomes fear, for it

knows no inhibitions, no limitations” (91). Bakhtin explains that this laughter “clarified man’s consciousness and gave him a new outlook on life” and allows for unofficial truths to emerge (91-92). Dentith echoes this complexity of parody noting that, in the first case, parody “destroy[s] the seriousness required to transform society” while the latter “unsettl[es] the certainties which sustain social order, and placing all final truths under suspension” (20). For the purposes of this study, the ways parody questions or critiques are most significant. Like orality, parody can function as a tactic for critiquing systems of power — renewing and revitalizing social situations, to use Hutcheon’s words (*A Theory of Parody* 115).

Parody can be used as a weapon against many systems and figures: politics, religion, art, and social structures. Dentith notes that parodies often use the authority of older texts to attack or reference the contemporary world (9). By recasting the words of another, a parody can be thought to have more rather than less force because of the ways it draws on the authority of the previous text. As Hutcheon explains, modern artists use the juxtaposition of past/present to conjure up more than what is verbally expressed: “Their double voiced parodic forms play on the tensions created by this historical awareness” (*A Theory of Parody* 4). This requires an audience to be aware of the historical code and the present context, as parody depends on the shared code of the speaker and the audience — lest the message lose its intended irony — reinforcing rather than reinscribing the parodied work (27).

Through an analysis of the tactical use of orality and parody in *Yo también* and *El tren*, I demonstrate the power of voice to question the national narrative of progress that has left many Mexicans, like many characters in these works, behind. I suggest that these

linguistic tools provide ways for characters to derail symbolically the Mexican narrative of progress, much like the physical derailment of the train by Toña and Polo in *Yo también*. The concepts of orality and parody, although distinct uses of language, demonstrate that tactical language can be used to move against political systems that have forgotten the marginalized.

A Double Derailment: Questioning the National Narrative of Progress in *Yo también hablo de la rosa*

Carballido's *Yo también hablo de la rosa* (1966)⁹³ centers on the derailment of a freight train by two poor adolescents, Toña and Polo, in the middle of the waste-filled Mexican countryside and the many interpretations of this derailment. While scholars have analyzed these multiple interpretations as an example of the difficulty of making sense of reality or as an example of postmodernism, the derailment of the freight train itself has been little studied.⁹⁴ By considering the derailment in the context of Mexican rail history, this section of my chapter signals that the freight train evokes a national narrative of progress and that this narrative, like the train in the play, has left many behind on its track to modernization. The derailment in *Yo también* is thus significant because it points to the power of the marginalized to question the ways they have been ignored and exploited. I suggest that the play enacts this event doubly, through the physical train derailment caused by Toña and Polo, as well as through what I call a linguistic derailment by the mestiza medium (*La intermediaria*) that appears throughout the play. Although the medium occasionally tells stories from a book, the primacy of her oral expression recalls Mexico's indigenous and other marginalized mestizo peoples. By juxtaposing her orality

with the train's modernity, the play underscores her exclusion from the discourse of progress and draws attention to voice as an alternate agentive tool for moving against national discourses of exclusive power.

The play begins by foregrounding the medium; she sits on stage, dressed as a "mujer de pueblo," speaking of her heartbeat and the many things she knows: plants, memories, texts, roads, wisdom, as well as the news of the derailment. The lights of the theater then go dark as spectators hear the train's derailment. After a newsboy announces the tragedy, the play returns in an analepsis to the time preceding the derailment in which Toña and Polo skip class because Polo's mother does not have enough money to purchase the required shoes. Like many young adults evading school, they talk to their friend Maximino who works in a mechanic's garage, spend their money on candy, and walk along the train track outside of town, collecting flowers, motor parts, and other objects of interest. Upon finding a cement-filled tub of no use as a vase for the flowers, Toña and Polo place it on the train track, causing the freight train's derailment and their subsequent arrest. In what follows the play offers a variety of interpretations of the derailment by: the newsboy, Toña and Polo's teacher, university students, two university professors, an announcer (*El locutor*) who discusses various ways of understanding a rose, and the medium, among others. The play ends with a celebratory reenactment of the derailment in which a variety of people, including Toña and Polo, dance together with the medium.

The limited mobility of Toña, Polo, and their community juxtaposed with the mobility of the freight train signals the extent to which they have been excluded from the national narrative of progress. In contrast to the powerful freight train, valued at a half million pesos, Toña and Polo live in an impoverished community, characterized by

limited social, economic, and educational mobility (122). The poor *campesino* adolescents are unable to get on the train, much less a bus or motorcycle, or even escape dangerous situations — especially given Polo’s lack of shoes. As Eugene Skinner notes, while society considers the derailment a crime, “the real crime is poverty” (31).

This limited mobility is evidenced by Polo’s lack of shoes and bus fare as well as Maximino’s broken down motorcycle. Polo’s physical movement inhibited when he cannot flee from the authorities after the derailment, as his mother’s words indicate: “¿Y no podía usted correr? ¿Para qué tiene las patas? (*Llora*). Ahora que iba a comprarte tus zapatos, esta quincena” (124). Polo’s family’s limited finances leads to his physical immobility and his subsequent educational immobility — ensuring a cycle of poverty. To his detriment, he is not able to attend school without acceptable footwear:

TOÑA. ¿Tú no vas a la escuela?

POLO. No tengo zapatos. Hasta la semana que viene me los compran.

TOÑA. Pues vete así.

POLO. La maestra revisa al entrar si les dimos grasa. Ni modo que me dé grasa en las patas. (108)

Rather than aiding Polo and his classmates, the educational system limits his ability to succeed by requiring that which he cannot afford. The inability of the educational system to help indigent populations is emphasized again when Polo’s teacher criticizes another student, Leopoldo, for his “Vagancia, estupidez, y... falta de civismo” (117). Toña and Polo live in an impoverished community, and it can be assumed that they attend a public school, which emphasizes the way the state has forgotten many on its road to national progress. The adolescents’ limited mobility also becomes apparent in the irony of

Maximino's situation; their friend works for a mechanic and yet does not have access to reliable transportation:

POLO. ¿Y tu moto?

TOÑA. (*Se le cuelga del brazo.*) Llévenos a dar una vuelta.

MAXIMINO. Está re fregada.

POLO. ¿Qué le pasó?

MAXIMINO. La corrí mucho sin aceite, se desbieló, la patada que quedó trabada... (109)

It becomes apparent that his motorcycle is unable to provide any kind of transportation, according to Toña: “Lo que pasa es que esta motocicleta no sirve” (110). Maximino's mobility is further limited by his lack of finances and his dead end job. As if these limitations were not enough, Toña and Polo do not have the coins they need for bus fare, having spent them on candies. When Maximino offers them change they decline, realizing they have nowhere to go without shoes (110).

In contrast to Toña and Polo's limited physical, social, economic, and educational mobility, the powerful train they derail exemplifies unhindered mobility — evoking the national narrative which has done little to better their lives. The long history of the railroad in Mexico conjures up progress and modernization, as well as foreign investment, exploitation of marginalized populations, and the critique of this hegemonic power during the Mexican Revolution with the hijackings and derailments of trains. The specific type of train in *Yo también*, while evoking this history, further emphasizes Mexico's interest in serving foreigners over its domestic indigent populations. This

becomes clear in the newsboy's first announcement of the derailment, indicating the type of train:

Su prensa, joven, lleve su periódico. Muchachos vagos que descarrilan un tren. Lea como pasó el impresionante desastre. Y era nomás un tren de carga, qué tal si hubiera sido de pasajeros. Lleve su prensa de hoy, su prensa de hoy... (106)

The abundance of food that the train carried — sugar, beans, and tequila, among other products (119, 133) — contrasts with the poverty of the community through which it passes and calls to mind the wealth of the people to which the train carries the goods. Although the play does not reveal the train's destination, it is most likely bound for the United States or another foreign market, as this was the primary purpose of many rail lines according to Ruffinelli:

La historia de América Latina fue, durante el siglo XIX y el primer tercio del siglo XX, la de una economía orientada hacia los mercados europeos (y desde la primera guerra mundial, hacia el mercado estadounidense), cuya subsistencia y posible crecimiento dependía no sólo de esos mercados, sino también de las inversiones extranjeras: un capital que ingresaba a América Latina para reproducirse, multiplicarse y volver a su lugar de origen. (290)

The train in *Yo también* reminds spectators and readers that the national narrative is tied closely to foreign powers, not only through the exportation of goods and natural resources to foreign markets, but also in the ways Mexico welcomed foreign investment in rail infrastructure and the acceptance of a capitalist economic model which privileges

the wealth of few at the cost of many. As Laura Gugliani explains in “Yo también hablo de la globalización,” “vislumbramos los motivos de la sociedad capitalista mundial nacida de la globalización y los efectos devastadores que ha producido tanto en el contexto internacional como local” (185). It is not until the derailment of the train that the Mexicans who produced the goods are able to enjoy the fruits of their labor. This act emphasizes the exclusion of the many Mexicans from the wealth extracted from their nation, echoing the famous saying popularized during the Porfiriato: “México: madre de los extranjeros, madrastra de los mexicanos” (Werner 211).

After Toña and Polo derail the train, the poor enjoy the goods that fall from the train, stressing that the national narrative must be derailed for Mexico’s forgotten citizens to enjoy the benefits. Although the newsboy and the teacher — representing the media and the educational system — critique the adolescents’ vagrancy, the scavengers who look for useful objects in the dump rejoice and call their friends to take advantage the train’s bounty:

SEÑORA. Virgen Pura, yo creo que esto es un robo.

SEÑOR. Qué robo ni qué la fregada: maíz y frijolitos

SEÑORA. Les voy a avisar a mis hermanos, que tienen tantos niños.

Lástima que los míos estarán en la escuela, no pueden ayudar. Cómo pesa esto. (120)

While enjoying the abundance, the woman scavenger expresses guilt for taking the goods. Her internal conflict renders the scene humorous because the foreign countries that purchased this bounty for a miniscule price might be thought to rob Mexico’s people. The derailment of a freight train, as opposed to another kind of train, underscores that

Mexico's people do not always benefit from its economic policies which privilege foreign powers. It likewise signals that the marginalized can call into question the exclusive national narrative through tactics, such as the placement of a cement tub on a rail track.

In addition to this physical derailment, *Yo también* enacts a symbolic derailment of the national narrative through its emphasis on the orality of the medium who appears at four critical moments in the play.⁹⁵ The medium's words foreground her distinct approach to life; having come from an oral culture, she values different kinds of knowledge, refuses to arrive at a conclusion, and includes a variety of people in her discourse. Through this distinct use of language, her words question the exclusive national narrative of progress and in doing so derail it — demonstrating the power of orality to move against hegemonic discourses. As the final scene of the play elucidates, the medium's voice and dance also offer alternate movement, which unlike the train of progress, includes marginalized citizens.

The medium's oral expression in her first monologue demonstrates the way indigenous cultures value distinct ways of knowing. The presence of this alternate way of perceiving, especially considering the medium's centrality in the play, questions the singular trajectory of the train. According to David William Foster, the medium enjoys a special position in the play because, in addition to opening and closing the dramatic work, “tiene el privilegio de hablar sin que la interrumpen” (76). She takes full advantage of her time to speak and, as opposed to the short, reductive phrases of the newsboy and the concise, empirical interpretations of the professors, she uses long, connected phrases, full of lists of metaphors and images demonstrating an oral approach to the world. The

content of her monologues echoes this distinct vision of reality in which more than empirical knowledge is celebrated:

¡Sé muchas cosas! Conozco yerbas, y algunas curan, otras tienen buen sabor, o huelen bien. O son propicias, o pueden causar la muerte o la locura, o simplemente lucen cubiertas de minuciosas flores. Pero sé más: guardo parte de lo que he visto: rostros, nubes, panoramas, superficies de rocas, muchas esquinas, gestos, contactos; conservo también recuerdos que originalmente fueron de mis abuelas, o de mi madre, o de amigos, y muchos que a su vez oyeron ellos a personas muy viejas. Conozco textos, páginas, ilusiones. Sé cómo ir a lugares, sé caminos. Pero la sabiduría es como el corazón: está guardada, latiendo, resplandeciendo imperceptiblemente, regulando canales rítmicos que en su flujo y en su reflujo van a comunicarse a otros canales, a torrentes, a otras corrientes inadvertidas y manejadas por la radiante complejidad de una potente válvula central... (105)

The medium accumulates images, stories, and people in her words, recalling the totalizing and communal characteristics of oral cultures that Ong describes (57, 69). Her connection with a particularly indigenous oral culture is further emphasized in her dress as well as in images and allusions she makes to the pre-Columbian past (Taylor, *Theatre* 172). What is important about this connection with indigenous orality is the way she locates knowledge principally in the body. Her enumeration of the many things she knows — the herbs, for example — reveals that she knows them experientially as opposed to cognitively. By drawing on her heartbeat that produces a continuous rhythm

as a metaphor for wisdom, she again esteems bodily knowledge and evokes the many other indigenous in Mexico who understand the world similarly. As Taylor suggests, “She represents the consciousness and memory of a race — its history — kept alive by the very act of speaking” (*Theatre* 170). These distinct ways of knowing validate the lives and experience of other marginalized people with limited access to formal education or official histories — like Toña, Polo, and the scavengers. Her orality emphasizes inclusivity in contrast to the exclusivity of the national narrative of progress, and thereby questions this narrative that does not include all citizens on its path to a better future.

The medium’s oral expression also contrasts with the singular trajectory of the train in her inability to arrive at a particular conclusion; in this way, it questions the exclusive nature of the narrative. In contrast to the discourse of literate cultures and the national narrative of progress, the medium consistently leaves her stories open ended, as Talyor signals: “She refuses to give answers, to say the last word, to anticipate or precipitate an ending to the stories” (*Theatre* 170). In the final scene, after many interpretations of the derailment by other characters, the audience expects a final interpretation of the “crime” when the medium tells: “Voy a explicarles cómo fue el accidente” (136). However, she then utilizes elusive, poetic language in her explanation: “Ellos [Toña and Polo] se estaban convirtiendo en todo cuanto los rodeaba: eran basurero, las flores, y eran nubes, asombro, gozo, y entendían y veían, eso era todo” (136). Her use of poetic language allows for multiple interpretations, and thus avoids a clear and absolute answer.

The medium again denies a definitive understanding of the events by leaving the audience with questions rather than answers at the end of the play: “¿Saben cómo muy

pronto sucedió un cambio sorprendente? ¿Y saben cómo Polo llegó a instalar un taller? ¿Y cómo fue el matrimonio de Toña? [...] Ésa... ya es otra historia” (138). Bixler notes that the medium also leaves the audience with ambiguity in the second monologue in which the medium tells a story of two men who dreamed: “The more we grope for a solid truth, the more diafanous and enigmatic she becomes, both literally and figuratively” (*Convention* 203). While Bixler associates this lack of finality with postmodern tendencies, another way to view this lack of finality is as a tactical use of language typical of oral cultures. In *Proceed with Caution*, Sommer points to the way indigenous people use silence as a way of maintaining their cultures and evading oppressive rule. She cites K’iche’ Mayan Rigoberta Menchú, who explains that indigenous people have been careful not to disclose their secrets to outsiders as a form of self-preservation (119). According to Sommer, Menchú and others publicly perform this silence. This performance — pointing to the absence of speech with words — recalls the medium in *Yo también* who consistently says, “es otra historia” (122, 138). During a public reading, a student asked Menchú to translate her words into English; Sommer explains, “‘No’ was her polite response, ‘I cannot translate them.’ [...] This speech act was not hostile, but it was a reminder of difference” (122). Similarly, in refusing to reveal all, the medium in *Yo también* recalls the difference between the dominant literate culture and her oral culture — thereby highlighting that the national narrative of progress has disregarded her culture by assuming it illiterate and less advanced, much like Polo’s teacher. In doing so, she critiques the national narrative that, in addition to excluding many, has not respected alternate ways of life.

The end of the play ties together the medium's orality with the derailment of the train through the restaging of Toña and Polo's "crime," emphasizing the vocal derailment of the discourse of progress via the medium's orality. In this second derailment, the characters do so purposefully and, together with the medium, celebrate: "*Ellos han llevado el tanque al sitio donde pasará el tren. Empiezan a oír risas alegres en derredor. Se oye el estrépito del descarrilamiento, luego se transforma en música. Un gran grito de alegría*" (138). The presence of laughter, music, cheers, and dance recall Ong's explanation of orality as a kind of movement in oral cultures that carries with it significant power. As he explains, "[t]here is no way to stop sound" (32). In this case, there is no way to stop the vocal derailment of the national narrative enacted through the voices of the people. Much like the peasants in Bahktin's study, their subversive laughter ridicules the national narrative of progress and the characters' shouts take it off its track.

After the derailment, the medium leads the characters in a dance, further connecting orality and physical movement, and enacting the inclusive community typical of oral cultures. The final scene illustrates a distinct vision of society, one of inclusion rather than exclusion: "*Entran todos los personajes corriendo: Maximino, los Pепенadores, la Gente de la calle, Vendedores, Profesores, Locutor, Parientes. Los dos que soñaron, todos, se abrazan, se besan, bailan, muy caóticamente*" (138). As the stage directions indicate, the celebration includes a variety of people of distinct cultures, ages, socio-economic levels, and genders — many of whom were marginalized historically and unable to climb on the train of progress. Although the final scene appears chaotic, the disorder moves toward a communal creativity of differences and not toward a destructive disorder. Through the dance, the characters find agential movement — changing from a

passive to an active position, as Skinner signals: “a change from sterility to fertility occurs on all levels: Toña and Polo pass from adolescents to adults (she marries Maxi, he gets his own garage), the situation of the poor shifts temporarily from lack to abundance, and the cosmos itself participates in this realization of creative potential” (34). Through the use of voice the medium induces alternative physical movement — creating alternate mobility for the disregarded marginalized. Their physical movement leads to other kinds of mobility — social and economic — grounded in community rather than individuality.

As if to emphasize the community of this alternate movement, the play ends with the voices of several characters that complete the others’ words:

MAXIMINO. Y ahora todos...

TOÑA. en las manos de todos...

POLO. vamos a oír latir...

TOÑA. largamente...

MAXIMINO. el misterio...

INTERMEDIARIA. de nuestros propios corazones...

