

A Successful Border Crossing in *Chicken Run*

Introduction

In the animated film *Chicken Run*, we learn the story of an entire hen farm trying to escape. The leaders of this escape are the co-protagonist of Ginger, a hen and Rocky, a rooster. I chose to explore the film in relation to the U.S.-Mexico border crossing experience as well as how the characters and the U.S. are represented. When watching the film, the audience witness criticism of the U.S. government, however, there are still details that glorify the U.S. through the character of Rocky. Throughout this paper I build on the possibility of the entire hen farm being general representations of Mexican migrants. With this said, my approach is to explore the content of *Chicken Run* in relation to the persistent paranoia that the U.S. government has had historically towards immigrants. Paranoia exists in spaces where it seems like the U.S. government is unable to control big waves of migration¹. In multiple scenes of the film the hens pursue to flee from their heavily patrolled farm, these imagery mirrors the migrant experience of crossing the heavily militarized U.S.-Mexico border. When critically watching *Chicken Run*, we can notice an engagement in the U.S.-Mexico Border discourse created through the use of the hen and rooster characters as human representors rather than their animal portrayals given their accents, dialogue and actions.

I find it significant to mention that this film has a global viewing audience since Dreamworks is an international company, therefore my interpretation is just one of the many possible. I will also mention the character of Rocky as a U.S. American, in order to have an approach where U.S. citizenship is not the only factor validating being an “American”. I pursued

¹ Raymond Michalowski, “Border Militarization and Migrant Suffering: A Case of Transnational Social Injury.”, 68.

this research topic because this is not the first time a children's film holds a discussion about the U.S.-Mexico border. A prior case that allows my arguments to be made is Manuel Martín-Rodríguez's article about *Lion King* in "Hyenas in the Pride Lands: Latinos /as an Immigration in Disney's *Lion King*". In his article it is argued that a border is created through having two locations that are opposite². In *Chicken Run* this is reflected when the audience is introduced to the scenery of a farm filled with dirt, desert-like characteristics, fields of mud and a life-less environment overall. The audience sees a clear depiction of the farm fences and barbed wire separating the chickens from the free landscape full of grass. These exaggerated opposite landscapes allow us to separate the land as two different places. For the purpose of continuing my analysis, I assigned the farm to serve as a symbolic representation of a borderland space. The green landscape on the other side of the fence is used to glorify the United States as always being *the side with the greener grass*. Before continuing with my analysis, it is important for me to state that the scenes I will touch upon are not written in chronological order within the timeline of the film but instead the scenes are organized based on theme.

Chicken Run Plot

The film begins with a night scene that provides the audience context that the location is a chicken farm. The characters of the film include the hen egg producers, one rooster inside the farm, and two human farmers. The introduction scenes repeatedly demonstrate the co-protagonist Ginger attempting to escape, along with her chicken colleagues, but failing at every attempt. Ginger and the rest of the hens live a plain life of egg producing and when they don't meet the farmers expected quotas then the hen is executed. Given this situation, Ginger's hopes and

² Martín-Rodríguez, Manuel. "Hyenas in the Pride Lands: Latino /as and Immigration in Disney's *Lion King*.", 53.

dreams are to escape the farm with her friends to obtain freedom and control of her life. The group of friends includes three main chicken supporting roles under the names Mac, Babs, Bunty, and a British Rooster named Fowler. The previous three named chickens are Ginger's partners in scheming the escapes while Fowler, on many occasions throughout the film, takes on the role of a father figure . The escape process is portrayed as impossible until the appearance of a new character. The audience is then introduced to the other co-protagonist Rocky, a U.S. American Rooster. With his appearance comes scheming, planning and pursuing freedom by trying to escape the farm once more. Rocky, miraculously falling from the sky, becomes a savior to the chickens and complicates Ginger's leadership role to her chicken community. Rocky attempts to guide the chicken to freedom but fails as he had promised to teach them how to fly over the fence, an impossible reality for the chicken. This last failed attempt pushes Ginger and the other chicken to work harder than ever, leading them to build a plane in which they will escape successfully.

