

C O C O L I C H E :
The Art of Assimilation and Dissimulation among Italians
and Argentines*

Ana Cara-Walker
Oberlin College

Cocoliche, that curious dramatic character improvised under the circus tent during the last decades of the nineteenth century, is no longer a vital aspect of Argentine life today. Yet his caricatured presence over a period of fifty years proved critical in the creolization of Italians and natives as well as in the sociocultural redefinition of Argentina's "national character." Creolization (the cultural redefinition negotiated by two or more diverse groups coming into contact—in this case, Italians and Argentines) yields a new ethic and aesthetic order wherein the presence of each group becomes integral to the national whole.¹ As will be shown, Cocoliche became a key vehicle for this process of creolization.

A makeshift mixture of *gaucho* and immigrant characteristics, Cocoliche the dramatic persona and his hilarious Italo-Argentine speech were the creation of native *criollos*.² By masquerading as the Cocoliche *gaucho mamarracho* (makeshift gaucho), an Argentine could mock the "foreignness" of Italian immigrants and assert criollo values and traditions. But the Cocoliche character also offered natives and newly arrived "tanos" (Italians) a way to negotiate their differences through ritual and symbolic confrontations onstage, in carnival activities, in print, and ultimately in everyday life.

Like the United States, Argentina opened its doors to European immigration in the second half of the nineteenth century in order to develop the new, sparsely populated nation. Buenos Aires, the nation's capital and port of entry, dramatized most clearly the phenomenon of unplanned urban growth and the consequent clash between natives

*I wish to thank José Gobello and Orestes A. Vaggi for their willingness to share their extensive knowledge about Cocoliche and their indispensable help with this essay. My acknowledgement and gratitude also extend to the National Endowment for the Humanities and all the participants of the 1980 NEH Summer Seminar, "Sociolinguistics and Literature," led by Professor John F. Szwed at the University of Pennsylvania, where the first stages of this essay were accomplished.

and diverse immigrant groups. Gino Germani observed, "The intensity and volume of immigration in relation to the resident native population was such that in a nonmetaphorical sense one could speak of a substantial renovation of the country's population, particularly in the areas of greater economic, social and political significance."³ Italians particularly altered and changed Argentine habits. "They added macaroni, spaghetti, and vermicelli to the national diet; they brought Italian expressions and words into the spoken language; they created lunfardo, a dialect of the slums and underworld of Buenos Aires; and they revolutionized urban architecture," as historian James Scobie has pointed out.⁴ But this brief list scans only the most evident manifestations of a far more profound transformation and redefinition of Argentine life brought about by negotiating cultural differences at a popular, unofficial level.

This essay focuses on the strategies devised by non-elite Argentine criollos and Italian immigrants to confront and reconcile such differences during a dramatic period of national change in Argentina. Non-elite natives were threatened by the overwhelming number of new arrivals who provided cheap labor, occupied limited living space, and infused everyday life with foreign words and habits. These natives consequently lashed out against immigrants by mocking their ignorance of criollo life, ridiculing their foreign ways, and mimicking their faulty command of Argentine Spanish. Verbal abuse gave way to mock-serious ritual enactments (typified by the improvisation of Cocoliche and his speech) that portrayed the sociocultural, political, and economic conflicts affecting native and Italian populations in Argentina.

This study will examine the circumstances under which Cocoliche emerged first as a character and then as a linguistic phenomenon, its various manifestations, and the dynamic dialectic it facilitated between natives and foreigners, thus underlining the importance of folk and popular expressive forms in precipitating social change and cultural redefinition. The essay highlights in particular the effectiveness of vernacular values, styles, and forms vis-à-vis official conduct and law, and it views cultural and ethnic identity as a negotiable, dynamic process.

THE HISTORICAL AND SOCIOCULTURAL BACKDROP FOR COCOLICHE

A careful plan developed by the Argentine government in the mid-nineteenth century advocated immigration to Argentina in order to populate the vast and sparsely settled country. Political leaders of the still-nascent nation sought a desirable European "element" to define the Argentine Republic. Public figures and intellectuals of the ruling

class argued for the need to “civilize” the “barbaric” character of the native population by introducing European refinements.

In his polemical essay *Facundo*, Domingo Sarmiento (subsequently president of the nation) denounced the “barbarous” aspects of Argentine rural life and customs, contrasting them with the “civilized” potentials of urban life if fashioned after European manners and values.⁵ He thus identified two nations foreign to each other coexisting in Argentina, and he clearly favored the modern over the traditional, the European idea of civilization over the centrifugal localism of rural Argentina.

Gobernar es poblar became the slogan of the time. Enunciated by the statesman Juan Alberdi, it not only summarized the felt “need” for immigration but pointed to the political and economic interests underlying the proposed Europeanization of Argentina. Alberdi argued that Argentina must be populated and that it must attract settlers in order to protect its national boundaries, exploit the land, develop modes of transportation and channels of communication, generate business and industry, and increase revenue by means of taxes. He insisted that the country could afford no delay in its “conquest of the desert,” nor could it ignore the demographic emptiness blocking progress by waiting for the Argentine population to grow naturally. Immigration was the answer, and selectivity was the key. Shaped by an elitist ideology and a racist perspective, Alberdi and others argued for encouraging the immigration of Europeans (preferably of the Nordic “races”) to Argentina in order to “implant” in the new nation the desired affinity for “English liberty, French culture, North American and European values.”⁶

This line of thought did not escape contention, however. José Hernández (author of the Argentine national epic poem, *Martín Fierro*) and others held that promoting immigration without the necessary capital and jobs would only create disorder, imbalance, and backwardness. They argued that the need to populate the country was equaled by an urgent need to create agricultural colonies and to provide education and opportunities for natives.⁷ But this point of view was entirely overshadowed by the immigration argument, and the ensuing census figures attest to the outcome of the debate.

“A country of 1,800,000 inhabitants in 1869,” Scobie points out, “received an injection of 2,500,000 Europeans in less than fifty years.” In a hundred years, the massive influx had added four and a half million Europeans to the country. By 1914, when a thousand immigrants were entering the port of Buenos Aires daily, “foreigners outnumbered native Argentines two to one in most of Santa Fé, Córdoba, and Buenos Aires, and constituted three-fourths of the adult population in the city of Buenos Aires.” Between 1869 and 1914, the number of *porteños*, or

port city dwellers in Buenos Aires multiplied nine times. Of the foreign born, Italians comprised the largest group. In the decades prior to World War I, Italians totaled 55 percent of all immigrants, followed by Spaniards with 26 percent.⁸

The nineteenth-century population policy appears to have succeeded until one considers the fact that most of the immigrants who entered Argentina were fleeing depressed areas in Europe, looking for manual labor rather than bringing elite refinements. Argentine intellectuals unabashedly expressed disappointment in the types and classes of newcomers, most of whom were not of the "Nordic race." Throngs of Italians, whose "low cultural level" Sarmiento judged no appreciable improvement over the backward native Spanish and mestizo population, occupied the land. Indeed, Argentina had become temporarily Europeanized, but without benefit of elite notions of "civilization."

Nevertheless, the ruling class and ultimately the nation capitalized on the new labor force created by immigration. Most newcomers had abandoned Europe in the hopes of *hacer la América* (making their fortune in America), and they were willing to perform tasks and undertake hardships alien to the Argentine elite and considered menial by rural criollos. While gauchos were drafted away from their land to secure the frontier and turn back Indian raids, industrious Europeans cultivated the plains. As a result, a curious and tenuous symbiotic relationship developed between the governing elite, who profited financially from immigrant labor, and foreigners, who benefited economically from their own efforts. The groups especially threatened by the new arrivals and the ensuing changes were rural and urban non-elite criollo men who had to compete for housing, jobs, women, and social status with an overwhelming, mostly male influx of foreigners.⁹ Most affected was the daily life of criollos in the rural areas. The open pampa became scarred by barbed-wire fences, and the unstructured life of the gaucho, violated by the foreign "invasion," underwent a radical metamorphosis.¹⁰ Ricardo Rodríguez Molas wrote that with immigration, "the pampa ceased to be gauchean and became *gringa* (Italian)."¹¹

Ironically, a change of heart spread throughout the nation with the disappearance of the gaucho. Reversing the earlier unequivocal elite support of immigration, turn-of-the-century nationalists began to exalt the gaucho as the paragon of Argentine virtue and national identity.¹² The actual gaucho was recast as a nostalgic symbol of Argentine national virtue and was thereby replaced by an idealized gaucho "type" composed of selective truths. The real-life gaucho's negative characteristics were transposed into positive features: anarchy was seen as independence, murder and brutality as courage, cheating as resourcefulness and wit. For example, the cult of friendship and loyalty among men (still displayed today in the *gauchada*) and the art of verbal quickness

and innovative talk were idealized to define “criollo” men.¹³ As if nostalgic for a way of life more readily valued in legend, memory, and literature (because it was in practice threatening and antagonistic to order, progress, and economic national interests), both the elite and common criollos invoked gaucho traits and styles in an effort to recapture the vanishing Argentine traditions being lost in the flood of immigration.

This heroic re-creation of an exemplary, if unreal, criollo Argentine was also laden with political interests. The once-scorned gaucho, long repudiated and despised by elite Unitarios, was transformed into a central ideological weapon used against the call for social justice and democracy as well as the growing socioeconomic demands made by immigrant laborers unwilling to be exploited like the gauchos. By the turn of the century, the very gaucho type whom the ruling class had sought to eradicate by promoting immigration had ironically become an emblem of all that was native and “national,” an image invoked to counter whatever appeared European and “foreign.” Immigrants now threatened the political and economic order of elite criollos because their alien ideas and habits challenged the conventions and canons of Argentine national culture.

But the newcomers recognized in the idealized gaucho a cultural model that they could appropriate to become part of Argentine culture. Thus the foreigners’ antithesis paradoxically became a vehicle for cultural integration into Argentine life. Consequently, although gringos inevitably transformed the old-style gaucho life of the *vaquerías* (wild cattle hunts), the *pulperías* (saloons), and the open pampa, they also imitated and assimilated criollo habits and expressive forms. It was precisely this imitation of natives by foreigners, together with the deriding mimicry of foreigners by natives, that laid the basis for the improvisation of the Cocoliche dramatic character.