(Sigue la danza, la cadena. La luz ha ido aumentando progresivamente como a latidos, hasta alcanzar la máxima intensidad.) (138-39)

The inclusion of multiple voices at the close of the play underscores the need for a revision of the national narrative in form and content which includes, as the medium models, the presence of all instead of only those in power. Rather than an exclusive linear trajectory, the figure of the medium conjures up the communal storytelling practices of oral cultures, echoing what Skinner terms “a complex web of creative potential” that becomes “not an image of entrapment but of liberation” (35). The distinct movement that

the medium offers is not simply a new track, but rather an inclusive, dancing vision of the nation in which all people find movement. Her use of voice recalls the creative power of the marginalized to do with words — questioning national systems of exclusion and finding alternate agential movement.

Through the derailment of the freight train/narrative of progress, physically and orally, *Yo también* enacts the power of oppressed people to question larger social systems with action and voice. It demonstrates that orality, a distinct use of language and its associated way of seeing the world, can be used tactically by the indigenous and others to dismantle hegemonic discourses. What is significant in *Yo también* is the way voice can critique the national narrative and also provide alternate agential movement for the marginalized.

Parody and Progress: A Critique of the National Narrative in *El tren que corría*

Much like the freight train in *Yo también hablo de la rosa* the passenger train in Carballido's novella, *El tren que corría* (1984), leaves Mexican citizens behind on its journey, but this time in a literal sense. Written decades later, this novella centers on middle class citizens rather than the poor in *Yo también* — demonstrating the ways other Mexicans have not benefited for Mexico's visions of progress. While *Yo también* has received much critical interest, *El tren* has received little. Bixler briefly mentions the novella in an article on trains in Carballido's work and considers the train a metaphor for enjoying life's journey: "Pero lo importante no es alcanzarlo [el tren] sino disfrutar del viaje, este movimiento y aventura que es la vida, con todos sus fracasos y triunfos, caídas y ascensos" ("Emilio" 43).⁹⁶ Federico Patán interprets the train differently as a symbol of

fate: “Parece insinuarse que estamos sujetos al azar en mayor medida de lo que pensamos” (76). Parting from these readings that interpret the novella in universal terms, I posit that *El tren* signals more specific challenges of Mexicans who have been unable to experience advancement in their lives. In their failed attempts to catch up with the train, racing along its track in an old automobile, the characters question this exclusive narrative through the use parody. One of the passengers, a speechwriter, performs an address he has written for the politician who awaits him at the end of their journey and another, a little known actress, presents a scene from a Greek tragedy. Through this tactical use of parody the characters symbolically derail the narrative of progress that has not improved their lives.

El tren que corría, as its title⁹⁷ suggests, is about a train that runs off without its passengers. The novella begins in Mexico City with a description of the bustling Buenavista station and the lives of five different passengers who prepare to board the train destined for Monterrey. These passengers include: Nora, an actress who believes herself famous although she plays minor roles in soap operas and commercials; Chela, a waitress who plans to marry a wealthy man in Monterrey with whom she has corresponded only in writing; Ramón, a speech writer for a politician, Camilio Ruíz Septián; Gilberto, a young businessman; and Leocadia, an indigenous, working class grandmother. For various reasons, the five passengers miss the train. When an unofficial taxi driver, Damián, offers to drive them to the next stop so that they can board, the five accept and begin what becomes a long journey to Monterrey through the night. At the next station, and the many that follow, the characters miss the train and end up traveling through the night in the old taxi to Monterrey. The novella centers on the characters’

conversations and other uses of voice during their road trip, including the singing of traditional songs and Nora's recitation of a scene from the ancient Greek tragedy *Medea* by Euripedes. Relatively little action takes place during the car ride except for a budding romance between Damián and Chela and some minor incidents with traffic and civic authorities. In the end, the passengers arrive in Monterrey and all go their separate ways, except for Chela who decides to abandon her love interest in Monterrey to be with Damián.

Like *Yo también*, the novella emphasizes the limited mobility of its passengers. In addition to the characters left behind by the train, this impeded mobility is highlighted in the description of the train station and its clocks, the lack of options for other forms of transportation, and the difficulties of their journey. The first chapter, "Cinco maneras de perder el tren," begins with a conversation between two passengers comparing their present train station to one in Italy:

— Eh, mirá que es grande...

— Se parece a Términi, che.

— Sos loco: en nada.

Hablan entre la corriente de la gente, se pierden en ella. Buenavista en México *no* se parece a Términi de Roma, pero el espacio enorme, quizá, pero la majestuosidad ajetreada del vestíbulo... (11, emphasis in original)

This comparison of Mexico City's largest train station with Rome's marks Mexico as inferior to its European counterpart from the beginning of the play. The Términi in Rome first opened in 1863 and was redesigned in the 1950s with a modernist façade and anodized aluminum friezes by artist Amerigo Tot, showcasing the sound and speed of the

train; it is the busiest train station in Rome and one of the most utilized in Europe (GrandiStazioni). Mexico City's Buenavista station, similarly, began serving passenger in 1873 and was rebuilt and inaugurated in 1961. However, although important for the transport of passengers to various destinations in Mexico, the station's design and architecture are of little note, as the characters and the narrator in *El tren* recognize.

The narrator's frequent references to the clocks that all run at different speeds inside the Buenavista station also highlight the sense of limited mobility: "Ahora bien: el día de hoy [los relojes] sufren corto desacuerdo: tienen más prisa los del vestíbulo, van tres minutos adelante del autoritario en los andenes. Y en el reloj del restorán se cuentan siete minutos menos" (11). Throughout the chapter the narrator makes several references to varying times and location of the clocks: "los relojes del vestíbulo dicen: 14 para las seis" (14), "Faltan en los andenes nueve para las seis" (19), and "En el reloj del restorán faltan ya diez minutos" (20). This lack of accurate timekeeping by the clocks, which the narrator refers to as "confusas amenazas," underscores the lack of upkeep at Mexico's most important train station and subsequently causes each of the five passengers to miss the train to Monterrey (11). In this way, the clocks may point to the limited mobility of Mexico — as if it were not on time with the rest of the modern world — and the subsequent effect on passengers who are unable to board the train.

The constraint on the mobility of the passengers is also emphasized in the limited options for other forms of transportation and the difficulties the passengers experience on their journey. When they miss the train, an unlicensed chauffeur offers to drive the passengers to the next station in Lechería where they can hop on. Realizing their lack of options, the passengers choose to share the cost of the journey. The dialogue later reveals

that the chauffer makes his living this way, by chasing trains with passengers left behind, further emphasizing the hindered mobility of many in the country (37). As the passengers get into the car, they question the vehicle's viability:

— Y ¿a poco anda esa cosa?

— Nomás súbete y verás.

— Ha de hacer buen café. ¿Pero correr? — mosqueteros humorísticos.

— ¿*Esto* va a correr más que el tren? — pregunta Nora, también escéptica.

(33, emphasis in original)

The 23 year-old car has filthy seats held up by a broomstick, and when the driver starts the engine, the narrator calls attention to the car's poor condition: "El coche corre. De verdad, corre, aunque vibre y sueñe por todos lados" (33-34). As the novella reveals, each time they arrive at a station, the train has already passed, and they have no other option but to continue on their journey through the night. The condition of the car, in combination with bad roads, the chauffeur's lack of a license and other documentation, and inclement weather all signal the extent to which the mobility of the passengers is impeded.

Left behind by the train, the novella shows the power of voice for critiquing the narrative specifically through the use of parody, as the characters demonstrate while during their car ride. Ramón, the speechwriter, performs a script he has written for a politician, and Nora, a minor actress, enacts a scene from *Medea*. As Dentith notes, parody occurs in the reenactment of the same words in another context: "By the mere repetition of another's words, their intonation exaggerated but their substance remaining the same, one utterance, [the original text], is transformed into another, held up to public

gaze, and subjected to ridicule” (1). In each of these cases, the difference between the context of the text parodied and the characters is substantial, and through this ironic distance the parodies question the narrative of progress.

As the passengers travel through the night, they learn that Ramón is a speechwriter for a candidate who is running for governor in Monterrey. The candidate has high hopes for Mexican industry and agriculture; in addition to running for political office, he wants to build an alliance between seven states (60). His supposed desire for progress marks him as one who promotes the national narrative. The passengers are critical of the politician, questioning his ability to write his own speeches and explaining to Ramón that he is despised by many (61, 79); however, the narrative he promotes is most poignantly critiqued by Ramón’s parody of the speech. Although Ramón himself does not intend to parody the candidate’s discourse, the passengers in the vehicles recognize it as such when they see the difference between Ramón’s pompous words and their reality.

After hearing about the political speeches, Nora asks Ramón to share one with the passengers in the car. The “critical distance” that Hutcheon notes is a trademark of parody is set up by Ramón’s resistance to the idea when he exclaims that performing a politician’s speech is not the same as performing in a play (*A Theory of Parody* 80). Ramón finally agrees, and after beginning with a response to the skeptical passengers, he gives the candidate’s speech:

Sé que están burlando de mí: no me extraña: por juego y porque el Partido sirve como escape para chistes y agresiones en que se le culpa todo. ¿Pero quién ha llevado adelante México? Desde el Jefe Máximo, esta figura

doble pero potente en nuestra historia, fundó las estructuras que luego fincaría definitivamente el gigantesco Lázaro Cárdenas, entramos en un proceso irreversible donde la agilización de las fuerzas revolucionarias encuentra paradigmas flexibles y canales de conducción para llevar adelante, hasta las últimas consecuencias en la teoría, y hasta los últimos rincones de la Patria en práctica, la optimización de los altos ideales por los que lucharon y murieron los centauros de la epopeya revolucionaria.

(80)

The allusions to Mexico's history, the erudite words, and the long sentences replicate the candidate's speech. However, the passengers response to the speech signals their awareness of the disconnect between the words and Mexico's situation, as the narrator explains, "Todos se quedan muchos y vagamente deprimidos" (80).

The speech draws on the former "glory" of President Plutarco Elías Calles (1924-28, *de facto* 1928-35), who he refers to by his nickname "El Jefe Máximo." Calles started the Mexican political party Partido Nacional Revolucionario (PNR) that eventually became the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI). Like Díaz, he did much to improve Mexico — ordering the construction of additional railroads and highways as well as improvements to schools, the army, and housing. Krauze notes that his most significant contribution was the aid he offered to the lower classes through economic policy, even though this segment of society was not consulted about their particular needs: "Under Calles, the government was becoming the only judge of the interests of society, an institution that would treat the Mexican people — just as Díaz had — like a minor child under the protection of its governing father" (416-17). The speech also

celebrates Lázaro Cardenas, president of Mexico (1934-40), who nationalized petroleum, worked for agrarian reform, promoted education, and improved national infrastructure. Following Calles's example, "He became an icon, a kind of moral *Jefe Máximo*, the only true living Mexican Revolutionary, the moral conscience of the Revolution" (Krauze 480). By drawing on the revolutionary past, with examples from decades earlier, the speech attempts to inspire those in the present. However, the inconsistencies between Ramón's words and context make the speech not simply repetition but a parody that calls into question the efficacy of Mexico's advancements for its citizens.

This vision of progress might be easier to believe when the speech is given by the candidate in "traje de la penúltima moda europea, trae corbata de Givenchy" and surrounded by a band playing celebratory Mexican anthems (15, 64). However, the passengers' knowledge the candidate's actual situation and their own renders the speech parodic. The road trip, in particular, allows the passengers to move beyond their own reality to see other parts of Mexico and to learn more about the candidate. In the conversation leading up to the speech among the passengers, they question why the candidate travels by train, instead of by airplane: "Pues ha de andar pobre su candidato. Viajando en tren en vez de tomar avión." Ramón defends this decision, claiming that traveling by train will allow the candidate to speak at stations, and cites examples of the probability of plane crashes and heart attacks (78). However, the message of this speech, evoking the advancements of Mexico under "great" leaders of the past, breaks down in its distinct context of the car ride; through their journey the passengers become aware of the disconnect between the celebratory words and Mexico's reality. That the candidate cannot afford to travel by plane and cannot be honest about his economic status might

imply that Mexico has not benefited from the promises of politicians like him. The parody thus calls into question the discourse of advancement, revealing the extent to which it does not concord with Mexican reality.

This disconnect is further emphasized by the images of Mexico that the passengers see of as they travel through the Mexican cities and countryside. Outside Lechería on the way to Querétaro, the passengers observe an industrial complex of several large factories promoted by the Mexican government — including many foreign-based multi-national corporations. As the narrator explains, “El estado de México puso allí la Normal Número 10. La Henry Ford plantó una armadora. La familia Bacardí destila una versión ínfima y ponzoñosa de su producto. También se hacen aparatos eléctricos en gran escala y hay unas cuantas industrias menores regadas por las cercanías” (53). This presence of multinational companies that abuse Mexican labor and export profits contradict the candidate’s glorious vision of nationalized Mexican industries. This inconsistency is further exemplified by the road conditions once the car gets off the super highways. The roads are full of large potholes, causing the car to slow down and Ramón to comment: “Esto no es un camino” (59). While the appearances — the candidate’s European suit, the large companies, and the superhighways — may signal advancement, the characters’ journey reveals that the narrative of progress poorly reflects their personal and national circumstances.

Immediately following Ramón’s speech, Nora, an actress who played a nurse in a particular episode of the soap opera *Relámpago de Amor* and an extra in the film *Canoa*, acts out a scene from Euripedes’s *Medea*. By way of her response to Ramón’s speech via the parody, Nora demonstrates her awareness of her parodic use of language.⁹⁸ In the

Greek tragedy that Nora chooses to parody, Medea is asked to leave the country with her children by her husband, Jason, when he decides to take another wife, Glauce, the daughter of Creon, king of Corinth. She reminds Jason of all she has done for him, including robbing a golden fleece and committing murder to aid him in this endeavor. When he does not change his mind, Medea — moved by her jealousy — finds revenge for Jason's betrayal by sending Glauce a poison-covered garment which kills her and Creon when he attempts to rouse her. Medea then, in attempt to wound Jason further, murders her two children. In *El tren* Nora performs a scene in which Medea expresses her hatred for Jason's new lover and laments his infidelity:

La heredera de Creonte, la consentida, la niña única: cómo la odio. Y esta criatura insípida me ha quitado a mi hombre [...] Repugnante, la ranita pelona de piernas largas y nalgas duras. La odio. Y mi sexo es como una cueva deshabitada que ulula por las noches. ¡Jasón! ¡Jasón! La desgracia hecho hombre. Oh cuántas veces me has dejado, Jasón, cubierto con distintos disfraces, Jasón, héroe, Jasón, marido. Jasón, fugaz seductor.

(81-82)

By performing this particular monologue, just after the candidate's speech, Nora employs *Medea* to effect a parody of the present. It can be inferred from the context that Jason represents Mexico (*La Patria*), Glauce, foreign investors and nations, and Medea and her children, the Mexican people. In her parodic monologue, Nora describes Glauce as a younger and taller lover, implying perhaps that the US and other foreign nations offer modernization to Mexico through investments in infrastructure and factories, like the Ford plant. Kevin Wetmore, commenting on the use of Medea in African-American

theater, observes, “Jason leaves Medea for an individual whose physical traits are often offered up as the embodiment of the white ideal” (150). Similarly, in Nora’s monologue, Glauce is wealthy, younger, and the daughter of an influential father.

In this parody, Medea is not a foreigner, but rather a Mexican national abandoned by her country. Commenting on Cuban playwright José Triana’s *Medea en el espejo* (1960), William García notes that this is common: “In Latin American adaptations Medea is not a foreigner; instead she is depicted as a person marginalized within her own culture, in her native land. The sense of grievance by the Latin American Medeas is linked to the perception of their marginality” (148).⁹⁹ Nora’s parodic interpretation of *Medea* follows suit as this Medea feels abandoned by her husband and worries for the future of her children who have been deserted by their father as well. She especially fears for her son: “¿Y tu frágil varón? ¿Qué será de ti crecido entre mujeres, con tu madre y tu hermana y mi nodriza, que es como abuela tuya, tierna y lleno de cuentos y mimos, mi pobre Osvaldo débil” (82). Lacking a father, quality leadership of the nation, her children have little hope — only the empty words of politicians. As if to emphasize the critique of Mexico’s national discourse, Medea’s cry in Nora’s parody (“¡Ay, mis hijos, mis hijos míos, míos, mis hijos míos!” [83]) evokes the popular Mexican figure of La Llorona, the weeping woman who kills her children in a river in an attempt to be with the man she loves. Nora’s monologue thus does more than replicate Euripides’s *Medea*; it marks critical difference. Her parodic interpretation calls into question the national narrative by foregrounding that Mexico, like unfaithful Jason, has left Mexico for wealthy, influential foreigners. By masking her words in parody, Nora moves away from the rhetoric of the nation and uses language creatively as a tool for critiquing it.

The novella ends with the arrival of the passengers in Monterrey who never succeeded in boarding the train. Much like *Yo también*, this novella concludes by positing an alternate movement for Mexican citizens. After many of the characters depart for their individual destinations, Chela, the young woman who traveled to Monterrey to meet her pen-pal lover, most likely a married man who has deceived her with false promises, decides to accompany her new love Raúl, the car's driver, back to Mexico City. They plan to wait for passengers who miss the train in Monterrey, as Raúl explains: "Siempre habrá alguno que lo pierda" (142). Rather than following the initial man's false discourse, Chela chooses the genuine words of Raúl even though he drives a beat up car and makes his living picking up those who miss the train. The novella might therefore imply the need for a more honest discourse, as opposed to the exaggerated narrative of the politician, in order for the nation to move to a better place. Even though Raúl may not be modern and wealthy, he cares of Chela, and together they find movement and offer it to others along the way.

Carballido's *Yo también hablo de la rosa* and *El tren que corría* demonstrate the ways the train has left behind Mexican citizens — be they the marginalized poor or the middle class. As the analysis of each work has shown, the train conjures up Mexico's national narrative of progress and what many consider a selling out of Mexico's products and people for foreign profit. Faced with this exclusion of certain citizens, *Yo también* and *El tren* demonstrate the use of voice for critiquing this narrative. In each case, orality and parody serve to question the narrative by noting its exclusive nature and the inconsistencies between the narrative and the reality of many Mexicans. Through their

tactical uses of language, the characters take the train of progress off its tracks and highlight the need for alternate narratives that facilitate the movement — social, educational, economic — for all people in the nation.