Hens Representing Mexican Migrants

The only animals that appear in *Chicken Run* are chickens and roosters. To be able to give a race, ethnicity and or nationality to a chicken, we must humanize their traits through Anthropomorphism. For example, the concept of anthropomorphism which is “seeing the human in non-human forms and events”³ allows me to argue that they are not just chickens. The film creators gave the chicken characters human personalities and human decision-making skills detaching them from their realistic animal traits. By having animals who dress like humans and that don't act like their real animal presentation reinforces the audiences to see the characters

³ Jessica Birthisel, “How Body, Heterosexuality and Patriarchal Entanglements Mark Non-Human Characters As Male in Cgi-Animated Children's Films”, 341.

through a humanistic lense. Accents are also a keyway of connecting these animated characters to be more human-like rather than the practical nature of who they are⁴. Viewing and analyzing the hens and roosters through their human-like traits is unavoidable because the film creators assigned these characters to have prominent human appearances and human voices.

The choice of animal, being hens and roosters, have significant cultural context and pre-existing stereotypes. Companies like Disney contributed to this cultural context attached to stereotypes of chickens and representing Mexicans. The choice of animal is an interesting one that helps support the claim that these animals are potential representations of Mexican migrants. I make this argument by reflecting on an old U.S. animated film that has used roosters. The use of a rooster has been used to represent Mexicans and we see it in the Disney film *The Three Caballeros*, released in 1945, with their use of Panchito the rooster. *Chicken Run* builds on this history of Mexican representation.

I will emphasize that *Coyotes*, also known as human smugglers in the U.S.-Mexico border are also referred to as *Polleros* (Aquino 2012). A *pollero* in Spanish is a name used to describe someone who works with chickens by raising them. This Mexican/Latinx context of a pollero contributes to why the hens make more sense of representing Mexican Migrants over the British identity they are meant to have in the film. In this film we witness a multi-layer cultural product of the chickens' identity. Although the film creators have attempted to give the hens a British persona through their British accents, the chickens actually better embody the representation Mexican migrants because of their hardships and lived experiences.

The presence of Mexican culture exists in this film when we look at the historical context

⁴ Birthisel, "How Body, Heterosexuality and Patriarchal Entanglements Mark Non-Human Characters", 341.

of the legality of cockfighting. Through the presence of Mexican culture, those in the audience who share this culture can now see themselves as those characters in the film. Cockfighting is mentioned during a scene between Fowler and Rocky who are the only two roosters of the film. During a heated argument between the two roosters Rocky's response is "cockfighting is illegal where I came from"⁵. This dialogue helped me address that Rocky's statement implies that Fowler's position, as "the other", is a rooster originating from a place where it is a tradition and legal to have cockfights. What Rocky implied is a misrepresentation of information since cockfighting is illegal both in the U.S. and in the U.K.— Rocky's accusation to Fowler does not correlate with Fowler's visual U.K. national identity in the film. By having mentioned the culture of cockfighting, the creators of the film brought up a connection to Mexican context. Cockfighting is legal in Mexico and commonly practiced, having this in mind not only are the hens representation of Mexican migrants but so is Fowler within this cockfighting context. The film creators continue to build on a Mexican representation for the characters through the tradition of cockfighting. In connection to the hens of the film, whose main goal is to escape, Fowler shares the same goal. Now that we can place Fowler in a Mexican identity then we can also perceive him as a Mexican migrant who at the end of the film migrates and escapes with the rest of the hens.

Character Dynamic

There are three main categories in the characters in *Chicken Run*: the hens, the roosters and the humans. The humans are Mrs. Tweedy and Mr. Tweedy, who are the owners of the farm. The egg laying chickens are a source of income for the two farmers that play the role of the

⁵ Nick Park and Peter Lord, *Chicken Run*, August 10, 2000; USA: DreamWorks, Movie.

patrol. The hens are an allegory for the Mexican migrants as they constantly interact with the farmers and with the rooster characters with migration-themed dialogue. Fowler's role is to be in charge of the hen's behavior while Rocky's role is of the white savior. Rocky is interestingly unique in that he fluctuates between being a human smuggler and the embodiment of a United States patriot. In regard to Mr. Tweedy, he embodies the role of being the farm's border patrol and his responsibility is to ensure no hens escape.