THE BIRTH OF COCOLICHE, THE DRAMATIC PERSONA

The romanticized, legendary gaucho was most resonantly portrayed in a literary genre called *literatura gauchesca*.¹⁴ Interestingly, the creation of Cocoliche emerged from one such work during a dramatized performance of Eduardo Gutiérrez’s novel, *Juan Moreira*.

Although gauchesque works encompassed prose, poetry, and drama, the most celebrated examples of the genre were long poems with vibrant stanzas depicting gaucho life and fashioned after gaucho speech and poetic improvisations.¹⁵ Particularly well received was José Hernández’s *Martín Fierro*; its first section, “La Ida” (the departure), published in 1872, was later hailed as Argentina’s national epic poem. The rustic dialect of the pampa used in composing these verses and

their polemical sociopolitical commentary provoked derision from cosmopolitan critics and linguistic purists.¹⁶ But gauchesque compositions found an enthusiastic popular audience who memorized long passages, recited their favorite stanzas, and took to heart gauchesque heroes like Martín Fierro, Santos Vega, Juan Moreira, and other half-fictional characters as part of the popular historical lore of Argentines.

For example, *Juan Moreira* (1879) portrays the life and character of an outlaw gaucho. The story centers on two loyal friends unjustly persecuted by local civil and military authorities and on their remarkably successful struggle against society. Moreira's tragic appeal inhered in the theme of his being unjustly persecuted by those in authority and victimized by "civilized" society. Although essentially an outlaw, Moreira symbolized the independent rebel who celebrates his freedom and shuns legalities yet is willing to sacrifice even his life to defend his friends and his convictions.

Juan Moreira became so popular that publishing houses hired professional "poets" to render the tale into verse for a market that would support repeated editions.¹⁷ The story's dramatization was of even greater consequence because it played a central role in defining the *circo criollo* (creole circus) and fostering an Argentine national theater.¹⁸ Most important for this study, the dramatization of *Moreira* created the context for the birth of the Cocoliche character.

The first criollo drama to be presented in the circus ring, *Juan Moreira* premiered on 2 July 1884 as a pantomime prepared by Gutiérrez, with José J. Podestá playing the lead.¹⁹ A great success, the play soon evolved into a spoken drama scripted by Podestá, eventually becoming the "plat du jour" of Buenos Aires highlife, according to a review of 1890.²⁰

Among the popular audiences, however, *Moreira* became best known for the invention of Cocoliche and for this character's impersonation of Italian-criollo tensions. On the now-famous occasion, Podestá's brother and fellow actor, Jerónimo, broke out of the theatricalized gauchesque framework of the play to engage in an improvised verbal exchange with a Calabrese hired hand on the circus crew. The broken speech of the Italian day laborer, Antonio Cocoliche, caught the audience by surprise, causing great laughter and transforming the incident into an instant success that was to be repeated in subsequent performances. Shortly thereafter, Celestino Petray, an actor just back from Patagonia who had temporarily joined Podestá's traveling theater company, improvised further on the incident in an outrageously exaggerated manner. Podestá recalled:

Without prior warning, he [Petray] secured himself a skinny, useless horse not fit for work or worth its hide and, mounted on his Rocinante, dressed

in an outrageous fashion, he presented himself in the country feast scene of *Moreira* imitating the way that Cocoliche and his brothers spoke.

When Jerónimo saw Celestino with that horse and talking that way, he let out an Indian-style howl and said, "Hello, Cocoliche, my friend! How's it going? Why the special get-up?" To which Petray responded [imitating broken, Italo-Argentine speech]: "¡Vengue de la Patagoña co este parejere macanuto, amique!" [I come from Patagonia with this swell appearance, my friend!]

No need to mention the explosion of extended laughter precipitated by the remark. And when asked his name, he [Petray] answered most proudly, with a coquettish strut: "Ma quiame Franchisque Cocoliche, e songo cregollo gasta lo güese de la taba e la canilla de lo caracuse, amique, afficate la parada." [My name is Franchisque Cocoliche and I'm criollo to the marrow of my calf bone, my friend, check me out.]²¹

The scripted character named Francisco, first impersonated by Petray and later played by real foreigners with "accents," became known thereafter as Cocoliche. It continued to be a part of the play for two years after the debut of *Juan Moreira*.²² Podestá observed, "Who would have known that from that improvised episode a new term would emerge for the popular lexicon!"²³

Indeed, the *Cocoliche* term became the name of not only the comic personage in *Juan Moreira* and of a future stock character in popular drama but of any Cocolichesque impersonation on or offstage. *Cocoliche* also referred thereafter to the "mixed" way of talking of Italian immigrants in Argentina as well as to a mock dramatic version invented by criollos for the stage. During carnival, *Cocoliche* was used to designate masqueraders of the "mock gaucho" stereotype. In everyday speech, *cocoliche* was employed as a pejorative adjective to describe styles of dress, interior decoration, and other fashions in daily life considered to be in bad taste.²⁴

In short order, the term *Cocoliche* permeated various dimensions of vernacular culture, becoming a central emblem and agent for the creolization of Italian-Argentines. Its manifestations expressed in symbolic and tangible ways the awkward mixture of criollo and foreign elements in Argentina at the time, and through the pejorative use of the word, expressed the view of outsiders by natives.

Cocoliche and Cocoliche-like expressions were not merely the manifestation of a cultural "mixture," however. The entire phenomenon embodied a paradox: Cocoliche the character was neither gaucho nor Italian, yet at the same time he was both. As the "gaucho," he mocked the immigrants' language and behavior, and as the "Italian," he celebrated Argentine culture and tradition, leaving foreigners no alternative but to want to become "native." In this manner, Cocoliche's double identity allowed for not only the survival but also the control of both cultural "faces." His image functioned as a disguise for integration (assimilation) as well as for dissent (dissimulation). By engaging in Coco-

liche-like behavior and speech, anyone could ritually “pass” as gaucho or Italian. By adopting and adapting traditional Argentine styles and forms, everyone could ultimately feel criollo.

THE ART AND STRATEGIES OF COCOLICHE

The name of the Italo-Argentine improvisation in *Juan Moreira* lent a rich new term to the popular lexicon, but some of the attitudes and motivations behind the creation of Cocoliche had already been depicted in literary and popular forms prior to the birth of the gaucho mamarracho. For instance, the famous incident between the gaucho and the Italian in *Martín Fierro* is often cited as prefiguring a Cocoliche-style interaction.²⁵ Yet while this literary example points to tano-criollo tensions characteristic of the time, neither Fierro nor the Italian pretend to masquerade as the other, as would be the case in the true Cocoliche spirit. Their dialogue nevertheless offers an excellent example of the criollo-style artful speech forms that provided the model for many subsequent Cocoliche exchanges.

In *Martín Fierro*, Hernández used the traditional, improvised poetic *payada* counterpoint common among gauchos as a model for his poem, and the hero repeatedly flaunts his verbal mastery and accomplished improvisational skill. These attributes single Fierro out as a clever criollo who can outtalk and outwit “invading” immigrants. One instance of verbal play between the gaucho protagonist and an Italian outsider keenly dramatizes the gaucho’s perspective on immigration while illustrating his artful command of language. Fierro’s clever manipulations also underscore the inadequate, broken Spanish of an allegedly drunken Italian sentry, whom the gaucho describes as follows:

Era un gringo tan bozal,
que nada se le entendía.
¡Quién sabe de ande sería!
Tal vez no juera cristiano,
pues lo único que decía
es que era *pa-po-litano*.²⁶

He spoke so thick that no one there
Could understand his lingo;
God knows where they could have found
I doubt he was even a Christian;
A “papolitano” he said he was,
Which I take it is a kind of gringo.

Martín Fierro’s Cocolichesque derision of the Italian immigrant and his talk are particularly evident here, where his words take a mocking and humorous turn in the final pun. Not only is the gringo’s speech characterized by the gaucho as *bozal* (“muzzled,” broken), but the Italian is called a *papolitano*. Under the pretext of describing him as a *napolitano* (Neapolitan), Fierro insults the foreigner by alluding to the derisive slang term *papo*.²⁷ The word ending, furthermore, employs the ethnic slur *tano*, derived from *napolitano*, sometimes applied affectionately, but more often insultingly, to Italians.

Moreover, Fierro’s verbal play is not simply a mockery of Italian

speech but an assertion. By imitating the language of the “invading” outsiders in hilarious mimicry, Fierro affirms his native authority and underscores the “ignorance” of foreigners. Under the guise of humor, Fierro “silences” the Italian in an implicit verbal contest by manipulating and ultimately taking over the foreigner’s words:

Cuando me vido acercar:	When he saw me comin’,
“¿Qué vivore?” preguntó;	“Who sneaka pas’?” he said.
“Qué vívoras” dije yo.	“What snake in the grass?” I answered.
“¡Ha garto!” me pegó el grito.	“Stoop right dere!” he ordered.
Y yo dije despacito:	And I replied slowly,
“Más lagarto serás vos.”	“You’re a bigger stupe!” ²⁸

The pun in Spanish rests with the unintended suggestions provoked by the sound of “snake” (*vívora*) and “lizard” (*lagarto*) in the Italian’s broken speech. “¿Qué vivore?” uttered by the Italian, is meant to ask “¿Quién vive?” (Who goes there?). But the native gaucho, making use of the homophony between the gringo’s words and *vívora*, comments: “Qué vívoras” (What snakes). Similarly, “hagarto” is a deformation of “Haga alto” (halt, stop). But, again, the gaucho takes the opportunity to insult the Italian by punning on *lagarto* (lizard), which in underground slang means “thief.”²⁹

Although original, Fierro’s verbal style is not unique. His verbal agility and wit and his capacity for manipulating words exemplify the value criollos traditionally placed on the power of having the last word.³⁰ Such verbal assertions were often aggressive, although usually full of humor and wit. Careful to avoid turning verbal assault into physical violence and by introducing playful strategies to undermine insult, the criollo man-of-words was a master of indirection. This verbal tradition is still practiced today, as has been observed by folklorist Ismael Moya:

In many towns in the province of Buenos Aires, it is customary among persons of a certain lineage to disfigure a word in order to give it a picaresque meaning. . . . Almost always the one uttering something finds himself at a distance from the person addressed, and since the latter doesn’t hear the alternating syllable because the speaker covers them up with a weak intonation, the receiver answers to what he thought were words said in good faith.³¹

Thus *con su perjuicio* (to your detriment) might be said in place of *con su permiso* (with your permission), or *¡Chancho gusto!* (Pig pleasure!) instead of *¡Tanto gusto!* (Such a pleasure!), or *bandido* (scoundrel) for *Buen día* (good day). Similarly, an offense might be verbally “undone” by “taking back” or “redirecting” an original intention. *¡Qué tormenta!* (What a [dark] storm!), one might say when meeting up with a black man, adding thereafter *la del jueves* (we had on Thursday).³²

Knowing they could not be matched by foreigners, criollos employed these verbal patterns to insult newly arrived immigrant rivals.