Chapter 4

Moving Against Injustice in the Fields: The Artist's Voice in the Farmworker Movement

More than any other group of Mexican descent living in the US, migratory farmworkers find themselves constantly on the move. Field hands and other agricultural workers travel from camp to camp following growing seasons over generations in what becomes a never-ending cycle. Because of their highly mobile lives, at first glance the mobility of agricultural migrants appears to vary greatly from that of other Mexicans and Mexican-Americans/Chicanos analyzed in previous chapters whose movements are limited by factors including ethnicity, race, nationality, gender, and class. However, as this chapter will demonstrate, the mobility of farmworkers in artistic representations does not stand in for mobility marked by freedom and ease; rather, it is a kind of compelled or coerced movement — a mobile immobility.¹⁰⁰ Such are the experiences of farmworkers in El Teatro Campesino's *Actos* (1971) or short political plays, Tomás Rivera's novella *...y no se lo tragó la tierra* (1971), and Helena María Viramontes's novel *Under the Feet of Jesus* (1995). In each, the characters' highly (im)mobile lives are a constant struggle. Vehicles function as markers of limited movement rather than tools for going places, and characters wear the challenges of migratory life — sickness from pesticides, poverty, and abuse by landowners — on their tired bodies. These cultural productions, however, also signal the possibility for an alternate agentive mobility through the use of the artist's voice. Rather than single deployments of creative language as seen in other chapters, *...y no se lo tragó la tierra* (hereafter referred to as *Tierra*) and *Under the Feet of Jesus* emphasize the need for individual artist-activists who creatively intervene on behalf of

their communities. My analysis of these literary works demonstrates the many ways a creative life can “move” against injustice.

These artistic representations offer creative mobility as a strategic response to the real-world immobility of migrant farmworkers. Although Mexicans came to the US to work on the railroads, in the mines, and on ranches and farms in the late 1880s and early 1900s,¹⁰¹ the first large scale movement took place during World War II due to the labor shortage while Americans (including many Chicanos) fought in the theaters of war. In 1942 the Emergency Labor program oversaw the recruitment of *braceros*, Mexican workers who came to labor in US fields and returned to Mexico when no longer needed.¹⁰² At this time, authorities regulated transportation, housing, and wages. However, Texas growers pressured the US government to end the regulations and open the border so that workers could be paid lower wages (Acuña 144). In 1943, this desire became a reality; consequentially workers received lower wages and suffered from worsened conditions in the fields and camps, as Rodolfo Acuña explains:

[B]oth Mexican authorities and US politicians became aware that the status of the *bracero* resembled that of a prisoner of war, herded to and from work. Workers had many grievances; they especially resented paying \$1.75 (in 1975) for meals consisting of mainly beans and tortillas when they earned \$3.00 for a 10-hour day. Growers recovered a good part of their wage outlay through the company store and in some camps by acting as pimps. According to a physician, the *bracero*, after he was used was just dumped across the border to fend for himself. (149)

As Acuña's words remind readers, these agricultural migrants' movements were not characterized by freedom and progress. Rather, the migrants experienced physical hardship, economic exploitation, and even in some cases death, as Woodie Guthrie's poem "Deportee (Plane Wreck at Los Gatos)" enacts.¹⁰³ The *Bracero* program officially ended in 1964, although many continue to migrate to the US in unofficial ways for employment in agriculture and other industries.¹⁰⁴

The abuse of migrant farmworkers in the 1940s-60s led many to protest and demand better rights of exploited workers. In what came to be known as the Farmworker Movement or *La Causa*, under the leadership of César Chávez and Dolores Huerta, many Chicanas/os and other concerned citizens struggled for better conditions and wages. In 1962, Chávez, a Mexican-American migrant farmworker from Yuma, Arizona, began a union to better conditions of workers through non-violent means; as he explains, "I began to realize that a farm workers' union was needed to end the exploitation of the workers in the fields, if we were to strike at the roots of their poverty and suffering" (Levy 3).

The National Farm Workers Association (NFWA)¹⁰⁵ first met in the abandoned Fresno Theater on September 30, 1962, although the first strike did not take place until the following spring. In this strike against the rose industry south of Delano, California, the Union secured a wage increase for workers (181). The publicity of the event led college students, religious figures, and other concerned citizens to join the 1965 strike against Guimarra Vineyards Corporation.¹⁰⁶ In response to the Union's picket lines, growers threatened participants with physical violence, as Chávez recalls: "Some of our pickets were sprayed with pesticides. Others had dogs turned on them, and guns discharged over their heads. We had cases where our cars were turned over, and one case

where a grower drove into one of our pickets” (Levy 194). Rather than retaliating with violence, the Union publicized the growers’ actions in hopes of increasing visibility and support. Another strategy of growers was to bring in strikebreakers, called *scabs*, to work in the strikers’ place. Many were undocumented Mexicans, causing tension with domestic Mexican-American farmworkers. In the midst of this strife, Chávez worked to unite all farmworkers, advocating “a patient coaxing, and education in the fields” (Ferriss xvi). The Delano boycott effort ended five years later in the summer of 1970 with the signing of new contracts. The long battle, however, left 95% of the workers without their homes and cars because of their investment in the struggle for justice (Acuña 271).¹⁰⁷

These work experiences of migratory farmworkers and their geographic movements bring to the forefront issues of compelled geographic mobility. Their occupational lives, although highly mobile, are not characterized entirely by choice and cause various forms of immobility — social, economic, educational, and even geographic. Farmworkers experience this compelled mobility in daily transport to and from the fields and in the longer-distance moves between crops. While on the job, the mobility of migrants remains in the hands of others — contractors or unlicensed sub-contractors — and the conditions are limiting and dangerous. Daniel Rothenberg in *With These Hands: The Hidden World of Migrant Labor* notes that many contractors delegate the transportation of workers to unlicensed, unregulated sub-contractors due to increased governmental regulations:

Currently, over 90 percent of federally licensed contractors do not have authorization to transport farmworkers. [...] Small unlicensed operators, known as *riteros*, now transport workers to and from the fields, generally

charging laborers a few dollars a day. *Riteros* are farmworkers who have saved enough money to buy a car, truck, or van. They are unable to afford the insurance, and few of the vehicles they use could pass mandatory inspections. (113)

Despite the perilous conditions and awareness of most employers, contractors maintain that transportation is a worker's responsibility. Another challenge of farmworkers is the limited or lack of access to water, food, shade, and medical care while on the job, as the cultural productions analyzed in this chapter exemplify. Given the dangerous conditions with pesticide exposure and long hours in the sun, lack of access can mean sickness and even death.¹⁰⁸

Moving between job sites poses another challenge to farmworkers and their children as having work, in most cases, means not having a home. These undesired movements, as Rothenberg explains, have emotional as well as physical repercussions on farmworkers and their children: "The earliest memories of migrant children are often woven out of images of hard work and constant movement" (272). This constant movement creates uncertainty because children are moved from home to home or "[i]n the most extreme case farmworker children have no home" (272). Mobility rather than an experience of progress and freedom thus becomes one of poverty and uncertainty. For many this lack of fixed homeplace leads to educational and socio-economic immobility because children do not have the resources or consistency needed to improve their lives through education. According to the documentary film *Children in the Fields*, many migrant children leave school in April each year to work in the fields with their families, and two thirds of all children of migrant laborers do not finish high school. "A lot of the

kids are destined to a life of poverty,” explains David Straus, director of the Association of Farmworker Opportunity Programs, “ironically, by the very fact that they are working hard to help out their families” (*Children in the Fields*).

Despite the federal government’s intents at aiding migrants through head start programs, reduced cost and free meals, and college tuition assistance, the cycle of poverty¹⁰⁹ continues for many in part because migrants have difficulty accessing services as they often are discouraged from remaining in a certain area for any length of time: “community leaders in areas receiving migrants feared that providing services to migrants would encourage them to settle and compete with local disadvantaged residents for limited welfare funds” (Martin 123). Constant geographic mobility for this reason ensures educational, economic, and social immobility. This experience of farmworker migrancy echoes what Geraldine Pratt, in her study on Filipina domestic workers in Canada, terms a coupling of mobility-immobility (7). For Pratt, pairing these contradictory terms gets at the paradoxical experience of workers; they enjoy increased geographic and economic mobility, through migration and employment, while simultaneously being rendered physically, socially, and economically immobile by their occupational experience.

In midst of these challenges of (im)mobility, the cultural productions analyzed in this chapter point to an alternate agentive mobility available through the use of the artistic voice. Specifically, the *Actos*, *Tierra*, and *Under the Feet of Jesus* center on development of the artist and his or her voice within farmworker communities and signal the artist’s role in moving against oppression. Rather than individual deployments of voice, the works highlight the need for the development of artist-activist figures that stand against

oppression individually and lead others in this direction. The artist-activist may be able to facilitate movement toward a better social place by helping the community envision a distinct future and by working for justice along the picket line.

The use of artist-activist figures in *Tierra* and *Under the Feet of Jesus* to counter immobilizing situations of migrant farmworkers lives is consistent with the key historical role of artists and creative activity in the Farmwork Movement. From the Union emblem, to poster art, to marches under banners of la Virgen de Guadalupe, to agit-prop theater, the Movement utilized various artistic forms as a way of promoting the cause. In many cases, Union members appropriated cultural symbols, such as the eagle from Aztec mythology and the colors red, black, and white from Mexican union strikes, on the flag (Levy 173). The creative reuse of images conjured up ethnic nationalism increasing solidarity among those of Mexican descent — recalling Linda Hutcheon’s insistence that adaptation can be a creative endeavor, an art form, or a kind of “extended palimpsest” in which multiple layers work together to produce meanings (*A Theory of Adaptation* 33-34).

Through the creative mixing of a variety of artistic, theatrical, and religious techniques, the marches used art performatively to political ends. In a march to Sacramento during the Easter week of 1966, Chávez combined elements of the strike/march with a religious pilgrimage.¹¹⁰ This combination aided the movement by bringing strikers together in a spirit of non-violence and by providing a protective cover for the strikers, as growers were less likely to harm to workers on a religious pilgrimage.¹¹¹ This was key to the success of the movement: “By tying these traditions of pilgrimage and protest march together, Chávez intended to create a unique context that

would encourage Mexican-American participation in a political event [...] and then use that process to train them as activists in La Causa” (Orosco 26).

Every night marchers were rejuvenated and united through sounds including traditional union songs like “Solidarity Fever,” Woodie Guthrie’s “Pastures of Plenty,” traditional Mexican choruses like “De Colores” and “Tú Reinarás,” African American spirituals like “Go Down, Moses,” and protest songs such as “Blowin’ in the Wind” (79-80). Following the songs, El Teatro Campesino (The Farmworkers’ Theater), directed by Luis Valdez, would perform *actos*, or short political plays, often depicting the cruelty of the growers, the exploitation of the police, and any other opponents of the cause. Yolanda Broyles-González explains that these skits “expressed the exploitative living and working conditions of farmworkers in boldly satirical words in actions” (xvii). Techniques — following the *commedia dell’arte* model — included slapstick, exaggeration, and allegory. The group regularly performed on the edges of the fields, utilizing the backs of flatbed trucks as impromptu stages.¹¹² According to Valdez, theater and the Movement were inseparable because theater was born out of the Movement and then returned to it as an inspiration for political action:

The *actos* were born quite matter of factly in Delano. Nacieron hambrientos de la realidad. Anything and everything that pertained to daily life, *la vida cotidiana*, of the *huelguistas* became food for thought, material for *actos*. The reality of *campesinos* on strike had become dramatic, (and theatrical as reflected by newspapers, TV newscasts, films, etc.) and so the *actos* merely reflected the reality. (*Luis Valdez* 11)

Because of their close connection with the experiences of farmworkers,¹¹³ the short plays served many purposes: they entertained and allowed protesters a space to let out anxieties, they informed people about worker challenges, and they aided strikers in developing stronger voices. Allowing the farmworker actors to play the role of growers developed their consciousness and confidence, much like in Boal's *Theatre of the Oppressed*. As Valdez explains, "Chicano theater [...] must also educate the pueblo toward an appreciation of *social change*, on and off the stage" (*Luis Valdez 2*, emphasis in original).

In the well-known play, *Las dos caras del Patroncito*, which was first performed along the grape strike picket line in 1965, farmworker actors played a Patroncito (grower), a farmworker *esquirol* ("scab" from Mexico), and an armed guard. In the play the Patroncito speaks with the farmworker in a demeaning way, asking him how much he pays for his housing, transportation, and food. While these are provided at no cost, they are much below standard, as the farmworker explains: "Yesterday the door fell off, Señor. And there's rats también. Y los escusados, the restrooms, ay, señor, fuchi! (*Holds fingers to his nose*)" (20-21). When the Patroncito expresses that sometimes he wishes he were a Mexican and shares his idyllic vision of that life — "Riding in the trucks, hair flying in the wind, feeling all that freedom, coming out here to the fields, working under the green vines, smoking a cigarette, my hands in the cool soft earth, underneath the blue skies," — the farmworker obliges him and they trade clothes and roles (23). Echoing Chilean playwright Sergio Vodanovic's *El delantal blanco* (1956) in which a maid and her employer switch positions, the farmworker and the grower act as the other. The situation, however, becomes heated when the farmworker refuses to return to his "role":

PATRONCITO. On no, this is too much. You've gone too far, boy. I think you better give me back my things. [...] You know that damn César Chávez is right? You can't do this work for less than two dollars an hour. No, boy, I think we've played enough. Give back...

FARMWORKER. Get your hands off me, spic!

PATRONCITO. Now stop it, boy!

FARMWORKER. Get away from me, greaseball!

(Valdez and El Teatro Campesino 26)

In what follows the armed guard believes the Farmworker to be the Patrón and refuses to help the real Patrón. What this scene demonstrates is the development of actors from the farmworker community into artist-activists. Through their experiences on stage, they come to understand the arbitrary nature of social positions and develop the ability to advocate for worker rights on and off stage.

In addition to the *Actos* and other uses of art in the Farmworker Movement, Rivera's ... *y no se lo tragó la tierra* and Viramontes's *Under the Feet of Jesus* highlight the role of the artist in moving against oppression. By analyzing the use of the *Künstlerroman*, a sub-genre¹¹⁴ which traditionally chronicles the development of an artist,¹¹⁵ the following sections of this chapter signal the value of individual artists in the movement for social justice as well as their roles in this community: to remember the past, signal inequity, protest injustice, and create community. *Tierra* and *Under the Feet of Jesus* emphasize the power of the artist's voice to speak out and to inspire others to do so — creating larger and louder movements resulting in tangible change. In this chapter, I thus understand “moving” via language in a broad sense: the artist's voice (a verbal

movement) inspires action (political movement) leading to improved conditions in the fields.

Cursing God and Creating Hope: The Role of the Artist's Voice in ...*Y no se lo tragó la tierra*

Tomás Rivera, the son of migrant farmworkers,¹¹⁶ penned ...*y no se lo tragó la tierra*¹¹⁷ (1971) in midst of the Farmworker Movement. His semi-autobiographical novella, based on the experiences of an unnamed young migrant boy and his farmworker community, is a pioneering work in Chicano literature and was awarded the Premio Quinto Sol.¹¹⁸ In its focus on the artistic development of the young boy, the novella draws on the *Künstlerroman* sub-genre to foreground the value and role of the artist in the Farmworker Movement. Through the way the boy draws on memory and utilizes words to articulate an alternate vision of reality, *Tierra* highlights the need for an artist (and not merely a political activist) whose role, I suggest, is to remember, to facilitate dialogue, to recognize larger social patterns, to speak truth to power, and to envision a distinct future for the community. Rather than single actions against injustice, the novella calls for individuals — like the young boy — to move continually against exploitation with their words and their lives.

Tierra is divided into 14 vignettes and 13 anecdotes that follow all but the last vignette; these anecdotes point backward (commenting on the last vignette), forward (commenting on the next), or speak to larger thematic issues. Scholars have suggested that the main vignettes represent the 12 months of the agricultural year, with the first and last serving as an introduction and conclusion, and in this way the novella enacts the

cyclical experiences of the laborers' journeys (Grajeda 71; Ríos xvi). The vignettes are narrated by the voices of various farmworkers of the 1940s and 50s who travel from Texas, where they pick cotton in the winter, and to the Utah, Minnesota, Iowa, and Michigan, where they pick beets and other crops in the spring and summer. In the first vignette, "El año perdido," an unnamed boy tells recounts that he is unable to remember the last year,¹¹⁹ and the 12 vignettes that follow comprise a collection of memories and conversations that the boy recalls. These seemingly random memories are presented through impersonal omniscient narration, unmediated thoughts, monologue, prayer, and dialogue by a variety of speakers: a mother whose son fights in the Korean war, a father who tells his child to endure his thirst lest the *patrón* become angry should they go for water, a boy who curses God for their situation, and a gentle wife and mother who thinks about helping her husband in the fields. The novella ends with a vignette titled "Debajo de la casa" in which the boy realizes that upon listening to all of the memories, he has not lost anything but instead gained much. The boy as the artist in the novella thus weaves together the many voices of his people — finding meaning despite significant problems and pains.

Through its content and structure, *Tierra* elucidates various ways that the characters' mobility is challenged, even in their highly mobile lives as migrant farmworkers. Although *Tierra* is organized around the growing year, the novella is fragmented through the use of a variety of voices, locations, and narrative styles. Moving between many voices — most times of unnamed characters — in each vignette and anecdote, readers lack a sense of location. Rather than a continuity of narrative voice and place, the novella's continuity might be found in its themes requiring readers to piece

together meaning from the lost year, much like the migrant boy in the first and last vignette.

The novella might be considered a *Künstlerroman*, a sub-genre of the *Bildungsroman* (novel of development), in which a young artist often experiences conflicts with the bourgeois society, and ultimately succeeds in developing their voice as an artist. This development, as Roberta Seret underscores, is not merely centered on the improvement of craft; rather, it encompasses social, psychological, and spiritual¹²⁰ growth (1). Protagonists frequently struggle to find their place in the context of societies that do not welcome their alternate visions. This societal rejection leads the artist to withdraw on a solitary journey or quest¹²¹ — geographical, psychological, or both — in which he or she struggles to understand the past and attempts “to create something with meaning” out of memory (Stewart 8). The use of this sub-genre, with its roots in the European upper class, clashes with farmworker experiences as the journeys of farmworkers, a compelled mobility, are a part of daily life.

