Of Cats and Wogs: ‘Translating’ the Migrant Experience Through 20th century Crónicas in Spanish-Language Newspapers in Australia

Catherine H. Seaton
University of Wollongong
Of Cats and Wogs

‘Translating’ the Migrant Experience Through 20th century Crónicas in Spanish-Language Newspapers in Australia

Catherine H Seaton

Supervisors:

Dr Michael Jacklin & Dr Karen Daly

This thesis is presented in fulfilment of the requirements for the conferral of the degree:

Doctor of Philosophy

This research has been conducted with the support of the Australian Government Research Training Program Scholarship.

The University of Wollongong
School of Arts, English and Media

March 2018
Declaration

I, Catherine Seaton, declare that this thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the conferral of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, from the University of Wollongong, is wholly my own work unless otherwise referenced or acknowledged. This document has not been submitted for qualifications at any other academic institution.

Catherine Seaton
30 March 2018
Abstract

This thesis focuses on a selection of newspaper crónicas published in the Spanish-language migrant press in Australia during the early to mid 1990s. Although published here for decades, crónicas are a form of multicultural writing that remain practically unknown to Australian literary scholarship. Crónicas are frequently written in a humorous style, offering a rich commentary on a variety of aspects of daily life. They voice the experiences and challenges faced by migrants as they adapt to the changed circumstances that accompany relocation.

My dissertation analyses columns by three Hispanic crónica writers, or cronistas: Clara Espinosa, Luis (Lucho) Abarca and Guillermo Hertz, (pseudonymously ‘Woggy Girl’, ‘Blady Woggie’ and ‘El Gato’, respectively). These texts are critiqued through the conceptual lens articulated by Anne Malena, who described migrants as “translated beings” in both literal and metaphorical senses. Through a close reading of the texts and interviews with the cronistas, the themes of language and identity, gender relations and belonging are examined. This study focuses on the role of crónica-writing in the migrant’s journey of translation into the host country and culture. Additionally, this study investigates what these cronistas have to say about the process whereby migrants are successful, or not, in ultimately achieving “translation”.

Self-translation is a constantly evolving process, prone to unpredictable setbacks and obstruction. By showcasing the rich legacy of crónica writing, I argue that this form of literary expression plays a significant role by offering migrant writers and their readers a supportive milieu through which to reconcile their experiences of loss and dislocation, while forging their new Australian identities.
Acknowledgments

During the course of my PhD candidature I have been extremely grateful for the support that I have received on many fronts. First and foremost, my heartfelt thanks go to my principal supervisor, Dr Michael Jacklin, for his patient guidance, unfailing encouragement, and invaluable critical lens. It was a privilege to be the recipient of his outstanding mentorship. I would also like to thank my co-supervisor Dr Karen Daly, whose considered feedback, particularly on Spanish-language related matters, as well as her meticulous attention to detail helped shape this research project. She supported me with enthusiasm and warmth. Professor Wenche Ommundsen joined the supervisory team towards the end of my candidature, and reviewed my final draft. I thank her very much for her insightful comments. I feel that I have had the fortune of enjoying ‘a dream team’ of supervisors, and I am very grateful for this.

I would like to offer special thanks to Clara Espinosa, Luis Abarca and the late Guillermo Hertz, whose crónicas are discussed in this study. All three were keen participants in the interviews and made themselves available for follow-up questions over the course of this research project. I feel honoured to have heard and recorded their reflections on their work. I am also grateful to Galan Onaindia and Tracy Onaindia, grand-son and great grand-daughter of Salvador Torrents, with whom I met in North Queensland. Both made themselves available for interviews and gave very generously of their time and of their family’s history. Bronwyn McBurnie, as Special Collections Librarian at James Cook University, administers the Salvador Torrents’ archive and assisted me greatly in the early stages of my research into Torrents. She facilitated my access to this treasure trove of archival material.