Both in the country and the cities, Italians became the preferred targets of non-elite native attacks mediated by traditional verbal art and play. Gauchos and rural inhabitants were not the only ones who perceived immigrants as snakes and thieves overtaking the land and robbing natives of jobs; other Buenos Aires common laborers also turned to traditional song and verse forms to accuse Neapolitans (Italians) of being “usurpers.” Afro-Argentines particularly suffered the loss of jobs and menial tasks taken over by Italians, as attested by the following complaint voiced at the 1876 carnival:

Apolitanos usurpadores, que todo oficio quitan al pobre.	Neapolitans usurpers, who every occupation take from the poor.
Si es que botines sabes hacer, ¿por qué esa industria no la ejercés?	If shoes you know how to make, why don't you practice that craft?
Ya no hay negros botelleros	Now there are no more black bottle-delivery boys
ni tampoco changador, ni negro que venda fruta mucho menos pescador.	nor errand runners, nor black fruit vendors, not even fishermen.
Porque esos apolitanos hasta pasteleros son, y ya nos quieren quitar el oficio de blanqueador. ³³	Because those Neapolitans have even become bakers, and now they want to take from us the whitewashing trade.

Another carnival song entitled “El negro Pancho Mafuri” mentions not only the replacement of blacks by Italians but the immigrants’ facility at dissimulating their foreignness and assimilating native customs by adapting expressive forms:

Ya no hay sirvientes de mi color, porque bachichas toditos son; dentro de poco, ¡Jesús, por Dios! bailarán cemba en el tambor. ³⁴	There are no servants of my color, because <i>bachichas</i> (Italians) they've all become; before long, Jesus, by God! they'll be dancing cemba on the drum.
---	---

Carnival became a central arena for voicing such complaints, accusations, and mockeries and for reflecting the cultural fusions depicted by these expressive forms. Cocoliche’s culturally ambivalent and socially subversive character consequently became a favorite mask during carnival celebrations.

Like his “mixed” language onstage, Cocoliche’s carnivalesque dress presented a visual testimony of cultural manipulations and con-



Argentine masking as a Cocoliche during the
1929 Buenos Aires carnival.

(Photograph gift to the author from the private collection of Orestes A. Vaggi).

fluences, as revealed in photographs of the period.³⁵ One such photo, taken in 1929, shows a Cocoliche masquerader whose costume emulates, yet simultaneously mocks, gaucho vestments. Everything he wears corresponds to gaucho dress, but in an exaggerated or anti-thetical manner, thus symbolically portraying the process of cultural redefinition in Argentina brought about by both natives and foreigners.

The subject of the photograph wears a false beard and long wig, imitating the look of most nineteenth-century rural men. His derby hat, however, contrasts jarringly with the expected broad-brimmed *chambergó* worn by gauchos in the country.³⁶ Similarly, the gaucho's prized and indispensable poncho is replaced by an ordinary bed blanket, worn over one shoulder in a traditional manner, as the photographed Cocoliche stands criollo-like with his left hand on the hip, his weight on his left leg. Held out in his right hand is the Cocoliche version of the gaucho *rebenque* or riding whip—an exaggerated, phallic, short log that he rests on his right knee. In place of the often elaborately embroidered *chiripá*, the Cocoliche masquer wears striped pants with randomly applied flowers and other motifs, alluding to the decorations found in the corresponding traditional criollo wear. The boots, unlike the *botas de potro* worn by the gaucho, are clunky—the soles flapping apart at the toes. The mandatory spurs are so large and exaggerated that they drag on the ground. The vest, in this case checkered rather than solid or embroidered, exhibits medals (most likely fake) meant to represent past carnival awards for outstanding costume. Finally, the belt, usually laden with silver coins and worn with pride by gauchos who carried knives at the waist, is decorated with trinkets, mock coins, even a horseshoe. In place of the knife, this native Argentine posing as an Italian posing as a gaucho wears a revolver hung from his belt. Indeed an “insult” to gauchos whose knives symbolized their courage in hand-to-hand fights, this Cocoliche's weapon represents an even greater insult directed at Italians who did not know the difference; a knife was not a mere weapon replaceable by a gun but a criollo symbol of courage and skill, of manliness.

As in the theater or circus ring, these carnival masquers relativized criollo and Italian cultures by joining two sign systems together in one carnivalesque image. But unlike the theater stage, the carnival scene made no distinction between stage and life, between actor and spectator. A diverse range of urban groups joined in the Cocoliche masquerade, thus confusing natives with Italians and blacks. A newspaper account cited by Ernesto Quesada in 1902 reported, “The majority of the groups who have chosen purely criollo dress and manners for their carnival costume are clearly characterized by their Italian last names.” Similarly, another account focused on a carnival masquerade ball at the

Teatro Apolo, and on the range and types of persons wearing “gaucho” costumes:

. . . entra un *cocoliche* y, viendo un grupo de morenos disfrazados de gauchos, exclama: ¡*Pe la gran flauta! ¡ma esta es l'África de Menelik!* . . . las máscaras aludidas se sulfuran, y lo tratan de gringo, tano, zafado, guarango, etc., y él contesta. ¿*E perche si inocan? ¿Vamos á ver? Perche he dicho: esta es l'África de Menelik. . . . ¡Ma si lo he dicho por il calor e no por il color! ¡No t'anocare, caramba! ¿Vamos a bailare este tango con corte e requebrada? ¡Maestro, aflocale pa que colee!*³⁷

[A Cocoliche enters and, seeing a group of blacks dressed as gauchos, he exclaims [in Cocoliche]: “Good heavens! This is Menelik’s Africa!” . . . the masqueraders get worked up and call him an insolent, impudent, uncivil *gringo*, a *tano*, etc., and he answers [again in Cocoliche]: “Why do you get angry? Let’s see. Because I said: ‘This is Menelik’s Africa.’ But I said it because of the heat (*calor*) and not because of the color (*color*). *Caramba*, don’t get angry! Let’s dance a tango with breaks. Maestro, let it rip!”]

“Such is their cleverness,” Quesada observes, “and such is the Cocoliche talk that replaces the gauchesque style of another period.”

Indeed, the nature and style of the carnival interaction cited by Quesada is reminiscent of gaucho (criollo) talk not unlike that noted in the field by folklorist Moya or the recreation in *Martín Fierro*. Like the verbal art of country criollos, the language of the carnival Cocoliche is simultaneously suggestive, insulting, and playful. He undercuts his own unretrievable statement, for example, by “taking it back” with a verbal pun on *calor-color*.

During carnival, *comparsas cocoliches* (cocoliche street musicians) paraded next to *comparsas de gauchos* and made their rounds from house to house, singing and reciting traditional-style songs and *relaciones* (improvised songs of praise and verses) that were fashioned after criollogaicho models but delivered in Cocoliche-like speech. Such anonymous oral verses eventually transcended carnival and stage settings. They filled the repertoires of street vendors or anyone wanting to display verbal cleverness with allusions, word plays, and rhymes.³⁸ These performances no longer necessarily expressed the mocking tone of the original Cocoliche character. They represented genuine renderings by Italians who, even if they had not entirely mastered Argentine Spanish, had adopted criollo-like talk and adapted it for their own expressive needs.³⁹ Ironically, criollo traditional expressive forms, presented under the guise of Cocoliche, had once again served as models or vehicles for the creolization of Italians.

In fact, the integration of Italians into Argentine life and their adoption of criollo traditions and styles ceased to be a matter for jest. The once-humorous and unlikely invention of an Italianized gaicho or a “gauchified” Italian had become a reality by the early part of the century. The old-style gaicho had been replaced by immigrants who

were now *gauchos criollos*. Godofredo Daireaux recalls an Italian immigrant from the provinces who dressed like an Argentine gaucho, married a criolla (a black woman, Daireaux specifies), and acted as an exemplary gaucho "with a knife at his waist and quite *compadrón* [swaggering]," although his language was a "*criollo-bachicha* [criollo-Italian] jargon."⁴⁰

Even in urban areas, the gaucho image informed the new self-definition of Italian-Argentines. Madaline Nichols observes that between 1900 and 1920, "The gaucho locale changed from country to city; the urban middle and lower classes, usually the descendants of Italian immigrants, apparently began to 'play gaucho'."

But the Argentine Italians took their *gauchos* with alarming seriousness. As late as 1914 there were over two hundred small clubs, the avowed intent of which was to perpetuate the gaucho tradition. More than fifty of these clubs were in Buenos Aires alone. Members met occasionally of an evening, played the guitar, sang gaucho songs, read gaucho stories, wrote gaucho newspapers, acted in gaucho plays. On Sundays, they went on picnics, built bonfires, roasted steaks, drank *mate*. Members prided themselves on the possession of authentic gaucho costumes, on their riding ability, on their skill in verse composition. Payadas were held, and the newspaper *La Prensa* noted at least one sorrowful occasion when five hundred potential customers battled the police in hot fury because not even standing room was left in the theater where one such payada was to take place.⁴¹

These imitations and reenactments were surely laden with studied artifice. Yet they nevertheless manifested ritually the high value placed on gaucho traditions and the desire of Italians to become creolized.