The artist in *Tierra* nevertheless shares some commonalities with the prototypical protagonist of the *Künstlerroman*: a young boy who is “sensitive, solitary, and introspective, temperamental, melancholy, and romantic” (Seret 9). The most striking difference between the traditional and farmworker protagonists is socio-economic status. Annie Eyosturoy suggests that Chicana authors take this difference into account and expand on the prototypical quest story by “exploring crucial effects particular to ethnic contexts and patterns of economic deprivation have on the female development process” (134). Part of the artist’s journey in the Chicana/o *Künstlerroman* thus includes

contending with social and economic oppression in addition to the ideological issues of finding a place as an artist within society.

The novella makes clear this social and economic oppression as traveling from place to place during the agricultural year is costly and dangerous. A woman explains the expense of the trips to Minnesota in the back of a trailer as the parents had to pay for their small children “aunque fueran parados todo el camino hasta Iowa” in addition to their own “fare” (55). The penultimate vignette, “Cuando lleguemos,” demonstrates more fully the challenges of the farmworkers who travel from Texas to Minnesota. When the truck hauling the farmworkers breaks down, the narrative voice shares several passengers’ thoughts which center on their many challenges: sickness, lack of access to restrooms, tiredness from standing, hunger, and caring for children (68-74). The highly mobile lives of farmworkers mean highly immobile lives in which they experience little power over their bodies.¹²²

Other vehicles in *Tierra* carry negative connotations such as exploitation, limitation, and death. The novella includes an anecdote, for example, recounting the story of a car accident with 16 fatalities: the spinach pickers were returning from the fields in a large truck when an inebriated Anglo woman, angry that her husband left her, ran into the truck. The men were trapped inside and burned to death (53). In this case, as in many others, the Anglo woman’s mobility and lack of care lead to the migrants’ death. However, Anglos are not the only ones to impede the mobility of farmworkers. As the last vignette signals, former Mexican-American farmworkers, such as Don Jesús, in whose trailer a dead man was found, transport the farmworkers in unsafe conditions (79).

Given these challenges workers try to remedy the situation by taking their own vehicles to the work only to end up in a more painful situation. In “Los quemaditos,” the parents of the three García children leave their children in their car while they work in the fields. When the car becomes too hot and the children become ill, the family leaves the children at home. However, the unsupervised children catch fire on the stove while playing and burn to death (44-46). The tragedy of this vignette points to the lack of safe options for children whose parents work in the fields as well as to the larger issues of mobility — including social, economic, and educational mobility that would prevent such heartrending events.

Thirst, hunger, and illness in *Tierra* also impede the farmworkers physical mobility and can even lead to death as “Los niños no se aguantaron” demonstrates. In this vignette, a young boy complains of his thirst to his father and asks to go to the cattle-watering tank for a drink. The father tells the boy to wait, as the grower does not allow extra water breaks, but the boy’s thirst leads him to devise a plan where he pretends to relieve himself near the tank and then quickly takes a drink. When the grower becomes aware of the scheme, he shoots a gun to scare the boy off, accidentally killing him with a shot to the head (7-9). In this case, tending to a basic biological need means death. Stories like these signal that, in addition to exploiting the workers bodies through low pay and unsafe conditions, growers attempt to control the bodies of workers through limiting access to water and other basic needs.¹²³

Given these challenges, many would believe that educational and religious institutions might aid the migrant workers. However, in *Tierra* they do little or place further limitations on farmworker mobility. *Tierra* thus seems to critique rather than

celebrate organized religion. “Es que duele” tells of a young boy who struggles in the school system where he is belittled by his teachers and fellow students in the north. The boy explains:

Siempre es lo mismo en las escuelas del norte. Todos nomás mirándote de arriba a abajo. Y luego se ríen de uno y luego la maestra con el palito de la paleta o de *ésquimeo pie* buscándote piojos en la cabeza. Da vergüenza. Y luego cuando arriscan las narices. Da coraje. Yo creo que es mejor estarse uno en el rancho, aquí en la mota con sus gallineros, o en la labor se siente uno a lo menos más libre, más a gusto. (13)

As his words demonstrate, the migrant students are considered dirty and capable of contaminating the local children. They are constantly under surveillance by the authorities, as Manuel Luis Martínez notes: “Shame functions as a control system. The migrant subject is isolated and examined. Like the vagrancy laws on Mexican ownership of automobiles, controlled mobility is the ultimate end” (312). In addition to these prejudices by teachers and other staff, local children are unkind to the migrant children — mocking and staring at them. Out of frustration for this treatment, the boy hits an Anglo classmate and boy fears he may be expelled. At the same time he yearns for the comfort of his community in the fields, as the hostile environment of school makes it difficult for migrant children, like this boy, to succeed. Many end up dropping out to work full time in the fields not only for lack of resources, but also out of shame because the physical exploitation of the fields is more bearable than the emotional exploitation of the classroom.

Similar to the educational system, religious figures in the novella limit the migrants' social and economic mobility as they fail to provide promised assistance or exploit the migrants' faith to economic ends. In one of the anecdotes, a Protestant mission sends a tradesman to teach carpentry skills. The farmworkers eagerly await the classes which will offer them new career opportunities, only to find out that the tradesman is more interested in spending time in his trailer with the pastor's wife, his "interpreter," than in aiding them (30). The literal and metaphoric silence of the church is presented in a satirical and humorous way, as Lauro Flores notes, when those who have come to share the gospel, and even their interpreter whose job it is to speak, remain silent (105). In another anecdote, the Catholic¹²⁴ priest's exploitation of the people is worse than the Protestant tradesman's apathy. The priest blesses the farmworkers' vehicles in a religious ceremony and uses the profits to fund a trip to Barcelona (61). Both the Protestant and Catholic religious figures use these encounters for their own gain, all the while exploiting those of a lower socio-economic class, as Santiago Daydí-Tolson explains: "The author does not deal with religion as a positive spiritual force, but as a form of psychological limitation to the social advancement of the Mexican American" (136).

As can be seen in these examples, the migrants' physical, social, economic, and educational mobility is limited. However, *Tierra* does not leave the community without agency. Rivera explains: "They may be economically deprived, politically deprived, socially deprived, but they kept moving, never staying in one place to suffer or be subdued, but always searching for work" (Olivares xxxv).¹²⁵ I suggest that this unconquerable spirit comes to the forefront in the novella's focus on the development of an artist. It is the artist-activist — one who works creatively with thought and word —

who is able to produce a kind of alternate agentive mobility when confronted with geographic, social, and economic immobility. Through remembering, facilitating dialogue, recognizing larger social patterns, speaking truth to power, and envisioning a distinct future for the community, the artist moves the people to better lives.

From the beginning *Tierra* emphasizes the artist's role of remembering.¹²⁶ The novella begins with the young boy struggling to recall the last year: "Aquel año se le perdió. A veces trataba de recordar y ya para cuando creía que se estaba aclarando todo un poco se le perdían las palabras" (5). Like all *Künstlers*, he begins in a place of lacking; both memory and words escape him, and these are precisely the resources on which many artists rely as the inspiration and tool of their craft. Echoing the first lines of Marcel Proust's *Remembrance of Things Past* (1913) in which a young man moves between sleep and awake, *Tierra* gets at the role of memory in the artist's experience. One of the themes of Proust's novel is involuntary memory, or those moments when images come without desire to the mind. This can occur, for example, when an experience in the present evokes a forgotten moment in the past. In *Tierra*, the boy experiences involuntary memory in that liminal space between sleep and awake: "Se dio cuenta que siempre pensaba que pensaba y de allí no podía salir. Luego se ponía a pensar en que nunca pensaba y era cuando se le volvía todo blanco y se quedaba dormido. Pero antes de dormirse veía y oía muchas cosas..." (5). Gilles Deleuze suggests about Proust's novel, and this may also apply to Rivera's novella, that the issue of memory is tied closely to the artist's ability to work with signs to consider other deeper realities (9). In this way, the beginning of the novella signals the artist's role in remembering and seeing deeper meanings¹²⁷ which is essential for migrants, as Alicia Schmidt Camacho underscores:

“The experience of displacement intensifies migrant desire and exaggerates the demands of memory” (6). For those who can take few possessions with them and who find themselves constantly on the road, the artist serves as a memory keeper — a human archive — in the community. His memory maintains identity, reinforces community, and provides the encouragement for continuing on the journey. In another way, returning to Deleuze, memory signals the artist’s ability to see greater realities, recalling Diana Taylor’s insistence that memory is not a passive experience but “an act of imagination and interconnection” (*The Archive* 82). In returning to the past between sleep and awake, the boy arrives at the complexity of farmworkers and their experiences: they are more than exploited workers but multifaceted people with stories and dreams.

Tierra also signals the role of the artist in facilitating dialogue — creating connections between people — through the career aspiration of the young boy in the vignette “Es que duele” and the anecdote about the poet, Bartolo. The young boy explains his greatest disappointment about being expelled from school: “Lo que me duele más es que ahora no voy a poder ser operador de teléfonos” (17). His dream job, inspired by a movie, requires he finish high school as the conversation between the boy and his grandparents illustrates:

— Vieja, háblale al niño que salga... Mire, compadre, pregúntele a su ahijado lo que quiere ser cuando sea grande y que haya acabado ya la escuela.

— ¿Qué va a ser, ahijado?

— No sé.

— ¡Díle! No tengas vergüenza, es tu padrino.

— ¿Qué va a ser, ahijado?

— Operador de teléfonos.

— ¿A poco?

— Sí, compadre, está muy empeñado m'ijo en ser eso, si viera. Cada vez que le preguntamos dice que quiere ser operador. Yo creo que les pagan buen. Le dije al Viejo el otro día pero el se rio. Yo creo que cree que m'ijo no puede, pero es que no lo conoce, es más vivo que nada. Nomás le pido a Diosito que le ayude a terminar la escuela y que se haga operador.

(17-18)

In this, as in many other cases, *Tierra* leaves it to the reader to decipher the meaning of this career choice. Unlike work in the fields, this career requires an education, implying the possibility of a higher socio-economic status. Significant for this study are the connotations of the boy's unusual career aspiration that imply an interest in creating connections between people distanced from one another. For migrant farmworkers the possibility of connecting with loved ones far off is of utmost importance. As with remembering — recalling and making sense of the past — the operator aids in making connections and forming community in the present.

As if to emphasize the artist's use of language to unite people and to create hope — what Héctor Calderón calls the artist's responsibility of “binding together” (105) —, an anecdote tells of a poet named Bartolo. This poet passes through the town each December after the people return from the North to sell his poems that include the names of the people in the town. Much like the operator in the previous vignette, as Martín-Flores notes, the poet unites people through the use of words: “Bartolo es hasta cierto

punto un operador que intercomunica nombrando y dando visibilidad individualizada a los miembros de la comunidad” (131). Through stressing that the poems need be read aloud, the novella highlights community over individuality and the role of orality in this process. The artist’s words, composed in print, must come to life again in their oral recitation: “Recuerdo que una vez le dije a la raza que leyeran los poemas en voz alta porque la voz era la semilla del amor en la oscuridad” (74). In the movement from text to speech in community, the people find connection with one another. “Rivera’s portrait of the artist,” Calderón explains, “contains the social function of storytelling which is to bind the culture together” (105). The ultimate goal of these connections facilitated by the artist, as Bartolo’s words signal, is to find love in community.

The novella sets up the role of the artist in recognizing patterns and making meaning from them through its structure. Given *Tierra*’s structural fragmentation, multiple modes of narration, and numerous voices, the boy in the first and last vignette serves as a meaning-making frame. His presence and words organize the diverse stories of the novella. While a silent figure in the novella, as Flores notes, he “never really rejects solitude and silence — on the contrary, he enjoys them and makes clear his purpose to pursue his search through meditation” (100). The boy’s reflective presence thus provides a narrative thread and signals the artist’s role in recognizing themes and making sense of experience. In “Debajo de la casa” the boy explains his need, like that of many artists, to hide away: “Necesitaba esconderme para poder comprender muchas cosas. De aquí en adelante todo lo que tengo que hacer es venirme aquí, en lo oscuro, y pensar en ellos,” his community (80). As a result of his reflection, he gains rather than loses memory: “se dio cuenta de que no había perdido nada. Había encontrado. Encontrar

y reencontrar y juntar. Relacionar esto con esto, eso con aquello, todo con todo. Eso era. Eso era todo” (81).

This task of the artist of recognizing patterns becomes most apparent in “Cuando lleguemos.” After the long days of work, the farmworkers have little time to reflect on their experiences. The artist responds to the community’s lack of time; he sits at a distance weaving the stories together to create meaning. Throughout the vignette many farmworkers ponder what they will do when they arrive in Minnesota: get a new bed for an ill wife, look for a job in Minneapolis, find a *gringa* to date, buy a car so the children do not have to travel in the trailer, find a different occupation (68-73). As if to respond to this litany of thoughts, another character, potentially the boy from the first and last vignette, calls attention to the reality of their entrapment in this cycle of migratory poverty that promises better and never comes through:

Cuando lleguemos, cuando lleguemos, ya, la mera verdad estoy cansado de llegar. Es la misma cosa llegar por partir porque apenas llegamos y ... la mera verdad estoy cansado de llegar. Mejor debería decir, cuando no lleguemos porque esa es la mera verdad. Nunca llegamos. (73)

In the repetition of the phrase “cuando lleguemos” the character brings together the numerous desires of the passengers. Despite the large number of experiences — 13 individuals’ thoughts — he hears the rhythm in their individual wants. This ability to listen and to find common themes is impressive because the voices are diverse and contrasting: one angry young man yells “pinche vida, pinche vida, pinche vida” while the mother whose thoughts follow his considers how she might help husband in the fields (Grajeda 74). In this cacophony of voices, a perceptive artist is needed to sift through

many words, locate themes, and make meaning. In stating “nunca llegamos,” the artist underscores a deeper reality of the migratory experience, declaring that they are not mere individuals but an entire community that never arrives.

One of the most important roles of the artist is speaking truth to power. David Morgan proposes that this is the role of the contemporary artist, who might envision himself or herself as a kind of prophet of the people: “Careful studies of artists [...] have shown that the most advanced art of the age could be deeply motivated by the quest for liberation, using artistic media to challenge regnant ideas, to battle against the limits of thought, feeling, and sensibility imposed by social mores as well as dominant economic interests” (39). In the vignette “...y no se lo tragó la tierra,” the boy uses his voice to curse God, thus functioning as a prophet who contests the injustices of his people. Scholars, including Kanellos, Rodríguez, and Daydí-Tolson, have suggested that this action constitutes a rejection of organized religion by Rivera. While the novella supports this interpretation, another way to understand the curse is as an ultimate questioning of authority and the need for the artists to contest abuses of power. As Morgan explains, “The task of the artist is not to take the place of the priests, which would make mean making art a substitute for religion, but to champion the role of the prophet, namely, to speak truth to power” (39).

The vignette begins with the boy’s mother crying because of the death of an aunt and the illness of an uncle to tuberculosis. The situation worsens when the boy’s father falls ill from sunstroke. The boy listens to his father moaning in pain and praying to God for healing. The mother, also a devout Catholic, faithfully asks God to heal her family.

Seeing no response to the prayers and his family growing sicker, the boy becomes angry and questions his mother's faith:

¿Qué se gana, mamá, con andar haciendo esto? ¿Apoco cree que le ayudó mucho a mi tío y a mi tía? ¿Por qué es que nosotros estamos aquí como enterrados en la tierra? O los microbios nos comen o el sol nos asolea. Siempre alguna enfermedad. Y todos los días trabaje, trabaje. [...] Y luego ellos rogándole a Dios... si Dios no se acuerda de uno... yo creo que no hay... No, mejor no decirlo, a lo mejor empeora papá. (32)

In criticizing his mother's faith the boy raises the issue of suffering and systemic violence that the family experiences: disease, heatstroke, unbearable work, and economic oppression. Issues of faith and suffering converge in this novella, as is typical of many contemporary Latino/a novels according to Bridget Kevane (6).

Surrounded by evidence of the lack of a caring God, the boy desires to deny God but resists realizing the potential repercussions of his actions, including the offense that he would cause to his faithful Catholic mother. His mother, recalling the woman in the vignette "Un rezo" who prays for her son's safe return from the Korean War,¹²⁸ believes that a better world awaits after death and does not question her family's exploitation in the present. These women see themselves as part of this Catholic tradition of suffering; much like, Mary, the mother of Jesus, they must endure while their families are exploited: "Suffering was the way to salvation, but it was the lot of women, it would seem, to suffer more. By embracing it, as did the Virgen Mary, they proved themselves to be all the more virtuous" (B. Clarke 79).

When the boy's life could not seem to get any worse, his 9 year-old brother becomes ill from work in the fields and begins to vomit. The boy carries his brother home with his other younger siblings trailing behind him. On his walk, he begins to ask "why?" and finally curses God in anger:

Cada paso que daba hacia la casa le retumbaba la pregunta ¿por qué?
 Como a medio camino se empezó a enfurecer y luego empezó a llorar de puro coraje. Sus otros hermanitos no sabían que hacer y empezaron ellos a llorar también. Luego empezó a echar maldiciones. Y no supo ni cuándo, pero lo que dijo lo había tenido ganas de decir desde hacía mucho tiempo. Maldijo a Dios. [...] Por un segundo vio que se abría la tierra para tragárselo. Luego se sintió andando por la tierra bien apretada, más apretada que nunca. (35-36)

As the cited passage demonstrates, the boy believes that if he curses God — according to a traditional legend — the earth will swallow him up. However, his experience proves otherwise, and when he goes to bed that night he feels much peace. In questioning God, the highest authority in his religion and culture, the boy signals the possibility of questioning all authority — religious leaders, government officials, and employers. Rodríguez similarly points out: "It is as if religion symbolizes the cruel burden of fate, the weight of economic necessity, and social practice that keeps migrant workers laboring in the fields like brute animals" (18). The boy's curse of God, an example of Bulter's violent language as violence,¹²⁹ leads to change. Kevane explains how experiences of exploitation in Latino/a novels often beget responses of violence: "at times, the violence forces the characters to commit violent acts of their own — in some ways highlighting

the link between violence and protest, violence and action — that create change” (6). The novella reinforces this value of speaking the truth of one’s experience to those in power in the affirming results of the curse: rather than becoming more ill, the father and brother feel better the next day. The vignette ends with the boy feeling for the first time “capaz de hacer y deshacer cualquier cosa que él quisiera” (36), emphasizing his growth as an artist-activist and his role of questioning injustices on behalf of the community.