Mrs. Tweedy and Mr. Tweedy showcase their governmental power in the twelfth minute into the film, as they are eating one of the hens. This scene allows Mr. and Mrs. Tweedy's to exercise their control over the hens' well-being and fate. This power relation is parallel to how the U.S. government controls the mobility and life experiences of Mexican migrants by having a border patrol. In this scene we see death not as a natural process but as a decision of Mr. and Mrs. Tweedy's. In the case of the U.S. government and the border patrol there are traumatic histories on how they utilize their power to decide the life or death fate of migrants. Through parallel comparison, we become aware of the authority, power, and exploitation that governments have over migrant bodies.

Within the relationship of the hens and roosters, Rocky is purposely made different. He is the only chicken with an American identity and wears a cape with the U.S. flag; his yellow feathering hints that he is blonde. Both of these features are prominent characteristics that convert Rocky into a patriotic white male. Rocky continues to embody an American patriotic identity as the hens consistently refer to him as their only hope of freedom, access to the free land and as brave during the last scene when he helps all the hens escape. Rocky's image is created by his wearing of an American flag and as an embodiment to the lyrics of The Star-Spangled Banner. We cannot see the hen characters as having white ethnic backgrounds but instead through the

colors of their animation. Unlike the rest of the characters, the hens are animated to be different shades of brown. Even if this animation decision was unintentional the hens are still *othered* (made different) through their color.

Another instance where the chicken is *othered* is when Mac, the most intellectual chicken, speaks to Rocky. Rocky claims that he cannot understand her and during an argumentative scene he states, “Was that English?”⁶. Mac is the only hen in the film with a deep Scottish accent. Some can argue that this is a joke referring to Rocky not understanding her intellectual manner, but I argue that this dialogue holds deeper significance. Rocky is referring to her strong accent as well since Mac is the only one whose accent is the most prominent and different. I connect Rocky’s dialogue to the phrase “Speak English!”, a phrase commonly used to marginalize minorities who either do not speak English or speak it with a notable accent. By including such clashes in communication the audience can notice that Rocky accepts an American accent as the correct way to speak English. The example in this scene is tied to the historical discourse of migrants being questioned and pointed out for their way of speaking. To add another reason to why the hens continue being a representation of Mexicans; Mac’s experience of being shamed for her accent, reflects the immigrant populations that are *othered* by American society for the simple reasons of pronunciation.

The First Scene

The protagonist in this film is Ginger, she is the hen who leads the rest in attempting to escape the farm as she aspires towards freedom. In this first scene we see Ginger having agency by escaping the farm by digging a hole under the fence. As she gets out successfully, but the others do not, the dogs become aware of her escape. Ginger is then chased around the farm by the

⁶ Nick Park and Peter Lord, *Chicken Run*, 2000.

dogs who have obviously been trained to stop these hens from leaving. When connecting the border crossing experience we can then see how Ginger represents Mexican women and makes migration not only appear as a male situation. Ginger experiences plenty of emotions as each of her attempts are shown to fail and only place her in solitary confinement. The narrative of attempting to cross the border and being unsuccessful multiple times is a shared experience for many migrants. In Alejandra Aquino Moreschi's work, "Cruzando La Frontera: Experiencias Desde Los Márgenes", we learn about the experience of a Mexican women migrant that has attempted to cross the border multiple times during 1999, a year before *Chicken Run* was released. The women's experience is as following:

"Corría 1999 y era la primera vez que doña Mati intentaba pasar al otro lado, se encontraba sola en Tijuana, completamente desanimada, con mucho miedo porque los agentes de migración ya la habían detenido tres veces y mantenido incomunicada en centro de detención."