Precisely the artificial nature of these events and expressions allowed for the temporary suspension of "reality" in order to rehearse a new cultural identity. The theater, the carnival, and (in some ways) these club-based enactments offered ideal arenas for exercising and displaying Cocolichesque strategies. More significantly, such occasions allowed for the artful, popular expression and mediation of cultural diversity that redefined Argentine life.

THE LANGUAGE OF COCOLICHE

More lingering than the actual character or mask of Cocoliche was the mock language used to impersonate or caricature Italians in Argentina, which flourished with the creation of the gaucho *mamarracho*. Equally important during this period of cultural transition was the actual Italo-Argentine speech of immigrants, which was also called Cocoliche. For the sake of clarity, the mock language of Cocoliche will be referred to here as mock Cocoliche, while the actual Italo-Argentine speech of immigrants will be noted as Cocoliche.

Most of what has been written on this linguistic phenomenon

centers on the actual “broken,” “mixed,” or “hybrid” speech of Italian immigrants in Argentina. Virtually none of those deliberations, however, examine the relationship of Cocoliche to mock Cocoliche or to the nonverbal dimensions of the Cocoliche phenomenon.⁴² The two forms are often confused in such discussions, leading to uncertain conclusions.

The problem with most linguistic approaches to Cocoliche, as Dell Hymes observed about the study of language in general, is that “linguists have abstracted from the content of speech, social scientists from its form, and both from the patterning of its use.”⁴³ Consequently, nothing approaching an ethnography of speaking exists for Cocoliche, and practically no analysis focuses on Cocoliche as a communicative event. In other words, the creative aspects of language use have been almost entirely neglected with respect to both Cocoliche and mock Cocoliche, as have concerns for social and aesthetic functions. Such studies would require a closer look at expressive genres and at the performance aspect of language.

Although my task here is not a full sociolinguistic study of Cocoliche, my concern is precisely those expressive forms by which cultural structures, values, and styles are celebrated and perpetuated. A close look at Cocoliche and mock Cocoliche therefore offers insights into the nature of Cocoliche in general and its verbal manifestations in particular. Most revealing, for example, is the parallel between Cocoliche as a means for a linguistic transition between Italian and Argentine Spanish and mock Cocoliche as a symbol or vehicle for a cultural transition between foreigners and criollos.

The circumstances under which Cocoliche emerged at first suggest that it might have been a contact language, reduced in its grammar and use and formed from a mixture of two languages—not unlike a pidgin. Upon closer examination, however, it becomes clear that Cocoliche was not a pidgin proper.⁴⁴ It is true that Argentines and Italians did not share a mother tongue, that no “standard” Italian was the norm among immigrants who spoke Sicilian, Piemontian, Friulian, Tuscan, and other dialects, and that Italians were in close contact with native speakers and surrounded by foreign groups (speakers of French, Yiddish, German, Arabic, and other languages). But it is also the case that Cocoliche emerged exclusively as the everyday language only of speakers of Italian. Furthermore, although Cocoliche shows some grammatical reduction, it never reached the degree of simplification characteristic of many pidgins—a fact perhaps explained by the linguistic proximity of Spanish and Italian.⁴⁵

Cocoliche is therefore more appropriately described as an open system in constant flux, whose manifestations could range from a way of speaking that closely resembled any number of Italian dialects to the

Buenos Aires Spanish of Italians. This perspective on Cocoliche explains the existence of countless individual versions of this Italo-Argentine speech, all classified under the rubric of Cocoliche.⁴⁶

Keith Whinnom used a biological model or metaphor to make this point, portraying Cocoliche as a secondary “language” that resulted from “secondary hybridization.” He pointed out that Cocoliche, like any secondary language or linguistic product of a process of simple secondary hybridization, “exhibits the same characteristics as biological hybrid populations, namely a plethora of variant forms which fill a series of spectra between one language and another, whereas a pidgin exhibits variations no greater than a ‘primary’ language.”⁴⁷ Several years earlier, Giovanni Meo Zilio had already made this point, when he wrote as follows about the language of Italian immigrants on the Río de la Plata:

When [an immigrant Italian’s speech] reaches a certain level of linguistic confusion, it is difficult to establish at what moment they [Italian immigrants] speak (a Spanishized) Italian and at what moment they speak (an Italianized) Spanish, and it is therefore impossible to clearly isolate the respective influences of Spanish and Italian in their speech. The phenomena of contact and contamination between them became overlaid, crossed, complicated to such a point that one *cannot speak of an absolute boundary between the two languages.*⁴⁸

How, then, is it possible to isolate or identify a Cocoliche “language” on the Río de la Plata? The answer rests less on linguistic clues than on sociocultural factors. In fact, Meo Zilio suggests that speakers of Cocoliche do not distinguish their speech from Argentine Spanish or Italian, and that they differentiate between “speaking Italian” and “speaking Spanish” only by their intention: “The only distinctive criterion ends up being the speaker’s intention to express himself in one language or the other, depending on whether he speaks with Italians or natives of the Río de la Plata area.”⁴⁹

In this light, Cocoliche can be clearly viewed as an undifferentiated tongue that cannot be placed formally as a third language next to Spanish or Italian (or above them as a primary language). Instead, the use and composition of Cocoliche appear to be spontaneous, unconscious, and oscillating, and do not constitute a “regular and consistent system from a linguistic perspective.” Therefore, rather than thinking of Cocoliche as a linguistic system associated with grammatical and lexical norms, Meo Zilio conceives of it as a group of isoglosses (imaginary lines indicating the limits of some stated degree of linguistic change) that expand and contract in a continual state of becoming. Thus it becomes possible to have “*tantos cocoliches como hablantes*” (as many forms of Cocoliche as there are speakers).⁵⁰

Given this situation, Cocoliche cannot be easily or systematically

“taught,” nor does one actually set out to “learn” to speak it. Instead, Cocoliche is spoken or acquired in the process of adopting Argentine Spanish. This conclusion does not imply that linguistic and stylistic patterns, or recognizable tendencies and lexical repertoires, cannot be identified and used to describe or even “codify” Cocoliche; it simply reiterates that Cocoliche was not an end in itself but a language of transition—an example of imperfect secondary language acquisition developed by immigrant Italians in Argentina.

Interestingly, no similar transition language characterized the many other immigrant groups in Argentina.⁵¹ But then, Italians were a significant majority of the immigrant population, and the marked cultural and linguistic proximity between this group and Argentines facilitated the emergence of Cocoliche in a way that would have been impossible among, say, Germans in Argentina. That is, while Italians could be understood by the Argentine Spanish-speaking population even at an early stage of Spanish acquisition, such was not the case with speakers of German, who found themselves more frequently in situations requiring switches from one language to the other. It is worth noting, however, that although no other language approximated the pervasiveness of Cocoliche in Argentina, the term *Cocoliche* is still used generically there to indicate any hybrid language, a language mixture, or broken speech.⁵²

But the very proximity in the linguistic and cultural background of Italians and Argentines prevented the arrest of this Italo-Argentine speech or the development of Cocoliche as a pidgin or creole. Other factors further contributed to the adoption of Argentine Spanish as a lingua franca and to the relatively quick social integration of Italians and Argentines.⁵³ The spontaneous nature of Italian immigration, as opposed to programmed mass immigration sponsored by organizations or the state, produced a steady stream of Italians from different areas of Italy who independently integrated into Argentine life and mixed with other newcomers rather than settling into more isolated immigrant colonies. *Conventillos* housed a vast range of ethnic, religious, cultural, and language groups who had to adjust to new social and cultural demands, and they naturally turned to Argentine Spanish as a lingua franca.⁵⁴

The social fluidity that made possible rapid socioeconomic advancement for immigrants and their offspring who spoke the national language further spurred the desire to learn Spanish. Also instrumental were the educational opportunities available to the immigrant population through compulsory, free public schooling conducted in Spanish. Nationalistic policies of the period further encouraged assimilation by facilitating the naturalization of foreigners and by granting citizenship to anyone born on Argentine soil.

Individual characteristics and abilities also affected how quickly and thoroughly Italians adopted Argentine Spanish as their mode of speech. This process of transition was also influenced by such factors as an individual's trade or profession, economic status, length of residence in Argentina, native dialect, age, intellectual capacity, degree of education and literacy level, amount of contact with Spanish speakers, and exposure to the press, radio, and theater, together with their willingness to learn a new tongue.

Given these factors and what has been established so far about mock Cocoliche, several parallels and distinctions can be drawn between Cocoliche and mock Cocoliche. Neither one was a formally standardized language; both were "open systems" that varied from individual to individual and situation to situation. While Cocoliche was the exclusive language of Italian immigrants in Argentina, mock Cocoliche was employed only by Argentines. Neither was an end in itself but a medium through which linguistic and sociocultural transitions were precipitated. They differed principally in that Cocoliche was a genuine mode of speech born out of necessity in a contact situation, while mock Cocoliche was a stylized portrayal of the former.

Mock Cocoliche portrayed Cocoliche from a native perspective, however, and this invented speech therefore displayed qualities reflecting the social, political, and economic conditions of the moment as viewed by non-elite criollos. It also revealed the nature of personal confrontations and cultural renegotiations between Argentines and Italians. The satirical form and content of mock Cocoliche expressed the resentful and at times xenophobic attitude of non-elite criollos toward the mass arrival of foreigners.