On a personal note, I want to thank most sincerely the following people: my sister Clara, for cheerfully reading and commenting on endless drafts of my work; my ‘study buddy’ Heidi for meeting with me at the Bowral library for regular writing (and moral support) sessions; my eldest son Ruben, who assisted with copy-editing tasks, and my youngest son Charlie, who looked after me with cups of tea. My deepest thanks go to my husband Hugh, who has been immensely supportive of this endeavour from start to finish. He has been a listener and a sounding board, who agreeably stepped in to do much of the domestic heavy lifting during the course of this research project. Most importantly, I thank him for believing that I was up to the task, and for encouraging me to embark on the project in the first place.
Table of Contents

Introduction 6

Chapter 1: Interviewing a Translated Being: Theory and Research Methods 16

Chapter 2: The Crónica: Its origins, characteristics and evolution 31

Chapter 3: From Mataró to Mena Creek: Australia’s First Cronista 51

Chapter 4: On Language and Identity: Communication and the Self 71

Chapter 5: On Gender Relations: Latin Lovers in Australia 92

Chapter 6: On Belonging: A Home in Multicultural Australia 118

Conclusion 144

Works Cited 153
Introduction

Can one misunderstood word spoken in Australian English encapsulate the embarrassment, disempowerment and cultural conflict experienced by a Hispanic migrant in Australia? In a newspaper crónica,¹ or column, entitled “Espikin Inglich” (1991),² published in El Español en Australia, the protagonist is a factory worker known by his fellow Latino co-workers as ‘El Chileno Recortado’ (‘The Little Chilean’). El Chileno takes the opportunity of a lunch-break at work in a Sydney factory to share his dismay following an episode of linguistic misunderstanding between his seven-year-old daughter and himself. He explains to his work friends that “su hija . . . le había faltado el respeto de una manera inaceptable. Que en Australia la consideración a los padres no existía” [“his daughter . . . had demonstrated to him an unacceptable lack of respect, and that in Australia there was no regard for parents”]. The humiliating incident takes place at a parent-teacher meeting, during which El Chileno’s daughter interrupts the conversation, telling her father to “Shut up! Sticky Pig”. El Chileno is disconcerted by both the interruption and the insult, and proceeds to reprimand his daughter emphatically and colourfully in Spanish, in front of the teacher. In response, the child alerts the teacher thus: “Miss Kerry, Miss Kerry, Daddy is saying rude words”, which embarrasses El Chileno even further. Back in the workplace, El Chileno’s colleagues discard all the nicknames that relate to his diminutive size, and instead, start to address him as ‘Chancho Pegajoso’ [‘Sticky Pig’]. It is not until sometime later that El Chileno realises that his daughter was actually using the colloquial Australian expression ‘Sticky Beak’, meaning a nosy or prying person – a mildly pejorative term in stark contrast to the term ‘Sticky Pig’, which so provoked El Chileno’s deep embarrassment and disempowerment.

This crónica was penned by Chilean-born Luis ‘Lucho’ Abarca,³ who used the pseudonym ‘Blady Woggie’, which pairs the Hispanicised version of “bloody” with the pejorative term Wog or Woggie, referring to an “olive-skinned” migrant. Beneath Abarca’s

---

¹ Hereafter ‘crónica’. This study purposely uses the non-italicised version of this term. Italicisation denotes foreignness, and it is my goal to position this genre of creative writing such that its presence as a creative form in Australian literature is normalised and reinforced.

² This crónica was published on 27 Aug. 1991. An earlier crónica by the same name appeared in El Español en Australia on 22 Aug. 1978. Although the same title is used in both, the contents and anecdotes differ. A third version appears in 1992 in the anthology Las Historias de un Blady Woggie.

³ Hereafter ‘Lucho’.
humorous depiction of an intergenerational linguistic misunderstanding lies a range of poignant themes which are discussed in forthcoming chapters. The issue of translation, and the implications for El Chileno of translational impotence, leaves him struggling to hold his ground in his communications with his bilingual daughter and her English-speaking teacher. His lack of competence in Australian English leads El Chileno to feel disempowered and marginalised, and it is his young child who holds all the cards in this three-way exchange, due to her ability to switch effortlessly and confidently between Chilean-Spanish and Australian English. Lastly, this crónica references complex cultural differences, as expressed by El Chileno’s mournful complaint that the respect parents enjoyed in his homeland was sadly absent in Australia. Linguistic and cultural translation, loss of power and misunderstandings are recurring themes that populate and intersect the range of crónicas that I explore in this study.

Why is the newspaper crónica so effective in highlighting the various challenges associated with migration? Crónicas are as diverse as many other genres of creative writing and manifest themselves in many forms and literary styles; however, they share some common characteristics. They are usually published on a weekly basis, and are generally written under a pseudonym in the first person, by a crónica writer, or cronista, who is most often male. Cronistas offer a commentary on a broad range of aspects of daily life, often in a humorous and satirical style. In the Hispanic press in Australia they have addressed a range of every day scenarios that will be familiar to their migrant readership: applying for a bank loan, teaching their wives how to drive, or obtaining employment positions for which they may well feel overqualified. Crónicas are an ideal mechanism for processing or making sense of migrants’ encounters with members of the host community who are largely ignorant of Hispanic history and culture. Thus, crónicas provide new migrants with a lens through which to view the many and varied situations, dilemmas and predicaments that characterise their journey of adaptation from their pre-migration lives to those in their adopted host country.