"Ongoing 1999, it was the first time that doña Mati attempted to cross over to the other side of the border, she found herself alone in Tijuana, completely discouraged, with a lot of fear because the border patrol had already detained her three times and maintained isolated within the detention center."⁷

The experience of Ginger is similar to the lived-experience of doña Mati. Both attempted to cross multiple times and both had encounterments with the authority, in the case of Ginger she was punished by the farmers and Doña Mati was taken by border patrol agents. One last significant sharing between Ginger and doña Mati is that both felt lonely, scared, and hopeless. Doña Mati's

⁷ Alejandra Aquino Moreschi, "Cruzando La Frontera: Experiencias Desde Los Márgenes",14; My translation.

lived experience, similar to the situation of other women Mexican migrants, is what allows to draw a parallel between Ginger's plot development to a Mexican migrant's process crossing the U.S.-Mexico border.

When watching the first scene, I was reminded of the depictions of crossing the U.S.-Mexico border in the film *Desierto*, released in 2016. As simple as comparing the release date we can interpret plenty of the migration experience as a collective experience. Even though this film was released 16 years after *Chicken Run*, they both share the dog chasing scene that allows me to make a comparison. In *Desierto*, we have a U.S. white male, possibly militia member, trying to hunt down undocumented immigrants at the U.S.-Mexico border.⁸ Situations like these are not fictional as Raymond Michalowski describes it to be “nighttime watches with anti-immigration Minutemen as they [peer] into the desert night ‘hunting’ for undocumented migrants”⁹. In *Desierto* the white male is successful in tracking, chasing and attacking immigrants because of his trained dog.¹⁰ These *Desierto* scenes mirror Ginger's attempt of running away from the dogs that were trained by the Tweedy's with the shared goal of keeping control of bodies. The connection between *Chicken Run* and *Desierto* demonstrate the lived experiences that film continues to discuss in regard to the U.S.-Mexico border narrative.

A Militarized Border

The film begins with a night scene, and the first object we see is barbed wire. Which to some audiences, barbed wire represents a border that physically separates two different sides. As the scene progresses, we get to see the chicken cages and the fences that are set up in a style

⁸ Jonas Cuaron, *Desierto*, October 14, 2016; Movie.

⁹ Michalowski, “Border Militarization and Migrant Suffering”, 63.

¹⁰ Jonas Cuaron, *Desierto*, 2016

similar to the set up of border detention centers. It is this introduction that reflects the farm as a militarized border. With an established representation of the U.S.-Mexico border: we can further this discussion by analyzing how the farm was heavily militarized. During the 1990s the U.S. government purposely militarized its borders. Michalowski argues that the reason is because “the intentional results of border militarization strategies [are] designed to force migrants away from safer routes and toward more dangerous ones”¹¹. One important scene is when the hens decided it was best to let go of their mission to escape and accept that they are just going to die trying. We realize this when Babs, one of the hens, knits a rope that would serve to hang herself. This imagery creates a violent presentation of the border crossing experience. Prior to the 1980’s crossing the border was not the deadly experience it started to become as time got closer to the years of the 1990’s.¹² It sends a message that all who try to cross the border will bring death upon themselves. These scenes reflect how the militarization of the border puts migrants in extreme/deadly situations.

In *Chicken Run*, one of the major parts of the plot was Mrs. Tweedy’s decision to modernize by getting a pie making machine that will kill her hens. Mrs. Tweedy was not able to fix her economic failure of the farm by relying on egg laying, so she augmented her technology and repurposed her farm and allowed her to profit as much as possible. I connect Mrs. Tweedy’s new machines with the advancement of technology in the U.S.-Mexico border. Jardine describes Operation Gatekeeper as “[enhancing] the U.S. - Mexico boundary in a material sense by increasing the number of U.S. Border Patrol agents and augmenting the amount of technology”¹³. When the U.S. government executed Operation Gatekeeper, it enhanced the U.S. control of the

¹¹ Michalowski, “Border Militarization and Migrant Suffering”, 66.