The use of both Cocoliche and mock Cocoliche portrayed the reality of a changing nation, the transformation of the Argentine countryside and gaucho life, and the inevitability of an Italianized criollismo or creolized Italianism among Argentines. Thus paradoxically, mock Cocoliche took the foreign edge off Cocoliche even while accentuating the non-native speech of Italian immigrants. Mock Cocoliche, one might conclude, lent a criollo style to Cocoliche by introducing, even if in a mocking manner, criollo genres, images, and concerns to the expressive repertoire of creolized Italians.

COCOLICHE IN PRINT AND ONSTAGE

Although no transcription of Cocoliche dialogues exists to provide an accurate sense of Italian immigrant speech in context, a range of written texts that could be called Cocolichesque illustrate the expressive and symbolic use of Italo-Argentine speech during the early part of the century. Like the carnivalesque mask of Cocoliche portraying an imitation of an imitation (the imitation of an Italian imitating a gaucho),

written versions of Italo-Argentine speech rendered an imitation of oral improvisations that mimicked the speech of Italians (mock Cocoliche) or attempted to reproduce the speech of immigrants trying to speak Spanish (Cocoliche). Although detailed analysis of these works is impossible here, a brief survey of Cocolichesque themes and linguistic expressions in print will indicate how Italo-Argentine creolization was portrayed and precipitated by yet another expressive mode now known as Cocoliche literature.

So popular were these written or scripted works that Cocoliche books sold extremely well among a large part of the population, competing with gauchesque literature.⁵⁵ In 1902, for example, Ernesto Quesada pointed out that "more than 62,000 copies of *Martín Fierro* have been sold, and certainly no less have been printed by the Cocoliche poet Irellor. His *Cocoliche en carnaval* is a book seen everywhere in the hands of the lower classes." In a footnote, Quesada added, "There are in Buenos Aires bookdealer-editors who dedicate themselves exclusively to that 'genre' [Cocoliche]. They entitle their series: *Biblioteca criolla*. I cite here their most popular successes in the last three years: *Lis amori de Bachichin* (1900); *El nueve libre de canciones napolitanas* (1901); *Nuevas canciones del napolitano Cocoliche* (1902); and *El salamín* (1902)."⁵⁶

Like the character and speech of the original Cocoliche figure in the dramatization of the gauchesque work *Juan Moreira*, many of the Cocolichesque texts were fashioned after criollo traditions, usually gaucho verbal art forms. The following "Contrapunto Criollo-Genovés," written by Angel G. Villoldo around the turn of the century and included in his *Cantos populares argentinos*, offers a good example of a contrapuntal payada-like versed dialogue or challenge (*desafío*), where an Argentine criollo and a Genoese Italian compete with one another. Despite their divergent cultural backgrounds and markedly different speech, the two singers are "matched" and eventually reconciled by their parallel mastery of this gauchesque artful speech:

"Contrapunto criollo-genovés"

Criollo

Veo que sos muy compadre
y te tenés por cantante,
pero aquí vas a salir
como rata por tirante.

Genovés

Ma decate de suncera
nu venga cun lo ratone
e camtemo cada uno
alguna improvisacione.

Criollo

Ya que vos has desafiado
y te gusta improvisar

"Criollo-Genoese Counterpoint"

Criollo

I see that you're very hip
and you take yourself to be a singer,
but you're going to come out of this
like a rat out from a joist.

Genoese

Cut out the nonsense
and don't come to me with mice.
Let's each of us sing
an improvisation.

Criollo

Since you've made the challenge
and you like to improvise,

yo te doy la preferencia
podés, pues, empezar.

Genovés

Sun in bachicha italiana
ma de grande curazón,
e también sun argentino
cuando llega l'ocasión.

Criollo

¡Oigale al gringo acriollao
aura si te has lucido,
sin querer meter la pata
hasta el muslo la has metido!

Genovés

Ma que pata ne que muslo
pedazo de pelandrón,
avisá si per si acaso
me has tomao por mancarrón.

Criollo

Pucha el gringo estrilador,
ya ni sabe lo que dice.
Y por nada se le sube
la mostaza a las narices.

Genovés

Yo he visto muchos cantores
de bastante inteligencia
ma nu he visto cume vos
un tipo tan sin vergüenza.

Criollo

Sos para el canto, che gringo,
como para el bofe el gato
tomá una grapa d'Italia
y descansemos un rato.

Genovés

Ma tumemo lo que quieras
tutti insieme in cumpañía
que me queda in tel bolsillo
trenta centavo toavía.⁵⁷

I'll give you preference
and, well, you can start.

Genoese

I'm an Italian *bachicha*
but with a big heart,
and I'm also Argentine
when the occasion calls for it.

Criollo

Listen to the creolized *gringo*
now you've really outdone yourself,
by not wanting to stick your foot in
you've shoved it in up to your thigh!

Genoese

Never mind feet and thighs
you bum,
let me know if by chance
you've taken me for a fool.

Criollo

Son of a gun, that gringo's a pain,
he doesn't know what he's saying.
And the mustard doesn't even
rise to his nose.
[He doesn't even get flustered.]

Genoese

I've seen a lot of singers
who are pretty clever
but I've never seen
a guy as shameless as you.

Criollo

Hey gringo, you're made for singing,
the way cats are made for hunting.
Have an Italian grappa
and let's rest for a while.

Genoese

Sure, let's drink whatever you want.
We're all among friends.
I still have thirty cents
left in my pocket.

We see here that the contestants move from a defiant, insulting tone to one of festive reconciliation. The Genoese singer is simultaneously challenged and recognized by the criollo when he's called a *gringo acriollado* (a creolized gringo), and the Italian accepts both roles when he admits that he can be *un argentino cuando llega l'ocasión*. When the Genoese improviser proves he can stand up to the criollo man-of-words, the latter responds in the sixth stanza with surprise and indirect admiration. Similarly, in the seventh stanza, the Italian compliments his Argentine opponent in a roundabout, picaresque manner. The recon-

ciliation at the end of the *payada* underlines the mutual acceptance of the two contestants as they share an Italian grappa on Argentine soil. By the end of the dialogue—indeed the dialectic—the two contestants stand on an equal footing because despite their linguistic differences, they are evenly matched in their “native” mastery of *gauchesque* performance and *criollo*-like speech. Unlike the earlier cited dialogue between Martín Fierro and the Italian sentry (written prior to the invention of Cocoliche), the two speakers here confront each other using the same *criollo* conventions, verbal models, and values.

Another vehicle for Cocolichesque renderings of language mixtures and Italo-*criollo* tensions and reconciliations were the popular *sainetes*, plays comprising the *género chico criollo*. These creations were produced by the synthesis of the Spanish *género chico* (a theatrical tradition brought from Madrid to Buenos Aires) and the *circo criollo*.⁵⁸ Astonishingly popular, these plays sold far more tickets than did performances attended by the upper classes in such theaters as the Teatro Colón.⁵⁹ Their popular appeal derived from their familiar everyday settings and characters representing a range of ethnic and occupational groups, recognizable types with whom *Porteños* could identify. Also, *sainetes* dealt with popular concerns about contemporary social, political, and economic issues.⁶⁰ Unfailingly, they portrayed and caricatured the multiple languages of Buenos Aires, particularly that of Italians. Countless *sainetes* illustrate the use of mock Cocoliche, Cocoliche, *Lunfardo*, *gauchesque* talk, and other “accents” and lexical inventions of the immigrant and native masses.⁶¹

In their extensive exploration of the *género chico criollo*, Susana Marco, Abel Posadas, Marta Speroni, and Griselda Vignolo have made a key observation about the *sainete*'s use of Cocolichesque talk. They note that the presence of Italo-Argentine speech in these plays is “more or less accentuated, depending on how closely the character lives by the rules of [society's] established order.”⁶² Much like the way Cocoliche varied in its social use, Italo-Argentine speech was more or less exaggerated in these popular dramas, depending on each character's degree of assimilation. Consequently, although this dramatic use of language did not fully correspond to an ethnographic transcription of actual everyday speech, *sainete* scripts mirrored a social reality. As reflectors, these dramas not only symbolically “documented” the nature and dialectic of Italo-*criollo* dynamics but displayed them for audiences who could reflect on their individual situations and thus become aware of their own creolization.

Sainetes thus portrayed gradations of Italian holdovers and degrees of assimilation. They also sketched the emergence of a new, re-defined Argentine generation in the process of tracing the gradual transition from Italian to *criollo* talk. This process is keenly exemplified by

the character of Pascualito in the play *El guarda 323* (Conductor 323). He is only too aware of fine cultural and linguistic distinctions and wants to shed not only the foreign sound but the foreign smell of his name:

Pascualito

Pascualito, vea hasta
con el nombre ese tiene que
encontrarse marcao uno . . .

Pascualito . . .
hay nombres que no sirven
ni para hacerse llevar preso . . .

Le preguntan a una nena:
¿cómo se llama tu novio?

Pascualito . . .

¡Olor a brócolis!⁶³

Pascualito

Pascualito, see how
one's marked even with one's
name . . .

Pascualito . . .
some names aren't even fit
for getting arrested . . .

You ask a girl:
What's your boyfriend's name?

Pascualito . . .

Smells like broccoli!

In other instances, sainete dialogues highlighted the linguistic and cultural transition from Italian to Argentine Spanish through actual "speech lessons" written into play texts. Such is the case of the dialogue between Antonio, an Italian who wants to learn criollo talk in order to attract and seduce women, and Aberastury, a native *compadrito* (hipster or dandy) whose thorough command of Argentine Spanish and Lunfardo slang mark him as a true native and a master of smooth talk. In response to Don Antonio's question about what Aberastury does to seduce women, the latter replies:

Aberastury

Entonces, pare la oreja
y siga el procedimiento
sin alterar la receta . . .
Usted captura el mosaico . . .

Don Antonio

¡El qué? . . .

Aberastury

El mosaico, la percha,
el rombo, la nami, el dulce,
la percanta, la bandeja . . .
¿Manya?

Don Antonio

¡Ah . . . sí! . . . sí.
Ya comprendo . . .
¡Qué abundante que é la lengua
castellana! . . .

Lo mosaico, la zanguane,
la escopeta,
con cualquier cosa se dice
la mojere . . .