My exposure to, and my subsequent fascination with the Australian crónica arose when I was recruited to undertake PhD study as part of a 2013 Australian Research Council (ARC) Discovery project: “New Transnationalisms: Australia’s Multilingual Literary Heritage”. This project investigated the store of Australian literature written in languages other than English, focusing on work in Arabic, Chinese, Vietnamese and Spanish. My task was to access, investigate and document creative writing published in Spanish-language newspapers in Australia, and to ultimately decide on what aspects to focus in
my thesis. My attention was soon drawn to the crónica, a vibrant and colourful literary genre that has appeared ubiquitously in Spanish-language newspapers in Australia from the late 1970s to the present day. As my research into the Australian crónica advanced, it became evident that my findings represented the tip of an iceberg, exposing an expansive literary treasure trove of undiscovered material that offers a range of reflections and insights into the Hispanic migrant experience in Australia.

This Australian study spearheads a new research direction in the analysis of the Spanish language newspaper crónica. I expose a newly discovered body of literary work, much of it in its original publication, that to date has been largely unexamined. My research focuses on a selection of works by three Hispanic cronistas whose newspaper columns reflect their diverse pre-migration circumstances and backgrounds, as well as their individual experiences as new Australians. Bolivian-born Clara Espinosa, who wrote under the name ‘Woggy Girl’, left behind a successful career as a public health doctor in her homeland and migrated with her teenage children to Australia in 1987 when her marriage ended. Guillermo Hertz, or ‘El Gato’ was an industrial engineer who left Chile early in Salvador Allende’s presidency, settling in Australia as a sponsored migrant in 1971. The journalist Lucho Abarca (‘Blady Woggie’), also Chilean-born, fled the Pinochet regime and arrived in Australia in 1974. Each of the three took up writing in their adopted home, but at different points in their migration journeys. Crónica writing allowed them to give voice to their own experiences of re-location and dislocation, and enabled them somehow to make sense of the various migration-related challenges that they confronted. Early on in my research it became apparent that themes such as language and identity, gender relations, and belonging in a multicultural setting appeared frequently in many of the Australian crónicas, which led me to structure this project along those lines.

I was very fortunate to locate and make contact with all three cronistas, who generously agreed to participate in this study by making themselves available not only for interview, but also for on-going communication over the course of this project. I feel that the cronistas’ individual perspectives add a rich dimension to my project, by providing a window into the social and cultural contexts in which their columns were published, and

---

4 This study uses the cronistas’ pseudonyms when referring to their published crónicas. When referring to quoted material from interviews, and/or their work as a whole, the authors’ true surnames are used.
it is a privilege to be able to share these reflections, for the first time, in a domestic and international scholarly arena.

In the international arena, critical interest in the newspaper crónica has been gathering steady momentum over the last thirty years. To date the focus has centred on columns written in Latin America—whence the newspaper crónica originated—or those penned by Mexican migrants who fled north to the United States during the Mexican Revolution of 1910–20, whose crónicas were published in Spanish-language newspapers there. Scholars such as Nicolás Kanellos, Aníbal González, Andrew Reynolds, Linda Egan and Esperança Bielsa are some of the many researchers who have studied those crónicas. However, in Australia, with the exception of Michael Jacklin’s research into the crónicas that appeared in Spanish-language magazines and Louis Vincent Di Paolo’s Masters’ thesis *Las Historias de un Blady Woggie: Stories of South American migration to Australia*, there has been very limited attention paid to this genre of creative writing. Additionally, as Australian crónicas have yet to be translated into English, their consumption has been limited to a Spanish-speaking reading public with access to the original publications in which these columns first appeared in print. My project aims to bring awareness of these newspaper crónicas to a wider audience. In doing so I argue that they deserve to be documented, analysed and enjoyed by scholars and the reading public alike, both as powerful and significant pieces of creative non-fiction writing, and also for their colourful depictions of the Hispanic life in multicultural Australia.