The final vignette, “Debajo de la casa,” which functions as the closing frame in the novella, underscores the role of the artist in uniting the people in a vision for the future. The vignette begins with the boy laying under a house contemplating for many hours in solitude. Unlike his experience at the beginning of the novella, in the end, “En lo oscuro podía pensar muy bien” (76). The novella highlights how the boy has matured into an artist through showcasing his unedited memories of the past. Among many other thoughts, he remembers learning to pray and going to the dump to search for copper. He recalls his father telling him stories of witches, ponders an upcoming wedding, and thinks of a man who recently died. After recalling past stories and present experiences of his community, the boy reveals his dream: “Quisiera ver a toda esa gente junta. Y luego si tuviera unos brazos bien grandes los podía abrazar a todos. Quisiera poder platicar con todos otra vez, pero que todos estuvieran juntos” (80). *Tierra* again in this final scene emphasizes a role of the artist — recalling the operator career aspiration — in connecting people. His desire is to unite them in hope with voice, as he mentions “Quisiera poder platicar con todos.” The community is forged in dialogue.

However, the novella does not end here. After some children find him under the house, he decides to walk home and climb a tree. The narrator then describes what the

boy sees off in the distance: “En el horizonte encontró una palma y se imaginó que ahí estaba alguien trepado viéndolo a él. Y hasta levantó el brazo y lo movió para atrás y para adelante para que viera que él sabía que estaba allí” (81). By choosing to end this way, the novella elucidates boy’s role as a seer or visionary for the community. His sighting of someone far off and his waving to the person, signals his vision for a future and his belief in the possibility for connection. He sees hope for his people.

In utilizing the *Künstlerroman* sub-genre, I suggest that *Tierra* highlights the role of the artist in the Chicano farmworker community whose mobility is consistently limited. The boy’s development throughout the novella depicts the artist’s task in this particular community: to remember, to facilitate dialogue, to recognize patterns and themes, to speak truth to power, and to unify the people in a vision for the future. Through his work and his life, the artist-figure moves against abuses of power and assists the community in creating more mobile lives — socially, economically, educationally, and geographically. The novella’s focus on the artists alternation between time alone — off alone in an ivory tower or under a house, as it were — and time in the fields alongside the community speaks to a conception of the artist as one who lives *praxis* — working out thought in action. The novella signals the complexity of the artist’s voice and the multiple possibilities of voice in the movement for social justice in the farmworker community.

Saving Words and Violent Language in *Under the Feet of Jesus*

Under the Feet of Jesus (1995), written two decades after *...y no se lo tragó la tierra* (1971), also highlights the need for artist-activists in combating the abuse of

migratory farmworkers, but it does so in a more forceful way — positing the need for both thought and action in the movement for justice in the fields. Much like *Tierra* the farmworkers in this novel face many limitations on their mobility but find ways to overcome them through the power of the artist's voice and actions. The artist-activist in Viramontes's novel is a young woman named Estrella who belongs to a migratory farmworker family and seeks justice for her community.¹³⁰ Estrella's development over the course of the novel, following the structure the *Künstlerroman* sub-genre, underscores the artist's role as a builder and maintainer of community, as a seer of deeper realities, and as a voice for those who cannot speak for themselves. Many of these roles echo those of the artist in *Tierra*, however, as the novel demonstrates, the artist in *Under the Feet of Jesus* is a more pronounced artist-activist who must utilize a variety of tools — thought, word, and action — to move against injustice. In an even more assertive way, *Under the Feet of Jesus* signals the need for the continual deployment of these words over a lifetime to aid the community.

The novel begins with Estrella's family — including her mother, Petra, her four younger siblings, and her mother's partner who is not her father, Perfecto — in their old Chevy Capri station wagon headed toward a barn in the distance. The barn is located near the two-room bungalow in which they will make their home during the grape harvest season. Recalling Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath* (1936) the family faces one struggle after another: Petra and Perfecto lack the resources to provide for the many children, Estrella lacks access to a quality education and misses her father who left long ago, Petra fights off nervous breakdowns, and scorpions invade the house. The family and the other workers also fear being detained and separated by *La Migra*, even though they are

documented. For this reason, Petra tells Estrella that she should tell the authorities that her papers are “under the feet of Jesus” — referring to the plaster icon of Jesus in her living room and perhaps, by extension, under the care of God. The most pressing challenge of the family is the sickness of a young man named Alejo that the family watches over. When Alejo becomes ill from the pesticides sprayed by crop dusting planes, the family takes him to a clinic for treatment. Estrella becomes angry when the nurse charges them even though she can do nothing for Alejo. This leads Estrella to threaten the nurse for the money so that they can take Alejo to the hospital. The novel ends, echoing *Tierra*'s last scene,¹³¹ with Estrella climbing on the barn rafters, as if an angel watching over the people.

The novel emphasizes the limited mobility of the farmworkers in several ways, drawing attention to the need for tools for overcoming the challenging circumstances. This limited mobility can be seen from the first pages as the family travels in the old station wagon with a “booming muffler.” The car is weighted down with all of their belongings “tied with a web of ropes to the luggage racks” (4). When the family gets out of the car, the trash from the trip falls out with them: “stray socks, balls of crushed waxed paper, peanut shells” (7). The description of the family packed into the old, dirty car is not one of freedom, but of heaviness and uncertainty. The narrator explains: “It was always a question of work, and work depended on the harvest, the car running, their health, the conditions of the road, how long the money held out, and the weather, which meant they could depend on nothing” (4).

Rather than a sense of moving forward and dreaming of the next place — as in *Tierra*'s “Cuando lleguemos” — the novel expresses a feeling of loss: “Always leaving

things behind that they couldn't fit, couldn't pack, couldn't take" (14). The novel additionally underscores how the migrant life means leaving people behind; Estrella often thinks of her father leaving them and Alejo misses his family. The trains that continually pass by the peach orchard also recall that the characters are unable to move out of the cycle of poverty: "The lone train broke the sun and silence with its growing thunderous roar and the train reminded the piscadores of destinations, of arrivals and departures, of home and not of home. For they did stop and listen" (55). This train, which could stand in for progress as in Carballido's *Yo también hablo de la rosa*, leaves them continually behind.

The family's lack of money for fuel to take Alejo for medical care and their car problems demonstrate again their impeded mobility. On their way to the clinic, the car gets stuck in a deep rut because the roads near the migrant community are not well maintained. Perfecto attempts to get it out by gunning the motor only making matters worse: "the tire only spun deeper into the hole, the rocks and twigs spitting from beneath, all of them watching as the tire spun and spun without making an inch" (130). Much like the car stuck in a hole, the family cannot get out of their situation of social, economic, and educational mobility. When the family finally arrives at the clinic, Estrella observes that the tires of the ambulance are missing, rendering it useless in case of an emergency. The lack of resources of this clinic in a rural area populated by migrants speaks to the ways they are left behind by society and unable to reach the services they need for health and success.

Other vehicles in the migrant community symbolize work and exploitation rather than tools for going places. Trucks carry the field hands to and from the fields, honking to

signal the end of the workday (57). Once inside the truck, the references to the *piscadores* (pickers) bumping into one another “like change in a pocket” and as cattle “herded out of the corralled flatbed” upon their exit, underscore their lack of agential mobility and the growers view of them as dispensable labor (67). On one occasion Estrella cleverly repurposes a work truck for shade: “No one had claimed the shade under one of the trucks. The truck leaked oil and hot water from the radiator and so Estrella inched her back against the gravel from the rear” (85). Alejo comes to join her, and the two lie under the old Ford chatting as they avoid the hot sun. While her use of the vehicle for shade marks her ingenuity, the scene elucidates the extent to which workers are rendered immobile by their highly mobile occupation. In this case, Estrella and Alejo also put themselves at risk for injury or death by resting under the vehicle, signaling again the lack of basic resources like shelter for farmworkers and the dangerous conditions.

Another vehicle — a crop dusting plane — causes Alejo’s serious illness. The planes appear several times in the novel, foreshadowing Alejo’s sickness; one crosses over them “like a crucifix” as if to symbolically mark the death its pesticides cause (76). The characters fear the pesticides that the planes drop, but they take comfort in that the growers must alert them before spraying. One day, when Alejo and another worker, Gumecindo, pick peaches the plane sprays directly on them without warning. Alejo and Gumecindo realize the gravity of the situation and begin to yell: “Run! Alejo screamed, struggling to get himself down from the tree, Get the fuck outta here!” (76). The narrator describes the effects of the pesticides on Alejo: “Air clogged in his lungs and he thought he was just holding his breath, until he tried exhaling but couldn’t, which meant he couldn’t breath. [...] Alejo’s head spun and he shut his stinging eyes tighter to regain

balance. But a hole ripped in his stomach like a match to paper” (77). In addition to rendering him physically immobile, the effects of the pesticides strain the financial resources of Estrella’s family, limiting the family’s economic mobility.

Much like *Tierra*, *Under the Feet of Jesus* frequently points to the use of creative language by artist Estrella as a tool for moving against injustice. Throughout the novel are several examples of Estrella’s creativity and her ability to work with words: she is awarded a prize for her essay titled *My Blue Fat Cat* (166), she can make a coke bottle whistle (71), she entertains her siblings with song and dance (18-19), she learns the names of building tools from Perfecto (25), and after this experience she learns to read and enjoys practicing with another migrant girl, Maxine (30). In each instance her ability to work with words creatively is emphasized and her artistic development follows the *Künstlerroman* sub-genre, as Latimer notes (342).¹³² As in *Tierra*, Viramontes’s novel does not find value in art for art’s sake, but rather the development of the artist serves the good of the people. The novel foregrounds Estrella’s role as an artist and posits, by extension, the role of the artist in the farmworker community to build and maintain community, to see deeper realities, and to act for those who cannot do so for themselves. Estrella finds an alternate agential mobility through thought, language, and action. Despite her communities’ numerous limitations, through her voice and actions she leads the way to justice.

One of the roles of the artist, as my analysis suggests, is to build and maintain community with language. Words are associated with tools for building when Estrella helps Perfecto work on the barn near their home. Perfecto teaches her the names of the tools: claw hammer, screwdriver, crescent wrench, hacksaw, sledgehammer, pry bar,

chisel, axe. Although at first she is frustrated with the task, Estrella soon realizes that the names “gave meaning to the tools. Tools to build, bury, tear down, rearrange, and repair” (26). To further emphasize the metaphoric understanding of words as tools, the paragraph ends noting that this was the moment “when she began to read” (26). Lydia Cooper notes the symbolic value of this scene: “The novel therefore suggests that the primary goal of linguistic education is aesthetic fluency rather than functional literacy” (369). While this is true, the relation of words to tools also suggests their power to *do* when words are needed for action.

Estrella builds and maintains community in many ways, utilizing words differently according to what each person needs. She entertains her younger siblings with song and dance, allowing them to release their tension from being shut up in the house all day: “Estrella had carried the fussing twins in the hoop of her arms, and sat them in front of the overturned zinc bucket and handed them wooden spoons” (18). Although this angers Petra, the children enjoy their time and Estrella, in her dance “like a loca,” also finds an outlet from her frustration and grows her bond with her siblings (19). Estrella also intellectually engages Alejo, who aspires to be a geologist, by discussing the nearby La Brea tar pits with him. While the two lie under the old Ford, Alejo shares how oil is made. Estrella asks him “You like to talk, don’t you?” making it apparent that Alejo has few people with whom to share his passion in the farmworker community (87). In her play and reading time with Maxine Deveridge, the novel again underscores her ability to build community with someone considered dangerous and an outsider in the migrant community. The Deveridge family is infamous for violence and uncleanness, causing the other migrants to pitch their tents far away from the family (28-29). Estrella comes to

overlook these fears when Maxine shares books and magazines, and the two later become the friends.

Estrella builds community with words most poignantly by thanking Perfecto. Just after Perfecto has driven Alejo to the hospital Estrella turns to him and says, “Thank you, Perfecto Flores” (155). The experience impacts him as no one has thanked him before:

Perfecto sat being the steering wheel, the warm hum of the engine under his feet. He had given this country his all, and in this land that used his body for kindling, in this land that never once in the thirty years he lived and worked, never once said thank you, this young woman who could be his granddaughter had said the words with such honest gratitude, he was struck by how deeply these words touched him. (155)

Estrella uses language as a tool of affirmation. She knew from her experiences at school, much like those of the boy in *Tierra*, that language could be used to tear down: “words could become as excruciating as rusted nails piercing the heels of her bare feet” (25).

However, she chooses instead to use the words tactically to affirm, even though she and Perfecto had not always gotten along. This is essential for Perfecto and migrants like him who receive poor treatment and little thanks, as the cited quote illustrates.

Much like the boy in *Tierra* who recognizes patterns and themes, *Under the Feet of Jesus* emphasizes Estrella’s ability to understand experiences at a social and metaphysical level. She becomes a seer of deeper realities with her creative analytical mind. In the conversation between Estrella and Alejo, as they lie under the Ford and discuss the nearby La Brea tar pits and the origin of oil, Estrella’s ability to understand the physical reality at another level becomes apparent:

— You know where oil comes from? He asked in a whisper [...]

— Probably from a leak from the motor.

— I don't mean that.

— If we don't have oil, we don't have gasoline.

— Good. We stay put then.

— Stuck, more like it. Stuck.

— Aren't we now? (86)

Alejo then explains that bones, rocks, leaves, and other debris fell into the sea millions of years ago and eventually became tar oil. While Alejo looks at the tar pits from a geological perspective, Estrella, as an artist, understands this process as a metaphor for the abuse of her people. She recalls the tar pits, for example, when the white suburban nurse charges them excessively for minimal services:

She remembered the tar pits. Energy money, the fossilized bones of energy matter. How bones made oil and oil made gasoline. The oil was made from their bones, and it was their bones that kept the nurse's car from not halting on some highway, kept her on her way to Daisyfield to pick up her boys at six. It was their bones that kept the air conditioning in the cars humming, that kept them moving on the long dotted line on the map. Their bones. Why couldn't the nurse see that? (148)

In making this leap from a physical to a metaphoric level, Estrella does the work of the artist in seeing beyond a physical reality.¹³³ Her weary community, busy in the fields and at home, does not often have the time or energy to see beyond the immediate reality, thus the poet moves beyond. As Latimer signals, “The petroleum becomes in her mind, the

correlative, the estranged value, of the labor of her under paid, under appreciated people” (335). Her ability to see deeper realities leads her to speak and act out for justice.

Most significantly, the artist in *Under the Feet of Jesus* is one who speaks for those who cannot speak for themselves — recalling the young boy speaking truth to power in *Tierra*. While the family is at the clinic with Alejo, attempting to get help for his illness, Estrella becomes the literal and figurative voice for her people. Due to his illness from the pesticides, Alejo cannot speak and the adults in the family do not speak English (126). In addition to the language barrier, Perfecto and Petra experience shame for their lack of money and communication skills. Recalling Franz Fanon’s concept of the mask,¹³⁴ they internalized the dominant culture’s view and shut down verbally. In their silence, there is no one to speak for them except Estrella as artist-activist.

After the nurse explains that the family must take Alejo to the hospital and charges them for the visit, Estrella becomes angry. She tries to convince the nurse to let Perfecto fix the leaky toilet or to do other work around the clinic to pay for the services. However, the nurse refuses and takes their last \$9.07, claiming that she is making them a deal as the original bill was \$15.00. After the family returns to the car, aware of their lack of funds for fuel and the hospital bill, Estrella takes action and returns to the clinic with Perfecto’s crowbar in hand:

— Give us back our money

— Excuse me?

[...]

— I’ll smash these windows first, then all these glass jars if you don’t give us back our money.

— You listen here!

Estrella slammed the crowbar down on the desk, shattering the school pictures of the nurse's children, sending the pencils flying to the floor, and breaking the porcelain cat with a nurse's cat into pieces. (149)

This scene elucidates Estrella's work with both words and action on behalf of her people. Curiously, she combines words (a metaphoric tool) with a crowbar (a literal tool). She later explains the need for this violent act, rooted in oppression: "They make you that way, she sighed with resignation. She tried to understand what happened to herself. You talk and talk and talk and talk to them and they ignore you. But you pick up a crowbar and break the pictures of their children, and all of the sudden they listen real fast" (151). Her violent words that threaten the nurse recall Judith Butler's insistence that "Oppressive language is not a substitute for the experience of violence. It enacts its own kind of violence" (9). However, in this case the threat is not enough to get the money back, and Estrella must act to save Alejo. Mary Louis Pratt, in "Harm's Way: Language and The Contemporary Arts of War," writes on this scene suggesting that it "enacts the commonsense relation between language and violence [...]: Violence erupts when language fails, violence is called forth by the failure of language" (1526-27). *Under the Feet of Jesus* takes a more forceful stance than *Tierra* in its insistence on the need for thought, word, and action in the artist-activist's move against injustice.

Much like *Tierra*, *Under the Feet of Jesus* includes much Catholic imagery. The mother, Petra, is a devout Catholic who entrusts her life and her family's wellbeing to Jesus — literally placing their precious documents under the feet of the plaster icon. Rather than questioning God like the artist in *Tierra*, however, my analysis of the novel

suggests that it is the role of the artist to become a savior for her people.¹³⁵ When the Jesus icon falls to the ground and is broken, Petra becomes angry and places a doily over the head (167). Given the lack of a savior after this symbolic beheading, the artist-activist takes the place of Jesus through the significance Estrella's name and the final scene of the novel. Estrella's name evokes the heavens, and similarly is a name for Jesus Christ who is referred to as the "Morning Star" in the book of Revelation (22: 16). The novel ends, much like *Tierra*, with Estrella climbing up the rafters of the barn and hanging there: "Estrella remained as immobile as an angel standing on the verge of faith. Like the chiming bells of the great cathedrals, she believed her heart powerful enough to summon all who strayed" (176). As Ellen McCracken signals, "Estrella herself symbolically replaces the image as she stands atop the barn" (183). She indeed becomes the divine figure through thought, word, and action.