¹² Aquino Moreschi, “Cruzando La Frontera: Experiencias Desde Los Márgenes”, 9.

¹³ Jardine, Matthew, “Operation Gatekeeper” *Peace Review* v. 10 (no. 3), 329.

border. Mrs. Tweedy's farm, under this context, becomes a nation with borders; she controls the border patrol, lays the law and is responsible for the farm's economic status. Mrs. Tweedy's aspirations are to be economically successful like how the U.S. saw profitable gain by being the main executor of control for the border. Jardine emphasizes, "[the border] now has an economy larger than that of Poland"¹⁴. Being aware of the magnitude of the economic profit of the U.S.-Mexico border, we can see the parallel of Mrs. Tweedy's greedy dreams of becoming rich off the lives of her hens.

Adding to what has already been discussed, having a militarized border is typically reinforced by the media as the only way a nation can remain secure and safe. *Chicken Run* reinforces the concept of a militarized border. Referring back to Martin-Rodriguez's article: "Latinos /as and Immigration in Disney's *Lion King*" he states:

"the fictional/filmic militarized border that *The Lion King* presents is nothing but a reflection of the U.S.-Mexico border area from the late 1970s to that of our days, in which the immigrant as enemy is often imagined as part of an (in)visible army ready to invade the United States"¹⁵

What is being described here about *The Lion King* perfectly addresses the issues present in *Chicken Run*. The chickens are presented as a potential army the moment Fowler can treat them as his military trainees and line them up perfectly. In addition, Fowler reminds the chickens and the audience that he is someone who has a military background. Later, in the movie we have a scene of Rocky physically training the hens. This scene appears correlated with the hyena army scene in *The Lion King* in which Martin-Rodriguez refers to. In *Chicken Run* we see a mass of

¹⁴ Ibid., 334

¹⁵ Manuel, "Hyenas in the Pride Lands: Latinos /as and Immigration in Disney's *Lion King*", 57.

hens physically training as if they were an army. This army scene plays with the idea of the invasion being visible and invisible. When the hens train, they are only visible to Mr. Tweedy who becomes paranoid that the hens are organizing and taking over the farm. Mr. Tweedy addresses his concerns of paranoia to Mrs. Tweedy, and this is when the film criticizes the U.S. The film captures Mrs. Tweedy as failing to address the paranoia of Mr. Tweedy. The film implies the conclusion of not paying attention when her farm/nation was being destroyed by the hens. In connection to the migration discussion the film reveals about how the U.S. government's paranoia is all about the fears of immigrants *destroying* the nation.

Context on the U.S.-Mexico Border

The historical context is important to be able to understand why *Chicken Run* is potentially a U.S.-Mexico border film. This film was made in a moment where Mexican migrants made up a big percentage of all immigrants. There are a lot of correlations between what had occurred in the decade prior, the 90's, and the decade after the release of the film, the 2000's. According to the Pew Research Center, "Immigration grew sharply during the rapid economic and job expansion of the 1990s"¹⁶. The research stated that in the years of 1999 and 2000 immigration levels had peaked¹⁷. This is significant to my analysis because of the demographic influx of migrants; the film was created during a time where immigration in the U.S. was growing. As a result, the political climate of the time could have made an influence in the execution of *Chicken Run*. Pew Research Center noted that "Mexico represents by far the largest source of immigrants and is sending about 400,000 migrants each year"¹⁸. The research article

¹⁶ Pew Research Center: Hispanic Trends, ed. "Rise, Peak and Decline: Trends in U.S. Immigration 1992 – 2004." Pew Research Center, 1

¹⁷ Ibid., 1

¹⁸ Ibid., 4

suggests that the push factor for immigration was not as major as the pull factor, the pull factor was the job opportunities available¹⁹. Emphasizing the connection to Ginger's aspiration to leave the farm and better herself through freedom. There is a correlation that exists here in the motives of the Mexican migrants and Ginger to emigrate. Through this evidence we concluded that *Chicken Run* is addressing the waves of Mexican migration.