Aberastury

La cata a ella . . .
o no bien la vea pasar

Aberastury

Then perk up your ear
and follow the procedure
without altering the recipe . . .
You "check out" the *mosaico* . . .

Don Antonio

The what? . . .

Aberastury

The *mosaico*, the *percha*
the *rombo*, the *nami*, the *dulce*
the *percanta*, the *bandeja* . . .
Understand?⁶⁴

Don Antonio

Ah . . . yes . . . yes!
Now I understand . . .
The Spanish language is so
abundant! . . .

The *mosaico*, the *zanguane*
the *escopeta*,
you can say "woman" by
naming anything . . .

Aberastury

You look at her . . .
or as soon as she goes by,

le bate de esta manera . . . :
 "¡Che, fulana, párate ahí! . . ."
 Yen cuanto ella se detenga
 usté se le acerca y le hace
 este chamuyo a la oreja . . . :
 "Papurusa, yo te 'roequi'."

Don Antonio
 ¿Yo te qué?

Aberastury
 ¡No sea palmera! . . .
 "Yo te roequi" es
 "yo te quiero" al revés . . .

Don Antonio
 ¡Ah! ¡Qué riqueza de idioma!
 ¡Cuanto no alcanza
 hasta te lo danno vuelta! . . .⁶⁵

talk to her in this manner . . . :
 "Hey! what's-your-name, stop there."
 And as soon as she stops,
 you get close and whisper
 in her ear . . . :
 "Baby, I 'velo' you."

Don Antonio
 I what?

Aberastury
 Don't be such a stiff! . . .
 I "velo" you is
 "I love you" in reverse . . .

Don Antonio
 Ah! . . . What a rich language!
 When there's not enough to go around,
 they give it to you in reverse! . . .

Clearly evident here is the use of Lunfardo terms by the native Aberastury. Yet much of this integrally Argentine slang included instances of Cocoliche and mock Cocoliche speech, which persisted in Lunfardo long after both Italo-Argentine forms disappeared.⁶⁶

Other factors besides language—the themes, the settings, the characters, and the general content of many sainetes—underlined native-foreign conflicts and reconciliations. In the case of the play *Mustafá*, for example, the mixture implicit in the Cocoliche character is explicitly generalized to all ethnic groups. The daughter of a Turk marries the son of the Italian Don Gaetano, who (regardless of his own feelings about the union) recognizes the inevitable biological and cultural *mezcolanza* (mixture) inherent in conventillo life, in Buenos Aires, and in Argentina. He observes, "¿Por qué s'ixtrañara il mondo? ¿La raza forte no sale de la mezcolanza? ¿E donde se produce la mezcolanza? Al conventillo."⁶⁷ (Why is the world surprised [at this marriage]? Doesn't the strong race come from a mixture? And where's a mixture produced? In the conventillo.) The theme of mixture inherent in Cocolichesque assimilations, dissimulations, and creolization is thus commonly portrayed in Cocoliche literature through intermarriages between foreigners and natives.

The popular press also contributed to Cocoliche literature on both sides of the Río de la Plata. Newspapers and magazines such as *El Fogón* in Montevideo periodically published items like the love letter to "Rusita" (Rosita) printed in 1900. A few lines reveal its flavor. The author, whose pseudonym is Pedrín, refers to his declaration of love as a *cregolla misiva* (criollo message).

Oriental cuquetona
 Amante y bela Rusita
 Luminaria de mis ojos,

Flirtatious Oriental (Uruguayan)
 Loving and beautiful little Rose
 Light of my eyes,

Florecita senza espina, Quando te vedo Rusita, Me su agarrato la pluma, Dopo la meto in la tinta E cume in escribidore Mi fato questa cartita Perque la estampe il "Fogone" Come cregolla misiva . . . ⁶⁸	Little flower without thorns, When I see you little Rose, I take up my pen, Then I dip it in ink And like a writer I produce this little letter For the <i>Fogón</i> to print As a criollo message . . .
--	--

The popular Buenos Aires weekly magazine *Caras y Caretas* also ran stories, vignettes, and dialogues in Cocolichesque renderings and in a curious linguistic combination of gauchesque, Cocolichesque, and Lunfardo expressions. The following excerpt is taken from a scene featuring a *tano agauchado* (a gaucho-style Italian) who lives in the outskirts of Buenos Aires, considers himself *crigoyo vieco* (*criollo viejo* or "old-time criollo") and has a daughter admired by a *paisano criollo*. The "language" switches (impossible to translate into English) oscillate back and forth from versions of mock Cocoliche or Cocoliche, to a gauchesque tone, to Lunfardo-like speech:

Don Giacumin vió algunas veces este jueguito y llamó a asamblea; reunida la familia en consejo, los dos votos principales y validos decidieron que Rosa no sólo debía *acetar aquel moso tan mentao*, sino también hacerle cocos para inducirlo á *ina rápida matrimoniaciun*. ¡Pero tata! . . . ¡Si es más tacaño que! . . . ¡*Lasciate di cuela macana! Cuento di tacanio le ina sunsería* . . . *Dopo que no hay amo andato inta el requistro chivil, va volare tutti'l danaro*. . . ¡Tenés razón, ché . . . ! ¡Nos hace falta un poco'e moneda pa salir d'apuros! . . .⁶⁹

Cocolichesque renderings and what might be called cocoliche-related themes and conflicts were not limited to the scripts of popular plays or to the popular press. They were used as artistic resources in more conventional literary works written after the turn of the century, employed to portray and dramatize the changes and conflicts in Argentina introduced by immigration. For example, the short story "Campo amarillo" by Uruguayan Javier de Viana (1868–1926) portrays an Italian stranger, Gaetano Manguialane, who in his Italian "accent" tells his gaucho host, Baldomero:

¡Madona! . . . ! ¡Se io fose pupritario de questo campite, me venía rico in meno de chincue ani! . . . In veche di darle a la bestie il prodoto de questa terra, que é un bocato di cardinale . . . , se ne sembra trigo, se ne sembra maise, e anque la papa e lo poroto, e se guadaña prata, ma prata que no tienen lo bancos, no tiene. [Madona! . . . If I owned this land, I'd be rich in less than five years! . . . Instead of letting animals feed off the land, which only offers them a drop in the bucket, I would plant wheat, corn, even potatoes and beans, and would have money, more money than the banks.]

Familiar only with the life of a gaucho, Baldomero answers, "Sin duda hay razón en lo que dice, y en más de una ocasión lo he pensado; pero no entiendo d'eso, y el que no sabe es como el que no ve." [No doubt

you're right in what you say, and I have thought about it more than once; but I don't know anything about all that, and someone who doesn't know is like someone who doesn't see.] Gaetano then proposes, "Osté pone el campo, lo güeyes, la herramientas e la semilla dal primer año, e yo m'encargo la plantación, e vamo a media." [You put up the land, the oxen, the tools, and the first years' seeds, I'll take care of the planting, and we'll go halves.]⁷⁰

In this case, the written version of the Italian immigrant's way of speaking is not a playful or mocking rendition of mock Cocoliche but a literary version of Cocoliche speech. Gaetano's speech is not meant to caricature but to portray a dimension of his immigrant character.

Similarly, playwright Florencio Sánchez (1875–1910) used Italo-Argentine speech in *La gringa* (1904) as an important stylistic component. It is used not merely to provide local color but as a coded system pointing to degrees of creolization and dramatic opposition among the characters. In *La gringa*, in a manner parallel to that outlined by the Marco research team for the sainete, the employment of Italo-Argentine speech no longer functions as a blanket grotesque caricature to connote Italians but as a way of denoting a state of mind. The degree of Cocolichesque speech employed in Sánchez's play demonstrates not merely that a character is Italian but that he or she is not yet fully creolized.⁷¹

The diversity of vision and tradition between foreigners and natives is also captured thematically in Sánchez's play. The criollo-Italian polarity is clearly outlined in the characters of the Italian Don Nicola (a shopkeeper and entrepreneur) and the old-time criollo Don Cantalicio. Nicola considers all criollos lazy, drunken wastrels lacking ambition or foresight; Cantalicio resents the avaricious Nicola who takes his land by entrapping him with *pagareses* (IOUs) for mortgages and loans. Nicola transforms not only Cantalicio's old homestead but the entire character of the provincial landscape and its traditions. Insensitive to gaucho symbols, he orders an *ombú* tree to be cut down: "Esa porquería . . . un árbol criollo que no sirva ni pa leña . . . y que no sirve más que pa que le hagan versitos de Juan Moreira . . . Ya debía estar en el suelo . . ." [That useless thing. . . . A criollo tree worthless even for firewood . . . good for nothing except writing little Juan Moreira verses. . . . It should have been leveled long ago.] When Cantalicio returns for a visit, he finds the metamorphosis of the land and his old home devastating.⁷²

The only hope for the reconciliation or reintegration of these two worlds lies in the future of their offspring. So it is that the marriage of the criollo Próspero and the gringa Victoria (note the symbolic names) and the impending birth of their child promises an emerging, redefined Argentine generation forged from both traditions. One of the play's characters announces, "Mire qué linda pareja. . . . Hija de gringos puros . . . hijo de criollos puros. . . . De ahí va a salir la raza fuerte del

porvenir. . . ." [Look what a beautiful couple . . . the daughter of pure gringos . . . the son of pure criollos. . . . From them the strong race of the future will emerge.] The vision evoked is a prosperous future in a revitalized Argentine rural setting shared by criollos and gringos. The play ends with the "call" of the threshing machine and Don Nicola's words to Próspero: "Bueno, mozo. . . . ¡A trabajar! . . . ¡A trabajar!" [Well, young man . . . To work! To work!]⁷³

CONCLUSION

With creolization and a new generation, the forms of Cocoliche discussed here practically disappeared from Argentine life. But the folk and popular forms that served as vehicles for Italo-Argentine creolization, and the redefinition of Argentine culture precipitated by this phenomenon still inform the nation's culture today.⁷⁴ The disappearance of Cocoliche by no means implied an extinction of Italian values and customs. Italian words, expressions, gestures, foods, musical influences, and festivals became as much a part of the Argentine fabric as did the expressive forms, styles, habits, and redefined traditions of gaucho and criollo life. Argentine and Italian culture were not made similar (assimilated), however, but were refashioned, integrated, dissimulated, and creolized in a complex process that Germani characterized as cultural synchresis:

The result of this *aluvión inmigratorio* (flood of immigration) was not the assimilation of immigrants into a preexistent Argentine culture, or of the latter into the more numerous foreign currents: it was, quite the opposite, an unquestionable synchresis that originated a still not entirely stabilized cultural type. [In this type,] many of the contributions of different national groups are still recognizable—especially those made by the more numerous arrivals of Italians and Spaniards.⁷⁵

"The result," as Scobie describes it, "was a culture that by the early twentieth century appeared to be 'Italianianized Hispanic' but that increasingly asserted its 'Argentinism'."⁷⁶ Nineteenth-century efforts to Europeanize the nation had thus failed, ironically yielding instead a multifaceted new criollismo that embraced native and foreign traditions rather than a single-vision country with imposed foreign standards.