Under the Feet of Jesus thus highlights the need for artist-activists who use language to build and maintain community, to see deeper realities, and to speak and act for those who cannot do so for themselves. Through the use of these tools, the artist-activist induces movement in a community whose mobility is limited. By choosing protagonist Estrella for this role the novel posits that the weakest of these, a young, poor, female Mexican-American migrant worker has the tools to make a difference in the community whether it be for building up those around her or for tearing down systems of oppression with words and a crowbar. As Kevene notes, Viramontes's work highlights the artist's "need to act and to return to their community to organize and help those less fortunate" (36). I would add that this move relies on the power of the word that comes alive in voice and action.

In their focus on the development of the artist through the use of the *Künstlerroman* sub-genre *...y no se lo tragó la tierra* and *Under the Feet of Jesus* point to the need for artist-activist figures that consistently engage in the movement for justice in the fields. Through their verbal and physical actions the farmworker community is provided with an antidote to their situational immobility. While *Tierra* centers on the artist's work with thought and word, *Under the Feet of Jesus*, written decades later, demands that the artist use physical action when thought and words are not enough to make change. Rivera's and Viramontes's narrative works get at the interconnections between creative language and social justice for people whose mobility is restricted in various ways. Many understand the move for social justice and narrative works like Rivera's and Viramontes's as purely political. However, as the works signal, creative words are essential to the movement for justice in the fields; they are the roots of the struggle and constitute the movement itself in their continual deployment by artist-activists. *Tierra* and *Under the Feet of Jesus* thus call for artist-activists to dedicate themselves to the cause and to use voice as a powerful tool for moving against oppression in situations of limited mobility.

Afterword

Con Safos: Going Places with Words

This project began in the summer of 2005 on the US/Mexico border on the bridge of *Las Américas* between Ciudad Juárez, Mexico and El Paso, Texas as I watched trains pass freely through a guarded opening while people waited in long pedestrian and even longer automobile lines to move through border checkpoints. This particular moment piqued my interest in varying experiences of mobility because it exemplified the way products, especially post-NAFTA (1994), move with few restrictions while human movements, most notably post 9/11 (2001), have been increasingly patrolled along the same border. With a desire to know how experiences of movement are understood in particular communities, I began to take notice of representations of mobility in cultural productions (1960s-2000s) by Mexican and Mexican-American/Chicano authors and planned to develop my analysis following a geographic trajectory, beginning in central Mexico, moving to the northern Mexico border region, then to the US side of the border, and ending with the experiences of Mexican-Americans/Chicanos in the continental US.

Through my analysis, I realized that the works themselves resisted these neat categorizations of location and that mobility means more than travel northward for Mexicans and Mexican-Americans. In Carballido's play *Yo también hablo de la rosa* and his novella *El tren que corría* based in central Mexico, trains move beyond this corridor to foreign markets or to Monterrey. In Amparo Escandón's *González and Daughter Trucking Co.*, US based truck driver Libertad ends up at a penal institute for women in Mexicali, and Johnny, the Don Juan figure in *Johnny Tenorio* by Morton, travels from San Antonio to New York by Greyhound. Thus, the trajectory I had laid out, a migration

from south to north, did not represent the variety of directions or the many purposes of movements signaled by the cultural productions. While certain works center on international migration, the movement in others would best be classified as leisure travel, domestic migratory labor, and exile. In this way, my study challenges the often times singular focus of the media and the academy on migration by underscoring the heterogeneity of Mexican and Mexican-American movements. Through noting this diversity of mobile experience, my study signals the need for scholarship on other kinds of geographic movements — including the return to Mexico by many contemporary Chicanas/os, such as Louie in *Johnny Tenorio* who takes his lowrider to Mexico City or the Reyes family in *Caramelo, or, Puro Cuento* by Sandra Cisneros that returns to visit their grandmother each summer in the capital city as well. Scholars might also consider little analyzed Latina road novels such as, *González and Daughter* or Erika Lopez's *Flaming Iguanas: An Illustrated All-Girl Road Novel Thing*.

My analysis also led me to see that people experience mobility in different ways and that mobility does not always stand in as a marker of freedom, progress, or transgression of social norms, as evinced in many classic American road novels such as Jack Kerouac's *On the Road*. Rather than offering limitless movement to Mexican and Mexican-Americans, my analysis of cultural productions demonstrated that characters consistently lacked access to (quality) transportation, became imprisoned by traffic or vehicles — as is the case for the migrants who die of asphyxiation trapped in a boxcar in Salcedo's *El viaje de los cantores* —, or were harmed by them — such as the pesticide-spraying biplane in Viramontes's *Under the Feet of Jesus*. My analysis also pointed to the ways that gender, class, ethnicity, nationality, and economics influences a person's

access to vehicles and their associated sign-values. The big-rig became a key site in negotiating gender for Libertad and her father in *González and Daughter* while social class and economics influenced Johnny's use of a Greyhound rather than a Cadillac in *Johnny Tenorio*. My study also indicates that compelled or coerced mobility — typical in migrancy or human trafficking — could best be described as a mobile immobility that keeps people from moving in the ways they desire, as is the case in Rivera's *...y no se lo tragó la tierra* and other cultural production from the farmworker movement.

Most significantly, my analysis posits an alternate form of movement through the use of creative language — what I call linguistic mobility — in situations of limited geographic movement. Drawing on de Certeau's concept of tactics, everyday actions the weak use to maintain control of their lives, I demonstrate the possibilities of creative linguistic deployments including, among others: poetry, song, storytelling, and parody. These specific uses of language function as vehicles which allow characters to journey emotionally to better places and, in certain instances, to critique injustices — thereby moving to improved social, economic, and occupational situations.

Following this realization of the value the works place on creative language, I re-organized my chapters around types and purposes of linguistic deployments rather than geography. In doing so, I disrupted the south to north trajectory and signaled similar uses of language to induce alternate movement by both contemporary Mexicans and Mexican-Americans. The first two chapters highlight the tactical deployment of language to move to distinct places with the mind and emotions. In the first chapter on Salcedo's *El viaje de los cantores* and *Sinfonía en una botella*, I signal the use of music and poetry by migrants trapped in a boxcar and middle-class citizens stuck in a traffic jam on the

border to maintain sanity and remedy boredom and frustration. In chapter 2, I center on strategic code-switching in *Johnny Tenorio* which allows Johnny to succeed as a Don Juan despite limitations on his geographic and cultural mobility, and I consider storytelling in *González and Daughter* which aids Libertad and the members of the penal institute book club to move to an imaginary homeplace, even while enclosed within prison walls. In the last two chapters, I describe this alternate linguistic movement more broadly as a tool for moving against unjust social systems. Chapter 3 considers the use of oral expression and parody to critique an exclusive national narrative of progress in Carballido's *Yo también hablo de la rosa* and *El tren que corría*. Chapter 4, through an analysis of the development of the artist figure in Rivera's *...y no se lo tragó la tierra* and Viramontes's *Under the Feet of Jesus*, signals the need for artist-activists in the farmworker movement who use their voice over a lifetime in the fight for justice in the fields.

In retrospect, this study has become a kind of compendium of the options available to those rendered immobile by circumstance. The cultural production reveals that people are able to move through various kinds of language — both written and oral — as individuals and as communities. The options are indeed many: reciting poetry, penning letters, tagging city walls, storytelling, making jokes, protesting, acting, and singing. As *Under the Feet of Jesus* and *González and Daughter* highlight, language is a tool (or a weapon) that can be used to “do.” Cecilia Isabel Mendez echoes this understanding in her description of her work as a Latina artist: “I am deeply invested in exploring on literal and metaphoric levels the reality of language as a tool of power. [...] My ongoing investigation of language in my art practice inspires many questions, among

them: how does language allow us access into physical and psychological spaces? What are ways in which language is informative and transforming?" (138).

This access to distinct "physical and psychological spaces," through language, what I refer to as linguistic mobility, is significant because of the way it allows people — especially the marginalized — the ability to transcend their immediate circumstances. Creative linguistic deployments can move a person to a calm place in crisis situations; they can connect distanced loved ones; create home places for migrants and prisoners; and ultimately move people to better social circumstances through critique and protest. Shari Stone-Mediatore notes that language is the "central means by which such [marginalized] people can take control over their own representation" and, I would add, their experience (2). Locating agency in the body is significant considering the increasing limits placed on human movement across national borders as well as on movements of people of color in the US, as the analysis of *Johnny Tenorio* signals.

From the beginning on this project I desired to demonstrate the kind of scholarship that Debra Castillo in *Redreaming America* and Diana Taylor in the *The Archive and Repertoire* call for through an analysis of cultural productions from both sides of the US/Mexico border. Although this proved challenging because of the distinct cultural contexts, the tandem study of Mexican and Mexican-American cultural production allowed me to demonstrate the influence of social class, gender, economics, and nationality on experiences of mobility regardless of one's location in the US or Mexico. In another way, while I do not intend to suggest the universal applicability of linguistic mobility, my analysis has signaled the centrality of creative language to human

experience and the multiple possibilities for tactical deployments, even while particular deployments and their intended purposes may vary.

Many Chicano graffiti artists sign their work with the letters letters *C/S*, meaning *Con Safos*, as Chicano writer José Antonio Burciaga explains. The words translate literally “with safety” but signal a blessing on the artist’s work, a kind of “barrio copyright” (6). As with the marking *Con Safos*, what I have hoped to signal are the small ways people rendered immobile by circumstance can better their lives by moving via language: turning up the volume, telling a story, or joining a picket line. There is indeed more than one way to move, there are many.

Notes

¹ In this study, I use *Mexican* to refer to people born in Mexico who reside there or who maintain their primary allegiance to their home country. I use *Mexican-American* broadly to describe people of Mexican descent with US citizenship. *Chicana/o* references Mexican-Americans active in the civil rights movement of 1965-75 as well as those who continue to identify with said movement. Lastly, I use *Latina/o* to refer to people of Latin American origin residing in the US. In the case of individuals, I privilege self-identification when choosing a term. In the study at large, I use *Mexican-American* to refer inclusively to both Mexican-Americans and Chicanas/os, unless speaking specifically about communities or movements which self-identify as Chicano.

² For more information on the etymology of “mobility,” see Cresswell (*On the Move* 20).

³ Kaufmann defines motility as “the capacity for a person to be mobile, or more precisely, as the way in which an individual appropriates what is possible in the domain of mobility and puts this potential to use for his or her activities” (37, emphasis in original). Kaufmann thus proposes that access to mobility by different sectors of society varies; not all have the same ease and freedom to travel nor do all possess access to comfort on that same journey. Kaufmann also underscores that beyond acknowledging lack of access, motility suggests the agency of those with challenging social and economic conditions to use whatever forms of movement they can according to “aspirations and circumstances” (38).

⁴ Rafael Pérez-Torres in “Nomads and Migrants” and Tim Cresswell in “Imagining the Nomad” also critique the postmodern tendency to celebrate mobility, and specifically migration, as metaphors for multicultural or global relations.

⁵ See *La Bestia: The Death Train* in CNN’s *World’s Untold Stories* series.

⁶ For more information on the history of transportation in Mexico, see Romero; Meyer and Beezley.

⁷ Currently, a select number of Mexican trucks (around 100) are allowed to enter the US to transport goods. Presidents Calderón and Obama continue their dialogue to improve the situation. A bill to end this practice is currently debated in congress, as of March 2010. For more information, see Simon.

⁸ A public transcript, for example, might be the direct threat of a slave to kill his master, a rare occurrence. A hidden transcript, which is more common, would be a slave’s talking about his master behind his back. The hidden transcript, a form of ideological resistance is often “disguised, muted, and veiled for safety’s sake” (137), as insulting a slave master might lead to physical punishment, if not death.

⁹ See Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*.

¹⁰ For example, while a constative utterance, such as “Washington DC is the capital of the US,” reports a fact which could be considered true, the performative utterance of a bet cannot do likewise. This is because a bet, marked by the utterance “I bet you...,” is a wager (an action) into which two or more people enter and thus is a kind of performative speech act.

¹¹ In the study Searle posits that the conditions he describes specifically for promising — which turn language from saying into doing — also might be used as a way of analyzing other kinds of illocutionary or speech acts. “What is a Speech Act?” begins with the example of a “speech situation” in which he explains that a speaker’s words are associated with many kinds of acts. These include the physical act of moving the mouth and producing sound, the act of engaging or boring hearers, the act of referencing other people and places, and also acts that might include “making statements, asking questions, issuing commands, giving reports, greeting, and warning” (60). He goes on to explain that these illocutionary acts are governed by a system of behavior or rules. If these rules are met, the speech act is valid and language comes to do and not merely tell or represent.

¹² In “Signature Event Context” Derrida takes issue with Austin’s separation of language into constative and performative utterances. Derrida signals how all language is comprised of signs capable of communicating but which do not contain any kind of essence, referring specifically to “the arbitrary nature of the linguistic sign” (187). According to Derrida, because language is a system of signs and thus does not contain any meaning in itself, language cannot be divided into constative (which describes) and performative language (which does). Derrida seems to suggest here the infinite possibilities of language and the need for a more complex way of understanding it that does not merely divide it in two (192).

¹³ Austin and Searle would disagree with Pratt and believe literature to be a “parasitic” on real time performative utterances. By parasitic, Austin and Searle mean that these literary utterances take their life from the real time performative but do not provide the same results because they are not able to *do* in the same way. This close connection between performative real time and parasitic literary utterances may confuse readers who see a wedding in a novel, for example, and consider it performative because it would be considered so in real time. However, in a novel, that a bride says “I do” does not mean those characters are bound legally. For this reason, according to Austin, all literary utterances do not perform in the same way as they can in real time.

¹⁴ Taylor explains in *The Archive and The Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas* that “the archive” of enduring materials “texts, bodies, buildings, bones” (19) is already esteemed by the dominant society. She signals the need to value both the archive and the repertoire, less people who lack political, social, and economic resources be excluded from having a voice.

¹⁵ Although Tijuana in the 20th century is briefly represented, *Arde el desierto con los vientos que llegan al sur* primarily treats Tijuana's origins in the 19th century as well as its role during the prohibition era (1920s) as a place of recreation. It also includes no form of transportation other than the use of horses. As the present chapter focuses on texts which take place in the latter part of the 20th century, which include examples of vehicular technology, *Arde el desierto* will not be treated as part of the analysis. For more information on this play, see Beardsell.

¹⁶ Many thanks to Priscilla Meléndez for her unpublished manuscript and allowing me to use it in this study ("The Body").

¹⁷ Both title translations are mine and are as literal as possible while still attempting to communicate the word play in the titles. Teatro Vista in Chicago presented an English language version of *El viaje de los cantores* entitled *The Crossing* (1991). See Thatcher.

¹⁸ de Certeau's first volume offers his theoretical approach and discusses spatial practices (such as walking in cities), uses of language (such as reading and utilizing quotations), and ways of believing. His second volume centers on tactics more generally associated with the domestic life and city streets, such as cooking, food consumption, neighborhoods, and the use of weekend time.

¹⁹ See, for example, Paul Newham's *Using Voice and Song in Therapy* for a practical example of how music is used in therapy. *Where Music Helps: Community Music Therapy in Action and Reflection* by Stige et al. elucidates through case studies how music is utilized to promote community cohesion and political action.

²⁰ The play continues to find relevance with Mexican spectators in the adaptation of the play, which opened in Mexico City in August 2005 and ran through 2008. This version of *El viaje de los cantores*, created by the student group Casa Azul and directed by Claudia Ríos, includes women migrants alongside the men in the boxcar based on the interviews with playwright Inti Barrios. It also treats current border atrocities such as the numerous femicides. The adaptation also contains fragments from the plays of other well known playwrights such as *Luvina* by Juan Rulfo (Jalisco) and *Hotel Juárez* by Víctor Hugo Rascón Banda (Chihuahua). For more information, see Riveroll.

²¹ In addition to being staged by in San Diego by la Compañía Nacional de Teatro/INBA, Latino/a theater groups have represented the play in the US. Teatro Vista in Chicago presented an English language version entitled *The Crossing* (1991). Teatro Comunitario in Austin (1994) presented the original Spanish language version. See Thatcher, Pixier, and Welton for more information.

²² The play was first presented in Northern Mexico in the 1990s, according to Salcedo ("Literatura" 227). It was later staged at El Teatro de Durango (Dir. Bernado Galindo) as part of the Festival Escénico del Noreste de Teatro in 2003, although it was not well

received (Sánchez). In 2007 it was presented under in Tijuana, Baja California by the Universidad Iberoamericana de Tijuana (Dir. Juan José Luna) and by Teatro del Norte (Dir. Hugo Salcedo) (*Tijuana hace teatro* and Salcedo, “Literatura Fronteriza”). The play recently gained more prestige in the capital, perhaps because of its treatment of migration, a growing concern for those in Mexico City as well as the border regions. In March 2010, Teatro Salvador Novo in Mexico City hosted the theater group Icocult Laguna (Dir. Gerardo Moscoso) which presented the dramatic work (Muñoz Vargas).

²³ According to Kirsten Nigro, the train was made especially prominent in the staging by Ángel Norzagaray who “también empleó en forma brillante el motivo del tren, al hacer que el vagón de carga dominara el escenario de modo que éste se convirtiera en una formidable fuerza anticipadora del inexorable desenlace. La llamativa presencia visual del furgón del ferrocarril Missouri-Pacífica actuaba desde el principio mismo como un recordatorio de lo que fatalmente iba a ocurrir, haciendo tanto más doloroso el destino de estos hombres y sus mujeres” (190-91).