It is significant to consider the history of immigration policy when engaging in topics of immigrant. In order to build Rocky's presentation as a part smuggler we have to see real case studies where smugglers have been key to the migration process. In "Operation Gatekeeper" by Matthew Jardine he states that, "migrants [were] actually having greater success in crossing than before 'Gatekeeper', the operation has led unauthorized migrants to rely increasingly on professional smugglers."²⁰ As the border was becoming more militarized through Operation Gatekeeper human smugglers were in high demand. This militarization of Operation Gatekeeper calls for the demand of human smugglers, just how Rocky is portrayed in relation to being a smuggler to the hens. In Jardine's statement he recognizes that the smugglers are professional in their field. Parallel to this is in minute nineteen of the film in which the hens see Rocky as a "professional flyer." Due to all of Ginger's failed attempts to escape, her next big answer was to fly over the fence. Leaving Rocky, the professional flyer, to become the key smuggler. Chickens cannot physically fly making the term symbolic, not only representing freedom but also that flying becoming successful border crossing. The hens now depend on Rocky, their professional smuggler, to help them fly out of the farm and cross the border.

In "Border Militarization and Migrant Suffering: A Case of Transnational Social Injury.",

¹⁹ Ibid., 6

²⁰ Matthew, "Operation Gatekeeper", 333.

by Raymond Michalowski there is an anecdote that has a parallel to one of the final scenes of *Chicken Run*. The anecdote is from 2006 so it was six years after the release of *Chicken Run* but the correlations are still significant. Michalowski states the following:

“[A] border patrol agent described to me his shock when he saw a truck literally ‘fly’ over the border fence”, “what he saw was a truck with a long ramp angled to the height of the fence, nosed into the Mexican side of the barrier” and “the smugglers had driven up the ramp with sufficient speed to vault the fence.”²¹

One of the final scenes of *Chicken Run* consists of a plane that had a large ramp facing the fence in order to escape. One of their challenges was to have the plane gain speed in order to make it over the fence. Eventually they were successful and if one needs to visibly see Michalowski’s anecdote then we can utilize the chicken’s final escape scene. By connecting both scenarios in such a manner there was no doubt that these *coincidences* are not just coincidences but instead reflect the process of the diversity of attempts to cross the border.

A Nation of Liberty

The criticism towards the U.S. in the film was done in a very indirect manner. One of the hunting arguments the film has is that the U.S. heavily idealized. For example, Rocky is portrayed as having a cocky personality, which can also be seen as word play since he is a cock. The first example is when Fowler refers to Rocky as “Pushy Americans”²². It is later seen again when Rocky abandoned the hens and one of the main hen characters states how she doubted that Rocky was American. This is interesting because this implication hints that Americans are not as

²¹ Michalowski, “Border Militarization and Migrant Suffering”, 72.

²² Park, Nick, and Peter Lord, dirs. *Chicken Run*. DreamWorks, 2000.

reliable, committed or honest like the rest of the world imagines. These small details of criticism made me wonder while watching the feel if there was any deeper criticism being made.

Regardless of the film's small criticism towards the U.S. government, the nation is still glorified. This glorification can be found in the politics within the film industry, yet in a film review the analytical standpoint is much more meaningful. In order to hold the propaganda argument that the U.S. is the land of freedom, then glorification of the U.S. must be present in a film. In order to replicate that for this film, Rocky, the only American character, shows patriotism and glorification for his nation as a place of liberty. The first thing we hear Rocky scream is “freedom” and moments later he recites the U.S. national anthem and says, “the land of the free and the home of the brave”²³. To the U.S. American audiences, who may not be critically analyzing the film, they might think of this as a cheesy patriotic scene. There is a joke that occurs right after this dialogue where one of the hens believes that Rocky is referring to Scotland; this is a moment where the U.S. is once more discredited for that nation they perform and claim to be. Not only does Rocky advertise freedom but he also carries his nation’s laws with him when he says, “over in America we have a rule”²⁴. Here we have Rocky glorifying the U.S. by demonstrating that the laws of the U.S. are better than the ones of foreign nations. A migrant narrative has been that the U.S. attracts many immigrants because of the laws of justice and a land where one can be and act freely. This perspective though is one of superiority, and continues to disregard the perspective of immigrant communities and diasporas. In the case of the film Rocky carries this perspective of superiority.