For elite Argentines, the Cocoliche phenomenon had little bearing. But for the mass population of natives and foreigners struggling to reconcile themselves to the radical changes wrought by immigration, Cocoliche in all its forms expressed and mediated sociocultural negotiations that tempered a new Argentine way of life. Although Cocoliche the dramatic character is no longer vital today, the echo of his original outlandish declaration is still relevant: "Ma quíame Franchisque Cocoliche e songo cregollo gasta lo güese."

NOTES

1. For a model treatment of creolization in this light, see Edward Kamai Brathwaite, *Contradictory Omens* (Mona, Jamaica: Savacou Publications, 1974).
2. The word *criollo* has been used in diverse ways since the discovery of America. See José Juan Arrom, "Criollo: definiciones y matices de un concepto," *Certidumbre de América* (Madrid: Gredos, 1971), 11–26. The reference here is to the native, although not indigenous, population of Argentina whose cultural identity was shaped by local history, geography, and demography, as well as to aspects of their customs. In the Argentine context, *criollo* can be applied to urban and rural groups, elite and non-elite populations, with varying connotations. Culturally, *criollo* often refers to aspects of gaucho or rural life in Argentina and to values drawn from this context representing native traditions and national culture.
3. Gino Germani, *Política y sociedad en una época de transición: de la sociedad tradicional a la sociedad de masas* (Buenos Aires: Paidós, 1962), 179. This and all following translations are mine unless otherwise noted.
4. James R. Scobie, *Argentina: A City and a Nation*, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971), 134.
5. First published in 1845, *Facundo* was fully titled *Civilización y barbarie o vida de Juan Facundo Quiroga*. Compare the English translation by Mary Mann, *Life in the Argentine Republic in the Days of the Tyrants, or, Civilization and Barbarism* (New York: Collier Books, 1961).
6. Juan Bautista Alberdi, *Bases y puntos de partida para la organización política de la República Argentina*, 2d ed. (Buenos Aires: Eudeba, 1984), 60–62, 67.
7. Richard W. Slatta, *Gauchos and the Vanishing Frontier* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983), 186–88.
8. Scobie, *Argentina: City and Nation*, 33, 134.
9. Julio Mafud, *Psicología de la viveza criolla: contribuciones para una interpretación de la realidad social argentina y americana*, 5th ed. (Buenos Aires: Americalee, 1973), 54–55.
10. See Slatta, *Gauchos and the Vanishing Frontier*, 168.
11. Ricardo Rodríguez Molas, *Historia social del gaucho* (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Marú, 1968), 48–49.
12. Slatta, *Gauchos and the Vanishing Frontier*, 180–92; and Madaline Wallis Nichols, *The Gaucho* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1942), 58–63.
13. Felix Coluccio, *Diccionario folklórico argentino*, vol. 1 (Buenos Aires: Luis Lasserre, 1964); and Mariabo G. Bosch, *Historia de los orígenes del teatro nacional argentino y la época de Pablo Podestá*, preliminary study by Edmundo Guibourg (Buenos Aires: Talleres Gráficos Argentinos L. J. Rosso, 1929; reprint, Buenos Aires: Solar/Hachette, 1969), 92–94.
14. For a brief introduction to gauchesque literature, see Edward Larocque Tinker, *Life and Literature of the Pampas* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1961).
15. Among the most celebrated poets of gauchesque literature are Bartolomé Hidalgo (1788–1822), known for his *Diálogos* and *Cielitos patrióticos*; Hilario Ascasubi (1807–1875), author of *Paulino Lucero*, *Aniceto el Gallo*, and *Santos Vega* (or *Los mellizos e la flor*); Estanislao del Campo (1834–1880), who wrote *Fausto*; and of course, José Hernández (1834–1886), creator of *Martín Fierro*.
16. Instead, *Don Segundo Sombra*, by Ricardo Güiraldes, became the apogee of the appropriation of the gaucho myth by right-wing nationalist ideology.
17. Nichols, *Gaucho*, 60.
18. See Raúl H. Castagnino, *El circo criollo: datos y documentos para su historias, 1757–1924* (Buenos Aires: Lajouane, 1953).
19. Eduardo Gutiérrez and José Podestá, *Juan Moreira*, Sección de Documentos, vol. 6, no. 1 (Buenos Aires: Imprenta de la Universidad, 1935). The appendix gives a detailed version of how the first staging of *Moreira* came about (43–58).
20. Gutiérrez and Podestá, *Juan Moreira*, 54–57; and Livio Ponce, *El circo criollo* (Buenos Aires: Centro Editor de América Latina, 1971), 29. Many versions of the play followed the original performance, including a versed rendition written by the well-known sainete author Alberto Vacarezza. For a history of the origins and evolution

- of the Juan Moreira drama, see Bosch, *Historia de los orígenes del teatro nacional*, and Vicente Rossi, *Teatro nacional rioplatense*, preliminary study by J. A. de Diego, (1910; reprint, Buenos Aires: Solar/Hachette, 1969).
21. José Podestá, *Medio siglo de farándula* (Córdoba: Río de la Plata, 1930), 62–63.
 22. Pablo Raffetto, for example, was one of the well-known foreign actors who repeatedly played the role of Cocoliche in the *Moreira* play. See Ponce, *El circo criollo*, 32–33.
 23. Podestá, *Medio siglo de farándula*, 63. Philologist José Gobello has noted that Cocoliche seemed to be an unlikely Italian surname, considering Cocoliccio more probable. After lecturing on this subject in La Plata, Gobello had the apparent discrepancy confirmed by a woman who approached him to verify the source of the original character and term. She told him, “What you say is in fact right. The man you mentioned [Antonio, the hired hand] was a relative of mine.” She then produced for Gobello a personal document bearing her last name—Cocoliccio. Interview with José Gobello, Academia Porteña del Lunfardo, Buenos Aires, July 1979; and José Gobello, *Diccionario lunfardo* (Buenos Aires: A. Peña Lillo, 1976), 48–49.
 24. Gobello, *Diccionario lunfardo*, 48–49; Beatriz Lavandera, s.v. “cocoliche” in *Diccionario de ciencias sociales* (Madrid: UNESCO, 1974), 429.
 25. See for example, Domingo F. Casadeval, *La evolución de la Argentina vista por el teatro nacional* (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Culturales Argentinas, 1965), 49–60.
 26. José Hernández, *The Gaucho Martín Fierro: El gaucho Martín Fierro* (Buenos Aires: Instituto Cultural Walter Owen, 1967), 57.
 27. José Hernández, *The Gaucho Martín Fierro*, trans. by Frank G. Carrino, Alberto J. Carlos, and Norman Mangouni (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1974), 95, n. 32.
 28. *Ibid.*, 40.
 29. José Hernández, *Martín Fierro*, 7th ed., preliminary study and notes by Carlos Alberto Leguizamón, ed. by María Hortensia Lacau (Buenos Aires: Kapelusz, 1965), 35, n. 864.
 30. Compare Roger D. Abrahams, *The Man-of-Words in the West Indies: Performance and the Emergence of Creole Culture* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983).
 31. Ismael Moya, *Didáctica del folklore*, 3rd ed. (Buenos Aires: Compañía General Fabril, 1972), 80. Fieldwork observation in 1979 and 1984.
 32. *Ibid.*, 80, 85.
 33. Enrique H. Puccia, *Breve historia del carnaval porteño*, Cuadernos de Buenos Aires, no. 46 (Buenos Aires: Municipalidad de la Ciudad de Buenos Aires, 1974), 58.
 34. *Ibid.*
 35. I am most indebted to Mr. Orestes Vaggi, whose outstanding collection of carnival photographs and materials revealed to me the carnivalesque appearance of Cocoliche during my 1979 and 1984 visits to Buenos Aires. I am especially grateful for his generous gift of the Cocoliche photograph reproduced here.
 36. See Fernando O. Assunção, *Pilchas criollas: usos y costumbres del gaucho*, 1st rev. ed. (Montevideo: Ediciones Master Fer, 1979). Traditional gaucho wear is illustrated here with detailed explanations of terminology and use.
 37. Ernesto Quesada, *El “criollismo” en la literatura argentina* (Buenos Aires: Coni Hermanos, 1902), 53.
 38. *Ibid.* For examples of Cocoliche *relaciones* and other verses, see 58–59.
 39. To my knowledge, no study exists of the possible Italian traditional influences on these verbal art forms. Indeed, such an investigation would prove most informative in understanding Italo-Argentine expressive forms.
 40. Rodríguez Molas, *Historia social del gaucho*, 497.
 41. Nichols, *Gaucho*, 62.
 42. For example, Giovanni Meo Zilio, the foremost scholar of Cocoliche, has described it extensively as a language of transition. Keith Whinnom writes of it as an example of secondary hybridization. Ian Hancock included it in his world map and list of pidgin and creole languages. For a thorough survey of linguistic studies of Cocoliche, see these works: Renata Donghi de Halperin, “Contribución al estudio del italianismo en la República Argentina,” *Cuaderno* of the Instituto de Filología 1 (1925):183–98;