²⁴ The choice of this rail line by the playwright and its prominent positioning on stage evokes historical and cultural precedents as well as the economic power of the United States. In the history of US rail, the Missouri-Pacific holds a prestigious position for being one of the first railroads to expand west of the Mississippi in the mid to late 1800s and also because, after its merger with the Union Pacific and the Western Pacific Railroads in 1982, it became part of the largest rail system in the country at that time (see Dorin). In addition to its prestige in the US, in the early 1990s this rail conglomeration also acquired the rights to privatized rail lines in the Northeast and Northwest Mexico, thus establishing its economic and political power in Mexico (US Dept. of Transportation 29). While rail transport has taken a secondary position to truck transport and no longer is the primary method for moving freight, it continues to bring in a significant part of the nearly \$115 billion of US/Mexico annual surface trade (29). Considered in this context, the political and economic power of this train placed prominently on stage, along with the apparent velocity of freight trains, contrast greatly with the lack of political and economic strength of the migrant men who board it.

²⁵ While the play was written in 1990, its stagings continue to speak to the present situation of rising migrant deaths on the US/ Mexico border in the late 1990s and 2000s. A *New York Times* article from September 15, 2007 (“At the US Border, the Desert takes a Rising Toll”) noted, for example, the increase of migrant crossings through the Arizona desert as border patrol agents have stepped up their activities in urban areas. In addition to the changed routes, the article affirms that the perilous conditions of the desert have caused a great increase in migrant deaths (Archibold).

²⁶ Vincent Kaufmann’s idea of *motility* is helpful in understanding this scene in the play. Kaufmann in *Re-Thinking Mobility* defines motility as “the capacity for a person to be mobile, or more precisely, as the way in which an individual appropriates what is possible in the domain of mobility and puts this potential to use for his or her activities”

(37, emphasis in the original). This definition signals that access to mobility by different sectors of society varies as does the agency of those with challenging social and economic conditions to use whatever forms of movement they can according to “aspirations and circumstances” (38). Thus, hitching a ride in a boxcar may be considered an example of motility — a tactic for becoming mobile when confronted with challenging circumstances.

²⁷ For more information on the hijacking of trains during the Revolution, see Krauze and Ruffinelli.

²⁸ In *The Practice of Everyday Life*, de Certeau describes the railcar as “a travelling incarceration” in which the passengers find themselves “immobile inside the train, seeing immobile things slip by” (111). de Certeau writes that this “incarceration” incites anxiety in passengers as they feel powerless in comparison to the fast motion of the train and disconnected from the outside world. While de Certeau refers to rail travel of ticketed passengers, his notion of the train as a prison underscores how the migrants are doubly imprisoned on the train. In one sense, like all travelers, they are located within the moving vehicle. In another, more literal sense, they are physically unable to leave because of the jammed door. Using de Certeau’s idea to read this scene, it is clear that the action of passengers is taken away by the great machine (113). Nevertheless, it is more than their physical movement that is taken away: it is by extension the possibility of having any political or social agency in society.

²⁹ This view of migrants as cargo, as a way to make money, was typical of the time period in which the play was published and represented. A *New York Times* article on the common and perilous journeys of migrants on rail cars, written in 1988, two years before the publication of the play, noted: “Mexican guides earn from \$150 to \$300 a person to bring aliens across the border and get them aboard trains headed to jobs as far away as Chicago and New York” (“Aliens’ Rail”). Moorehead notes that the fees had risen to around \$1,000 in 2005, and the journey has become more difficult in recent years with increased patrol of the border (72). These lucrative operations work on a large scale; the Union Pacific found 32,000 undocumented immigrants on their rail lines in 1987 and in 1986 US Immigration Officials arrested over 130,000 attempting to cross on freight trains (“Alien’s Rail”).

³⁰ José Ramón Alcántara Mejía understands El Desconocido as a mythical figure representing the many unknown immigrants who continually migrate from Mexico to the US. He notes: “su identidad mítica permite concluir que Ojo Caliente es el espacio cíclico en torno a la cual la historia adquiere un carácter recurrente” (126).

³¹ For an explanation of the connection between invisibility and inexpensive labor see Cockcroft, especially his chapter titled “The Role of Mexican Immigrants in US Labor Growth.”

³² Salcedo explains that this “juego alteatorio” of the variety of possibilities for the play’s stagings “era precisamente para demostrar la destrucción de la anécdota como centro de la composición dramática, y permitir a la vez una recepción plural en apariencia inconexa pero cuya intención era manifestar la diversidad y la multiplicidad en la búsqueda del sentido” (“Dramaturgia mexicana” 130).

³³ According to Enrique Mijares, this kind of fragmentation of the dramatic structure and numerous outcomes is typical of Mexican playwrights of the 1990s. In this way, “compondrán un nuevo significado para cada espectador, un significado cuyas enormes proporciones le confieren una fuerza extraña” (104). Salcedo confirms that it was his desire to break with a traditional, chronological plot structure in order to permit “una recepción plural inconexa pero cuya intención era manifestar la diversidad y la multiplicidad en la búsqueda del sentido” (“Dramaturgia” 130). Priscilla Meléndez, in commenting on Sabina Berman’s *Backyard* and Salcedo’s *El viaje de los cantores*, agrees and notes that the playwright “uses the powerful image of dismemberment of traditional theatrical discourses” (“The Body” 25). She goes on to interpret this break with traditional dramatic structure as an enactment of the experience along the US border as well as the plurality of discourse in a world of “bilingualism, biculturalism, bisensibility” (5).

³⁴ For more on the influence of Brecht in Latin American theater see Martin and Albuquerque. For more on Artaud in Latin American theater, see Albuquerque.

³⁵ Salcedo explains that El Chayo’s character is based on a notebook of poems found in the boxcar, among the clothing, shoes, and few other personal objects left by the migrants. “Se trata de un poemario bajo el título *El Ilegal* atribuido a Rosario Caldera Salazar — mi “Chayo” en la pieza dramática que hace manifiesta una mezcla de vergüenza, tristeza, y orgullo” (“Literatura Fronteriza” 225).

³⁶ According to Martha I. Chew Sánchez in *Corridos in Migrant Memory*, the *canción ranchera* came into being in the late 19th century and can be translated literally as “ranch songs.” Although this genre came into being in rural haciendas, it was influenced by the Italian opera, especially the chanting lamentations. *Ranchera* music later became incorporated “in stylized form into urban theater music, especially in Mexico City” (35). According to Chew the genre, which is melodramatic and romanticizes the agrarian lifestyle, has become an important part of Mexican nationalism and identity on both sides of the border (36).

³⁷ “El Rey” by José Alfredo Jiménez can be found on the internet.

Yo sé bien que estoy afuera,
pero el día que yo me muera,
sé que tendrás que llorar.
Llorar y llorar, llorar y llorar.

Dirás que no me quisiste,
pero vas a estar muy triste
y así te vas a quedar.

Con dinero y sin dinero
hago siempre lo que quiero
y mi palabra es la ley.
No tengo trono ni reina,
ni nadie que me comprenda,
pero sigo siendo el rey.

Una piedra en el camino
me enseñó que mi destino
Era rodar y rodar.
Rodar y rodar, rodar y rodar.
Después me dijo un arriero
que no hay que llegar primero
pero hay que saber llegar.

Con dinero y sin dinero
hago siempre lo que quiero
y mi palabra es la ley.
No tengo trono ni reina,
ni nadie que me comprenda,
pero sigo siendo el rey.

³⁸ Meléndez notes in her study that the word *cantor* can be translated not only as “singer,” but also “in its figurative sense as ‘poet, especially epic and religious’” (“The Body” 10).

³⁹ For more information on migrant deaths and the many unidentified bodies, see Urrea.

⁴⁰ For more information on *La Llorona*, see Castro.

⁴¹ The New Sanctuary Movement was founded in the 1980s by concerned people of Catholic, Protestant, and Jewish faiths. Congregants of these and other religions would house undocumented immigrants in their own homes or within the walls of a church or synagogue to keep them from being seized by the authorities. Often this led to the incarceration of those harboring immigrants. The Movement continues to work for the fair treatment of immigrants in such areas as workplace discrimination, just deportation practices and hate crime legislation. For more information see the Movement’s website: <<http://www.newsanctuarymovement.org/>>.

⁴² Estimates from border officials indicate that about half of those who enter from Mexico through border checkpoints use a border-crossing card (B1/B2 visa) or another kind of legal documentation, such as a resident alien card. A border crossing-card allows Mexican citizens in border cities to travel up to 25 miles within the US (75 miles in Arizona) and stay up to 30 days (Ghaddar and Brown 2).

⁴³ Besides its premiere in Tijuana, the play has been staged and well received in Mexico City at Teatro Santa Clara Catarina (Trujillo Muñoz 234). I was unable to locate information on any other stagings.

⁴⁴ Ghaddar and Brown note that personal vehicles are the preferred mode of transportation for crossers. Approximately 80% utilize these rather than another form of transportation (2).

⁴⁵ While Bull discusses the ipod, a device that did not exist at the time the play was written, his insights are applicable to other forms of mobile sound devices such as the car stereos in the play which are mobile and utilized in similar spaces.

⁴⁶ Raúl Bañuelos (1954-) is a poet from Guadalajara, Jalisco. Aurora Maura Ocampo characterizes his work for its simplicity, focus on the emotions rather than the intellect, and as having a “carácter confesional” (137-38).

⁴⁷ While Morton’s play was written in the 1980s and Amparo Escandón’s in the 2000s, these works are in a certain sense contemporaries as *Johnny Tenorio* continues to be staged in the 2000s. In another way, through the analysis of these cultural productions from distinct decades, this chapter demonstrates key changes in Chicana/o literary and cultural concerns.

⁴⁸ Morton was born to parents of Mexican descent and self-identifies as Chicano. After his childhood in Chicago, he spent much of his adult life in Texas, where he completed his PhD in theater (University of Texas at Austin), and California, where he currently resides and teaches (UC Santa Barbara). Amparo Escandón is also of Mexican descent, writes primarily in English, and lives in California where she teaches creative writing (UCLA Extension). Different from Morton, Amparo Escandón was born in Mexico and moved to the US in her early adult years. In her own words, she feels “homeless as a writer” because she did not live the bicultural experience of Latina/o writers and lives far removed from her Mexican contemporaries (Interview 5). For more information on Morton, see Daniel’s introduction to *Johnny Tenorio and other plays*. For Amparo Escandón, see Amparo Escandón “A Conversation” and Martínez Wood.

⁴⁹ However, as Amy Best cautions, vehicles can be deceiving in terms of economic status as poor people sometimes save all of their money to purchase a luxurious vehicle while some wealthy keep an older, dilapidated model. In other words, “[a] fancy car does not always translate into a fancy life” (4).

⁵⁰ A *refundición* is a recasting or reworking of a play. In his book *Rewriting Theatre: The Comedia and the 19th Century Refundición*, Charles Ganelin underscores that the term that originated in the late 18th century still lacks an adequate definition but “implies remaking, recasting, refounding something new on the basis of the old as part of a continuous historical process that implies reception and reevaluation” (4).

⁵¹ Morton notes that the play was also staged internationally in France, Germany, and Spain by a student group from the University of California (1988) as well as in a Spanish language version in Mexico City (“Celebrating 500 Years” 22). In 1998 it was staged in San José, Costa Rica, and most recently in 2009 in Chetumal, Quintana Roo (Morton, “Re: Johnny Tenorio”).

⁵² For more information on these stagings see: “Teatro Dallas” (Dallas), Goddard and Davila (San Antonio), Olivieri (Pittsburgh), “Teatrotaller” (Ithaca), and Morton “Re: Johnny Tenorio” for all others.

⁵³ According to Huerta, Zorilla’s version was introduced to the Mexican stage in 1844 and most commonly represented on the holiday (93). Through viewing the dramatic work, spectators participated in the yearly eternal condemnation of the figure in Tirso’s version or the Christian redemption in Zorilla’s.

⁵⁴ Morton suggests *Johnny Tenorio* elucidates this cultural concern: “many people do not want to talk about it [*donjuanismo/machismo*], they hide it, ignore it. However, when it is placed on the stage they can’t help dealing with it” (Daniel, “An Interview” 147).

⁵⁵ While spectators of *Johnny Tenorio* include people of various ethnicities, I am most interested in the interaction between the play and Chicana/o spectators. Thus, when speaking of spectators in this study, I refer to those Chicana/o spectators in the audience at large.

⁵⁶ Although statistical data on the self-identification of Chicanas/os in Texas is lacking, according to the Pew Hispanic Center, Texas has the second largest Hispanic group in the nation, with 36% percent of the population of Hispanic descent. Of these, the majority (85%) are of Mexican origin (including Chicanas/os). The majority (67%) of the Hispanic population was born in the US (Pew Hispanic Center). What can be taken from this data is that Texas is home to a great number of US born people of Mexican descent, many that self-identify as Chicanas/os.

⁵⁷ Many Chicanas/os fear that SB 1040 “will lead to police harassment of people, particularly those of color, who cannot prove they are in this country legally” according to Gabriel J. Chin and Kevin R. Johnson. Court rulings, such as US Court Ruling *United States v. Brignoni-Ponce* (1978), and Arizona Supreme Court ruling *State v. Graciano* (1982) do not condemn racial-profiling in law enforcement practices.

⁵⁸ The association of travelers, drivers, and those able to move freely has long been associated with masculinity. In “Vehicular Gender” Smith explains, “Ever in the process of becoming ‘men,’ travelers affirm their masculinity through purposes, activities, behaviors, dispositions, perspectives, and bodily movements displayed on the road, and through the narratives of travel that they return home to the sending culture. Thus, travel functions as a defining arena of agency” (ix). Geographic mobility is intrinsically connected not only to being male, but also to becoming male, and to the ways in which one establishes oneself as masculine within a given culture. As examples she offers male literary figures whose journeys are vital to their stories: Odysseus, Aeneas, Columbus, Byron, and Jack Kerouac (ix). To these one could add from literary works in the Spanish-speaking world: Amadís, Don Quixote, El Cid, Lazarillo de Tormes, Joaquín Murieta, Gregorio Cortez, and as this study demonstrates, Don Juan.

⁵⁹ Although Johnny does not want to travel to Mexico, his friend Louie responds differently to the idea of traveling south, signaling the play’s representation of distinct ways that Chicanas/os relate with Mexico. Louie jokes that he jumped at the chance to return to Mexico but also how he went as distinctly Chicano in his lowrider and zoot suit, quintessential icons of La Raza. Like Johnny, who earns his keep by pedaling drugs and prostituting women, Louie does not come from a wealthy, upper class family. Nevertheless, it is, ironically, his *Chicanismo* that allows him a certain social mobility on the other side of the border among the wealthy girls in Mexico City. This new mobility recalls what Guillermo Gómez Peña refers to as the “Chicanization of Mexico” in which Chicano culture returns to Mexico via music, clothing styles, language, and other cultural forms (qtd. in Mariscal 238). According to Jorge Mariscal, “[t]he Chicano/a children and grandchildren of Mexican immigrant families export to their ‘ancestral’ home an uncanny and not always welcome (from the traditional point of view) cultural gift” (238). By traveling to Mexico, Louie constructs a Chicano identity that is celebrated by women who he later, like all Don Juans, abandons. The choices of Johnny and Louie to travel to different places exemplifies the complexity of Chicano identity.

⁶⁰ In a recent *Newsweek* article on Arizona’s controversial immigration law (SB 1070), David Cole of the Georgetown University Law Center notes: “In practice, it is inevitable that this law will lead to racial profiling. [...] People don’t wear signs that say they are illegal immigrants, nor do illegal immigrants engage in any particular behavior that distinguishes them from legal immigrants and citizens. So police officers will not stop white people. They will stop Latinos, especially poor Latinos” (Campo-Flores). As Coles’s comment signals, the increased surveillance of law enforcement will continue to impede the movement of Latinos — physically and psychologically — in the border region. While such actions limited movement in the past, as Marmon Silko indicates, this new law might be thought to legalize racial profiling.

⁶¹ The term low-rider refers to a vehicle that has been lowered and customized so that it has a sleek appearance and rides low to the ground. Many Chicanos (and some Chicanas) customize their own cars and use them to “cruise.” According to Castro in *Chicano*

Folklore, the artistic and mechanical work on the cars, the cruising of the cars, and the cars themselves express “tradition and cultural pride” (144).

⁶² This lack of finances appears again when Johnny deals drugs to support himself and is unable to get out of the business because he owes “some very important gente a lot of lana” (41).

⁶³ This primacy is further highlighted in his description of other Latinos, particularly Puerto Ricans, who live in New York and in his experience as a Chicano in the city (34).

⁶⁴ This scene also signals the regional and historical differences of Latinos in the US. As Puerto Ricans have a longer history in New York, many face discrimination for their race and culture. Johnny, as Chicano from the Southwest, thus suffers exoticization rather than blatant prejudice.

⁶⁵ Tirso’s version is written entirely in Castilian Spanish.

⁶⁶ The communicative break between Johnny and his father over the word “tee-cher”/ “tee-shirt” emphasizes the challenges of communicating across generations. Marta Fairclough notes that this generational difference in languages is common in immigrant homes. Whereas first generation speakers are mostly monolingual, second and third generations are more able to negotiate in both languages, in a mix of both, or sometimes only primarily in the language of the host country (192-93). This lack of linguistic input in English for Johnny sets him in a difficult position, especially in the context of the dominant culture that values English only.

⁶⁷ McAllister notes that this use of Spanish to express emotion is characteristic in the play (Daniel, “A Texas” 71).

⁶⁸ Code-switching, as Hall Kells notes, is “a socially binding act, a kind of linguistic glue, and at the same time a method of breaking barriers, reducing distance, opening lines of communication” (36).

⁶⁹ To avoid confusion, I use *audience* to refer specifically to Libertad’s audience of prison inmates as these words emphasize their auditory engagement with Libertad’s story. I use *reader* to mean the readers of *González and Daughter* as this word choice emphasizes an experience with a written text.

⁷⁰ Many would argue that Ana Castillo’s *Mixquiahuala Letters* (1986) could be considered the first Chicana road novel. Erica Lopez’s *Flaming Iguana: An Illustrated All-Girl Road Novel Thing* (1997) is another popular Latina road novel.

⁷¹ Deborah Paes de Barros notes: “In the context of American fiction, the road has been a space and a genre primarily associated with men. As Eric Lead remarks in *The Mind of*

the Traveler: From Gilgamesh to Global Tourism, travel is often a ‘spermatic journey’ wherein the dynamism of movement is defined in contrast with the more static position of women” (5). Rachel Adam’s study on road novels written by men on both sides of the border — including Jack Kerouac’s *On the Road*, Oscar Zeta Acosta’s *The Autobiography of a Brown Buffalo*, and Tom Wolfe’s *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test* (1968) from the US side, likewise signals the importance of “freedom of mobility, individual expression, and open land” in these countercultural road novels by men (59).