Rocky portrays that because he is an American, he has global freedom. He does this when

²³ Park, Nick, and Peter Lord, dirs. *Chicken Run*. DreamWorks, 2000.

²⁴ Ibid.

he mentions, “I’m a traveler by nature”²⁵. Rocky as an American has mobility while the hens do not have this freedom of movement. Rocky showed his mobility as he easily moved from entering and leaving the farm. The hens lack of ability in their mobility pursues the issue that immigrants deal with as the concept of legality restricts their mobility. When Rocky first entered the farm there were no issues since he flew inside. Then he quickly abandoned the farm by digging a hole under the fence, which the hens had failed doing in the first scene. In the final scene when the hens are about to fail their final escape plan, Rocky appears out of nowhere and jumps over the fence of the farm. This is interesting because it seems like this border plays no restrictions on him meanwhile the hens had spent a tremendous amount of time and effort to escape. Their final escape plan would have failed if they would have not received Rocky’s help. This finally reinforces Rocky’s image as the white savior that the hen’s need in order to have freedom. To put in a parallel position to the historical context of the migration narrative, the U.S. has presented itself through the white savior lens as the nation of liberty.

Closing Scene

In the last scene of the movie we witness the chickens enjoying, relaxing and having a new established community in the paradise Ginger had dreamed about. *Chicken Run* can potentially demonstrate the accomplishment of the American Dream as Ginger makes it to a glorified version of the U.S. and land of the free while assimilating through her marriage with Rocky. This is a plausible conclusion, but I would like to add that even on the very last image the audience gets the invasion element does not disappear at all. The last thing we are presented with is a sign that says, “Bird Sanctuary Keep Out” but the bird has been crossed out and instead says

²⁵ Ibid.

“Chikin”²⁶. The writing of the word chicken in such form infers two different interpretations about the chickens. The first one would be that the chickens are uneducated therefore they don’t know how to spell and when said aloud it assumes a thick Mexican accent. Although it has the purpose of humor, this portrays the hens negatively and as we have argued that they represent Mexican migrants then the interpretations extend as harmful as well. Besides the accented language interpretation and the intended humor in this, it is evident that the chickens invaded and claimed the land that was not theirs. This last scene reflects the paranoia that existed in the U.S. because of Mexican migration seen as a possible invasion. It is interesting to dissect a children’s film to find the deeper meanings and historical context that exist within the details of dialogue, character choice and location. This analysis hopefully causes a ruminating experience that brings other components of the film into further discussion; such as the content that regards the role of gender, which will bring a whole new perspective either far away or in relation to the border-crossing experience.

Conclusion

Ginger and Rocky as protagonist for *Chicken Run*, carry a whole conversation on attitudes about the increase of Mexican migration to the United States during the 1990s. There could be multiple interpretations to this film yet I argue that given the historical context of both the creation and release date that this film does contain details that reflect migration experiences. I reiterate that Ginger as a Mexican migrant woman could only cross the border because of Rocky’s white savior role. Not only does this film contain racial connotations but also participates in patriarchal norms. At moments it is unclear if the British creators of the film are

²⁶ Park, Nick, and Peter Lord, dirs. *Chicken Run*. DreamWorks, 2000.

criticizing or lavishing the United States. Nonetheless, the creators commentate on the rising governmental policy *issues* of increasing Mexican migration by including stereotypical characters along with the migration experience that reflect what real Mexican human migrants were experiencing when they encountered a heavy militarized border. To come to an end, *Chicken Run* is a film in which I urge Mexican children and adults to critically analyze the film when noticing the role that race and the borderland plays, all depending on their own and their families' experience with migrating to the United States.

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