- also her article "Los italianos y la lengua de los argentinos," *Quaderni Ibero-Americani* 3 (1958):446–49; William J. Entwistle, *The Spanish Language* (2nd ed., London: Faber and Faber, 1969), 274–75; María Beatriz Fontanella de Weinberg, "Algunos aspectos de la asimilación lingüística de la población inmigratoria en la Argentina," *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* 18 (1974):5–36; Rudolf Grossmann, *Mitteilungen und Abhandlungen aus dem Gebiet der Romanischen Philologie* (Hamburg: Seminar für Romanische Sprachen und Kultur, 1926), especially chaps. 4 and 6; Ian F. Hancock, "A Survey of the Pidgins and Creoles of the World," in *Pidginization and Creolization of Languages*, ed. by Dell Hymes (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1971), 509–23; Beatriz Lavandera, s.v. "cocoliche" in *Diccionario de ciencias sociales*, 429–30; Almanzor Medina and Vicente Rossi, "Supuesta contribución al estudio del italianismo en la Argentina," *Folleto Lenguaraces* 4 (1928); Giovanni Meo Zilio, "Notas de fonología y auto-fonodidáctica italo-hispánica," *Anales del Instituto de Profesores Artigas* 2 (1957):83ff.; Giovanni Meo Zilio, "Alcune tendenze sintattiche e stilistiche dello spagnolo medio rioplatense," *Quaderni Ibero-Americani* 22 (1958):417–27; Giovanni Meo Zilio, "El 'cocoliche' rioplatense," *Boletín de Filología* 16 (1964):61–119 (this article is a translation and amalgamation of a series of articles published in Italian in *Lingua Nostra* in Florence between 1955 and 1956); Giovanni Meo Zilio, "Italianismos generales en el español rioplatense," *Thesaurus* 20, no. 1 (1965):68–119; Giovanni Meo Zilio, "Italianismos meridionales en el español rioplatense," *Boletín de Filología* 17 (1965):225–35; Giovanni Meo Zilio, "Notas de español americano," *Quaderni Iberoamericani* 31 (1965):411–28; Giovanni Meo Zilio and Ettore Rossi, *El elemento italiano en el habla de Buenos Aires y Montevideo*, vol. 1 (Florence: Valmartina Editore, 1970); Julio Ricci, "The Influence of Locally Spoken Italian Dialects on River Plate Spanish," *Forum Italicum* 1 (1967):48–59; A. Rosell, *Cocoliche* (Montevideo: Distribuidora Ibana, 1970); Max Leopold Wagner, "Review of Grossmann (1926) and Donghi de Halperin (1925)," *Revista de Filología Española* 15 (1928):192–96; Keith Whinnom, "Linguistic Hybridization and the 'Special Case' of Pidgins and Creoles," in Hymes, *Pidginization*, 91–115.
43. Dell Hymes, "The Contributions of Folklore to Sociolinguistic Research," in *Toward New Perspectives in Folklore*, ed. by Américo Paredes and Richard Bauman (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1971), 42–50.
 44. Although definitions of pidgins or creoles vary somewhat among linguists, Loreto Todd's summary serves as a fair reference: "A pidgin is a marginal language which arises to fulfill certain restricted communication needs among people who have no common language." For a more detailed explanation, see Loreto Todd, *Pidgins and Creoles* (Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1974), 1–11.
 45. Whinnom, "Linguistic Hybridization," 97; Lavandera, *Diccionario de ciencias sociales*, 430; Fontanella de Weinberg, "Asimilación lingüística," 16, 32–33, n. 15.
 46. Although this description may fit any language, there is no proposed "standard" grammar or orthography, of Cocoliche.
 47. Whinnom, "Linguistic Hybridization," 111, 104–5.
 48. Meo Zilio, "El 'cocoliche' rioplatense," 62, emphasis in original.
 49. *Ibid.*
 50. *Ibid.*, 62–64.
 51. One possible exception may be Fragnol (the "mixture" of French and Spanish). See André Rigaud, "Le Fragnol," *Vie et Langue* 83 (1959):96–99. Fragnol was not as widespread as Cocoliche, however, and did not achieve the same cultural impact or symbolic importance in Argentina as Cocoliche.
 52. For example, when I asked José Gobello at the Academia Porteña del Lunfardo for references on cocoliche, he responded with this note: "About cocoliche, I remind you that in 'El amor de la estancia' there's an example of Spanish (castellano)/Portuguese cocoliche; in 'El sargento Palma,' by Martín Coronado, an example of Spanish (castellano)/French cocoliche, and in 'Con los 'Nueve',' by Felix Lima, various examples of Spanish (castellano)/ Yiddish (valesco)." Personal correspondence, dated Buenos Aires, 1984 (my translation).
 53. See Fontanella de Weinberg, "Asimilación lingüística," 14–20.

54. *Ibid.*, 16; James R. Scobie, *Buenos Aires: Plaza to Suburb, 1870–1910* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974), 200–201; Scobie, *Argentina: City and Nation*, 192.
55. A similar expressive form known as *literatura giacumina*, also existed concurrently with *literatura cocoliche*. This “genre” was named after *Giacumina*, the main character in the story-play *Los amores de Giacumina*, first published in 1886. See also Ramón Romero’s *Los amores de Giacumina, escrita per il hicos dil duorio de la Fundita dil Pacarito* (1909: n.p., n.p.); Agustín Fontanella, *Los amores de Giacumina: sainete cómico en un acto y cinco cuadros* (Buenos Aires: Editor Salvador Matera, 1906). For a discussion of this genre and term, see Vicente Rossi, *Teatro nacional rioplatense: contribución a su análisis y a su historia*, foreword by J. A. de Diego (Buenos Aires: Solar/Hachette, 1969), 128–30; Luis Soler Cañas, “Literatura ‘cocoliche,’ literatura ‘giacumina,’” *La Capital* (Rosario), 19 Dec. 1981, p. 5; Luis Soler Cañas, “La curiosa y efímera literatura ‘giacumina,’” *El Nacional*, 26 Apr. 1959; and Juan José de Urquiza, “Martiniano Leguizamón,” *La Nación* (Buenos Aires), 24 Feb. 1963, p. 2.
56. Quesada, “El criollismo,” 58, 59 n. 1. Note that the series title is *Biblioteca Criolla*.
57. Enrique Horacio Puccia, *El Buenos Aires de Angel G. Villoldo (1860 . . . 1919)* (Buenos Aires: n.p., 1976), 347–48.
58. For a history of this genre, see Blas Raúl Gallo, *Historia del sainete nacional* (Buenos Aires: Buenos Aires Leyendo, 1970).
59. For example, the Pasatiempo Theater, which had been divided into three sections with each offering a one-act play for fifty centavos, led all Buenos Aires theaters with fifty thousand tickets sold in one month. The San Martín sold forty-three thousand, the Politeama thirty-eight thousand, the Opera thirty-six thousand, and the Variedades twenty-one thousand. This popularity and success was summarized as “the triumph of the chicken coops over the golden cages of canaries and nightingales.” See Judith Evans, “Setting the Stage for Struggle: Popular Theater in Buenos Aires, 1890–1914,” in *Radical History Review* 21 (1979):51; and Gallo, *Historia del sainete*, 72.
60. See Evans, “Setting the Stage,” 52–59.
61. See Susana Marco, Abel Posadas, Marta Speroni, and Griselda Vignolo, *Teoría del género chico criollo* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Universitaria de Buenos Aires, 1974); Gallo, *Historia del sainete*; and Rossi, *Teatro nacional rioplatense*, 120–32.
62. Marco et al., *Teoría del género chico criollo*, 419.
63. *Ibid.*, 390.
64. Each word is a slang term for *woman* that corresponds roughly to such English slang as *broad*, *article*, *package*, *chick*, *cookie*, *choice bit of calico*, and *dish*. Amusingly, when Aberastury uses *mosaico* (a manipulation of the Spanish word *moza* meaning young woman), he means *broad*, *girlie*, or *babe*. But when Don Antonio picks up *mosaico* a few lines later, he understands only the literal meaning of the word *play* (*mosaico* meaning *floortile* or *brick*), and he goes on to list irrelevant and inappropriate nouns like *zaguán* (hallway) and *escopeta* (shotgun), foolishly assuming that anything goes.
65. Cited in Rosell, *Cocoliche*, 114–16.
66. See José Gobello, *Vieja y nueva lunfardía* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Freeland, 1964), 36–47.
67. Cited in Rosell, *Cocoliche*, 95.
68. Meo Zilio, “El ‘cocoliche’ rioplatense,” 114.
69. Cited in Quesada, “El criollismo,” 59–60.
70. Cited in Rosell, *Cocoliche*, 74–76.
71. Nicasio Perera San Martín, “El cocoliche en el teatro de Florencio Sánchez,” Comunicación al Vº Congreso de la Asociación Internacional de Hispanistas, Bordeaux, 1974, *Bulletin Hispanique* (1975):108–22.
72. Florencio Sánchez, *La gringa*, 3rd ed., with an introduction by Jorge Raúl Lafforgue (Buenos Aires: Editorial Huemul, 1970), 82, 78, 69.
73. *Ibid.*, 99.
74. The “image” or shadow of *Cocoliche* is sometimes recalled in various areas of contemporary Argentine culture. I am told, for example, that in the smash *telenovela Rosa de lejos*, Doña Pierina, a *cocoliche*-speaking *matrona de barrio* represents one of

COCOLICHE AMONG ITALIANS AND ARGENTINES

the ideological poles of the plot. Roberto Cossa's *La nona* also offers a renewed version of this cultural type. Similarly, Cocolichesque figures continue to appear routinely in the novel.

75. Germani, *Política y sociedad*, 209.
76. Scobie, *Argentina: City and Nation*, 192.