⁷² After the Massacre of Tlatelolco in 1968, some students, professors, intellectuals, and other activists, fled the country in fear of Mexican authorities. Mexican author, Elena Garro, left the country in 1968 and did not return until 1991 because of accusations for involvement in the movement (Kristerhof 269). Student activist, Marcelino Perelló, was smuggled out of the country to the US in fear of imprisonment or death. He lived as an exile in Spain until 1985. His sister, Mercedes, was incarcerated for two years in Mexico for her involvement in the movement (Carey 2).

⁷³ Halevi-Wise differentiates between two kinds of storytelling in novels: 1) the story is embedded in the novel but not central to the novel, 2) the story carries the entire novel (2). The second is true for *González and Daughter*.

⁷⁴ The last decades have seen an increased interest in the effects of migration on children. See Atkin, as well as films, *Al otro lado* and *Bajo la misma luna*.

⁷⁵ According to the US Department of Labor, 53% of all farmworkers were unauthorized to work in the US.

⁷⁶ The US Department of Homeland Security estimates that 10,750,000 undocumented people live in the US (2008).

⁷⁷ This use of characters’ names can be considered an example of metafiction, a literary technique that will be discussed in greater length later in the chapter.

⁷⁸ Marvin Carlson, approaching performance from a theatrical perspective, considers the relationship between theater and performance, noting the blurred lines between theater and everyday life.

⁷⁹ Within her story Libertad also acts performatively by throwing the words to the wind along the highways demonstrating how they can be used imaginatively to “claim a space” for oneself (166).

⁸⁰ As Vicky Unruh suggests in *Performing Women and Modern Literary Culture in Latin America*, many Latin American women utilized public performance in “their frustrated search for an intellectual home” (2). Through performance of various types these women also critiqued gendered systems and offered distinct views of themselves as women:

“Many undertook a critical dialogue with modern male writers or embraced a vanguard conception of artistic work as a dynamic cultural engagement. But as these women imagined themselves as instigators for change rather than muses, they unleashed penetrating critiques of projects for social or artistic modernization, including — by no means exclusively — their casting of women” (2-3). Libertad, centuries later, echoes the search of these women for a home. However, her search is not solely for an intellectual home but also for a physical one.

⁸¹ Carballido (1925-2008), perhaps one of Mexico’s most famous authors, is best known for his plays. Carballido was born in Xalapa, Veracruz, attended the Universidad Autónoma de México (UNAM) for his undergraduate and master’s degrees in literature. During his lifetime he wrote over 100 plays and film scripts, as well as several short stories and novels. For biographical information, see Sayers Peden.

⁸² In addition to *Yo también hablo de la rosa* and *El tren que corría*, the train also appears in *Conversación entre las ruinas* and *Un vals sin fin por el planeta*.

⁸³ See Bixler’s “Emilio Carballido” for a brief analysis of the train in the author’s works. She sees the train as a symbol of life and notes that Carballido’s fascination with the train began when he was a child as his father was a conductor (42). The only other study of the train in Carballido’s work is my article, “El progreso descarrilado en *Yo también hablo de la rosa* de Emilio Carballido,” on which part of this chapter is based.

⁸⁴ Sarah Misemer, in her recent book *Moving Forward, Looking Back: Trains, Literature, and the Arts in the River Plate*, similarly notes that railways in the River Plate stood as symbols of progress as well as the nation’s failure to fully modernize (16).

⁸⁵ Krauze notes that before 1876, Mexico had 638 kilometers (396 miles) of track linking the capital with Veracruz and Querétaro. By 1910, Díaz succeed in laying 18,643 new kilometers, crisscrossing the whole country (10).

⁸⁶ As if these paintings were not enough to prove Mexico’s modernity, the government hired foreigners, including the prestigious photographer of the American West William Henry Jackson, to photograph this same railroad (Tenorio-Trillo 118).

⁸⁷ Although criticized by many for his disregard for Mexican sovereignty, Rosecrans laid the foundation for US investment and intervention in the Mexican railroad in the late 19th and early 20th century. With the increase in railroads, in part due to Rosecran’s promotion among US investors, Mexican exports increased 8 ½ times from 1876-1910 (Burns 136).

⁸⁸ US investors and the US government played a prominent role in the exploration of territories for potential railroad construction (Almada 47).

⁸⁹ The Chihuahua-Pacific line spanned 901 kilometers (560 miles) from the US/Mexico border in Texas to the Pacific Ocean to facilitate the transport of goods from the central US to Asian markets. As with many other Mexican rail lines, this route principally served US companies and its construction relied on Mexican — mostly indigenous — labor for more than 90 years (Grant 58).

⁹⁰ These abuses were met with fierce resistance by indigenous people; Burns notes a record of 55 *campesino* protests during the years of 1877-1884 at the height of railway construction (112).

⁹¹ The use of the train became so common, as many *corridos*, traditional folk songs, from the period exemplify. In “La Adelita,” which celebrates a legendary woman who traveled with the revolutionary forces, the train is a mode of transport that the revolutionary would use to follow after her:

Si Adelita se fuera con otro
la seguiría por tierra y por mar;
si por mar, en un buque de guerra,
si por tierra, en un tren militar. (Ruffinelli 290)

For more information on La Adelita and of other women known as *las soldaderas* who aided revolutionaries and in some cases fought alongside them, see Poniatowska (22-23).

⁹² Amy Naus Millay in *Voices from the Fuente Viva* considers the effects on orality in twentieth-century Spanish American narrative. She suggests that Latin American writers might include examples of orality in their works to express the relationships between peoples in their heterogeneous countries: “This practice of recuperation and redemption is based on the premise that oral traditions convey values and knowledge that Western literate culture lacks” (26). However, by placing these examples of orality in literature, the oral tradition is lost. As I consider a play (a primarily oral genre) and not narrative works in this section, Naus Millay’s is not easily applicable because the medium’s orality is doubly enacted on stage through her person and her words.

⁹³ For a translation of the play into English, see Woodyard.

⁹⁴ This play, one of Carballido’s best known, has enjoyed much scholarly attention. As Bixler notes in her study of *Yo también* as an example of postmodern thought, the many critical interpretations of the play speak to the ways it resists classification (*Convention* 194). The most thorough studies include those by: Margaret Sayers Peden, Frank Dauster, Roy Keer, Eugene Skinner, Priscilla Meléndez, and David William Foster. Of special interest to this study are Roy Keer’s article on the role of the medium; Diana Taylor’s analysis in *Theatre of Crisis* which signals the socio-political dichotomies in the play including orality/literacy, marginalized/dominant, and indigenous/European; and more recently Laura Gugiani’s article that considers how the interconnections of the play

speak to issues of globalization. These works all center on the interpretations of the derailment, rather than the train and derailment itself, as is the focus of this chapter.

⁹⁵ As R.A. Kerr notes, the medium appears four times in *Yo también* at critical moments in the play: at the beginning and end of the play as well as before the first interpretation of the derailment and before the professors' interpretations of the rose (51).

⁹⁶ Mexican playwright Sabina Berman suggests similarly: "Carballido recomienda acelerar a fondo para alcanzar el tren que perdimos en la primera estación, ir de prisa sin dejar de gozar nuevos encuentros pero sin detenernos en ellos, sino llevándonos lo que podamos y dejando lo que no; la meta por supuesto no es acumular cosas ni experiencias, ni mucho menos la meta es el tren: la meta es la velocidad de entusiasmo" (22).

⁹⁷ The title comes from the popular Mexican folk song "La maquinita" most recently interpreted by Joan Manuel Serrat. The refrain tells of a train that runs into a small airplane and causes significant damage: "El tren que corría sobre su ancha vía de pronto se fue a estrellar contra un aeroplano que andaba en llano volando sin descansar."

⁹⁸ Curiously, Hutecheon cites *Medea* as a parody of earlier works by Aeschylus and Sophocles, as Euripedes "replaced the traditional male protagonist with a woman, and a woman who was an outsider rather than a member of a Greek family of renown" (6).

⁹⁹ Sandra Cypess analyzes the connection between *Medea* and the Mexican figure of La Malinche in Mexican playwright, Sergio Magaña's *Los argonautas* (1967). Magaña's play was later renamed *Cortés y la Malinche*.

¹⁰⁰ Some migrant workers have been rendered literally immobile; they have been enslaved, beaten, and held in debt by landowners. As recently as 2008, a case involving workers on tomato plantations in Immokolee, Florida who were enslaved by six landowners went before a federal grand jury. For more information, see "CIW Anti-Slavery Campaign."

¹⁰¹ See Acuña (194-196).

¹⁰² Under this agreement, from 1942 to 1947 approximately 220,000 workers came to the US, and many more crossed over in the next two decades.

¹⁰³ Guthrie's poem, since performed by many folk music artists as a protest song, commemorates the deaths of 28 *braceros* that died in a plane crash during their repatriation to Mexico in 1948.

¹⁰⁴ In agriculture, for example, the number of foreign-born laborers increased from approximately 50% in the 1960s to 90% in the 1990s (Ferriss 6-7); this increase in the foreign-born worker population has led to greater segregation and continued exploitation.

¹⁰⁵ The NFWA later joined with the Agricultural Workers Organizing Committee, led by Filipino organizer Larry Itliong, to create the United Farm Workers Association (UFWA, now UFW). See *United Farm Workers*.

¹⁰⁶ The Union fought for better wages by forming a picket line and encouraging consumers to boycott Guimarra products as growers paid domestic workers 15 cents less per hour (\$1.25/hour instead of \$1.40/hour) than *Bracero* workers received the previous year (Ferriss 86).

¹⁰⁷ After succeeding with the grape strike, the Union took on many other abuses including the treatment of lettuce growers in Salinas Valley, California and orange growers in various parts of Florida. Chávez and his counterparts inspired farmworkers in other regions, leading many in the Midwest and the South to create their own movements. Following Chávez's death in 1993, the United Farm Workers Association (UFW) has continued to advocate for higher wages and improved working conditions. The organization has many issues to take on as agribusiness remains California's largest industry, grossing over \$24.5 billion per year, and migratory workers make up a large part of field labor. According the US Department of Labor, 32% of all farmworkers migrate for work. Most of the 700,000 seasonal workers come from Mexico or are of Mexican descent (Ferriss 6-7). The most pressing current issues for the UFW include wages — as evidenced in the recent contract negotiation with El Gallo vineyards—, and working conditions that have led to heat stroke, cancer, and death (*United Farm Workers*).

¹⁰⁸ This was the case for 17 year-old María Isabel Vasquez Jimenez who died of heat stroke in the vineyards near Stockton, California in 2008. On the day María died, the water cooler was a 10-minute walk away and the foreman did not allow the workers enough time to walk there during breaks. The foreman, who later denied this accusation, refused to offer a ride to the hospital when she grew ill (Khokha). Although this case has become the impetus for increased safety measures in the fields, it speaks to the issues of limited mobility experienced by migrant farmworkers on the job. In their highly mobile profession, workers often do not have the freedom to access basic human necessities, and tragically, this lack of mobility.

¹⁰⁹ California farmworkers earned an average of \$9,300 annually in 2001. Those working with livestock earned more (\$14,700), and those working in agriculture in the San Joaquín Valley earned less (\$7,100) (Martin 111).

¹¹⁰ Watt explains: “One worker held high a banner of La Virgen, while other followed with flags of the Union, the United States, Mexico, and the Philippines. Participants sported red armbands and hatbands etched with the black Aztec eagle. The very last *peregrino* carried a wooden cross draped in black cloth” (79).

¹¹¹ See Watt and Espinosa for more information on the march/pilgrimage and the use of religious symbols.

¹¹² In the 1960s and 70s, the group traveled to college campuses to bolster support. El Teatro Campesino continues today as a production company with mostly professional actors. Their works take on some political causes. However, they are largely disconnected from their farmworker roots. For more information see Broyles-González or Huerta (*Chicano Drama*).

¹¹³ Having come from the farmworker communities, these actors were able to connect more closely with others on the marches: “that critical connection between performer and audience, was unwavering in the initial stages of teatro Chicano” (Huerta 3).

¹¹⁴ Examples of *Künstlerromans* include: James Joyce’s *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, Willa Cather’s *The Song of the Lark*, and Chaim Potak’s *My Name is Asher Lev*, and in Latin American and US Latino/a literature, Rodolfo Anaya’s *Bless Me, Última*, Roberto Bolaño’s *2666*, and Sandra Cisneros’s *The House on Mango Street*. For more information on the Chicana/o *Künstlerroman*, see Eysturoy.

¹¹⁵ Mario Martín-Flores and Dan Latimer, among others, have noted that these novels might be considered *Künstlerromans* (132, 342).

¹¹⁶ Rivera was born in Crystal City, Texas in 1935 to Spanish-speaking migrant farmworker parents. He worked in the fields as a child and later became well-known as a Chicano author and educator. He earned his undergraduate degree at Southwest Texas State University and his PhD at the University of Oklahoma. Throughout his life, he worked to help others find ways out of poverty and exploitation through education. For more information, see Lattin and Cuba.

¹¹⁷ *Tierra* was written in Spanish and later translated into English by poet Evangelina Vigil-Piñon as *And the Earth Did Not Devour Him* (1987). Novelist Rolando Hinojosa also reworked Rivera’s novella in an English rendition called *This Migrant Earth* (1987) with the desire of better translating the Spanish of migrant farmworkers to English.

¹¹⁸ The Premio Quinto Sol was established in 1967 by Octavio I. Romano and Quinto Sol publishing company to honor major literary voices of Chicano literature. Other recipients included Rodolfo Anaya, Rolando Hinojosa, and Estela Portillo Trambley.

¹¹⁹ The novella begins: “Aquel año se le perdió. A veces trataba de recordar y ya para cuanto creía que se estaba aclarando todo un poco se le perdían las palabras” (5). As can be inferred from the first lines, the novella has an oneiric quality, as Flores notes, in which reality and dream blur (99). This may signal the repetitive lives of farmworkers, constantly moving between jobs, never knowing where they are or where they will call

home, as well as the “psychological or social distortion” in which the character lives, according to Grajeda (73).

¹²⁰ I understand “spiritual” broadly to mean the way a person makes meaning out of life experiences.

¹²¹ For more on the *Künstlerroman* as quest or voyage, see Stewart and Seret.

¹²² As if to emphasize this point, the farmworkers in *Tierra*, much like the migrants in Salcedo’s *El viaje de los cantores*, refer to themselves as animal freight: “si nos va bien este año a ver si nos compramos un carrito para ya no andar así como vacas” (70).

¹²³ Movement is limited by hunger and illness, as is the case for the workers en route to Minnesota. In “La mano en la bolsa,” a young boy also becomes ill when left with relatives while his parents work in another area. He is given rotting food to eat: “La carne que me frió estaba bien verde y olía muy feo cuando le estaba guisando. [...] No quise desagradar y por eso me comí todo. Y me hizo mal.” (20-21). The theme of thirst, hunger, and illness underscores the connection between with socio-economic class, as access to quality food and water, safe housing, and childcare require a certain economic standing.

¹²⁴ In “La primera comunión” a Catholic nun is also represented as an oppressive figure that projects her obsessions with the sexuality onto the children. See Kanellos (61-62).

¹²⁵ Echoing Rivera’s words, Brooke Fredericksen views the migrancy of farmworkers — although challenging in a physical, social, and economic sense — as indicative of their strength of spirit and desire for survival. She writes of the paradox of migrancy, in the negative aspects of physical oppression and the positive aspects of the development of a resilient spirit. This chapter differs from Fredericksen’s interpretation by positing the artist’s voice as an alternate kind of mobility to deal with dire situations.

¹²⁶ Álvaro Llosa Sanz suggests that the novella relies on memory as its primary organizing strategy in addition to memory’s thematic importance.

¹²⁷ Rivera explains his view of the role of the artist in remembering: “It is from the past that we are able to perceive, create and give life to our ritual; it is from this that we derive strength, that we can recognize our existence” (“Chicano Literature” 21).

¹²⁸ Kanellos highlights the extreme lengths to which this mother goes in her devotion and sacrifice in offering her own life in exchange for her son’s (63).

¹²⁹ As explained in the introduction, Butler suggests in *Excitable Speech* that violent language *is* violence.

¹³⁰ Unlike Tomás Rivera, Helena María Viramontes was not a farmworker herself, although she dedicates the novel to her parents “who met in Buttonwillow picking cotton” and to César Chávez. Viramontes was born in East Los Angeles in 1954 to Mexican-American parents. She attended Immaculate Heart College where she began writing. She later attended the Masters of Fine Arts Creative Writing Program and UC-Irvine and currently works as a professor at Cornell University. Her published works, including stories, novels, and a screenplay, center on Chicana/o experiences, specifically women’s issues in Chicano communities.

¹³¹ *Under the Feet of Jesus* parallels *Tierra* in many ways. In addition to treating the struggles of farmworkers, choosing a young farmworker artist protagonist, drawing on religious and other symbolism, and concluding in a similar manner, Viramontes occasionally uses a stream of consciousness style of narration and includes images which seem tangential — thus relying on the reader to weave together fragmented images to make sense of the novel.

¹³² Latimer suggests that the novel would best be called a *Künstlerroman*. His article primarily focuses on the background of the novel through an analysis of Viramontes’s earlier work and the La Brea tar pits, as his study signals. In agreement with Latimer regarding genre, my analysis considers more fully the specific deployments of the artist’s voice in the novel.

¹³³ Anne Shea highlights the importance of memory in the novel as it provides “the resources for survival, for personal healing, and for collective struggle” (142). While this may be true, Estrella’s role is more than a repository of memory. She also takes on an analytical role, understanding the significance of experience.

¹³⁴ Fanon, in *Black Skin, White Mask*, explains how Black people may internalize views of the dominant (White) culture. Fanon suggests that this internalization can result in negative self-perception when a person sees himself through the eyes of the colonizer.

¹³⁵ Beck and Rangel suggest that the novel critiques Catholicism by associating religion with colonial oppression (17). However, unlike *Tierra*, there is no direct cursing of God.

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