It is evident that the lack of critical analysis of the newspaper crónicas mirrors a corresponding paucity of scholarly attention to creative writing in Spanish in general in Australia. Although to date there has been a significant critical response to Greek, Italian and Chinese literature, works on creative writing in Spanish have remained on the periphery, and, along with languages like Arabic, Vietnamese, Latvian and Polish, exist almost as if in a “parallel universe” (Jacklin, “Desde Australia” 177). Ignacio García’s 1997 book *Spanish Fiction Writing in Australia* took an important step towards addressing this dearth of critical attention; however, this publication’s circulation has been very

---

5 Di Paolo’s Masters’ thesis through the Department of International Studies at Maquarie University examines the crónicas that appear in Lucho Abarca’s anthology *Las historias de un Blady Woggie* (1992). It does not, however, take into consideration the newspaper context in which the crónicas were initially presented. Di Paolo’s analysis focuses on “critical multiculturalism and the postcolonial themes of exile, ambivalence and hybridity” (i).
limited. This is despite the fact that Hispanic literature has been produced in this country since the 1960s, and that over 100,000 Australian residents speak Spanish. My research will address this gap in scholarly attention around the Australian crónica, and will also further develop the critical evaluation of Spanish language literature in this country, and internationally. I will do this by concentrating specifically on the production and dissemination of crónicas in a literary environment that is geographically and culturally removed from the Americas, the origin of the main body of critical attention in this field to date. In doing so, I contribute to the international discussion of the crónica by highlighting the perspectives of migrant writers for whom migration to Australia represented a ‘one-way’ trip, where opportunities for a permanent return to their homeland were limited. This is a new aspect, as previous studies on the crónicas that have emerged from Mexican migrant communities in the United States concentrate on the columns produced by writers for whom a return ‘home’ in the short to medium term was both desirable and feasible.

Here, I will examine the crónica through a conceptual lens articulated by Anne Malena, who in a 2003 conference paper described the migrant as a ‘translated being’. Malena states that “migrants are translated beings in countless ways” (“Presentation” 9): firstly, like translated texts, they move from a ‘source’ to a ‘target’ environment. This new environment may be in degrees familiar or unfamiliar, depending on factors such as education, class and the underlying motivation for the move. Secondly, it is likely that the migrant will need to learn or develop new language skills to participate in their new environment. Next, either individually or collectively, their identity will be transformed during the transition process of departing from one country to settling in a new one.

---

6 There were two earlier instances of Spanish language literary production, which are discussed in Chapters 2 and 3: Rosendo Salvado (1814-1900), a Benedictine monk who settled in New Norcia, WA and whose memoirs, originally written in Italian, were translated into Spanish in 1853. Salvador Torrents, a Catalan anarchist who settled in North Queensland, wrote prolifically in Spanish for several decades from 1915 until his death in 1952, and was published internationally.

7 The terms ‘source’ and ‘target’ are used in this study. These terms are commonly used in relation to textual translation, ‘source’ being the language from which a text is translated, and ‘target’ being the language to which a text is translated. In this study, I also use them in the context of migration to refer to both the country and culture from and to which an individual might migrate.
Finally, Malena observed that leaving one’s country often means abandoning one’s history in an attempt to integrate more effectively into the host country.

This study explores to what extent Malena’s concept of ‘translation’ applies to the migrant experience as expressed by the cronistas writing in Spanish-language newspapers in Australia. I ask two questions: firstly, what role does crónica writing play in the migrant’s journey of translation into host country and culture? Secondly, what do the crónicas demonstrate about Anne Malena’s concept of the migrant as translated being, and what does the literary material indicate regarding factors that enable or hinder this process of translation?

My decision to focus on a set publication time period (1990–1997) was made for three reasons. Firstly, this was a stage during which all three cronistas’ columns appeared in print, either in the newspapers *El Español en Australia* and *The Spanish Herald* or as in the case of Blady Woggie and El Gato, collated in book form. Secondly, it enabled me to select cronistas who were available and willing to be interviewed for this project. Lastly, by concentrating on this fixed time period I was able in a practical sense to manage the large body of source material that my research uncovered. This was particularly relevant in the case of one cronista in particular, Guillermo Hertz (El Gato), who penned a twice weekly column that ran for over 12 years, from 1994 to 2006. By Hertz’s reckoning, he produced approximately 2,000 crónicas during this time. I stress that this study does not purport to exhaustively critique the crónicas produced by El Gato over this total period. Rather, it focuses on a selection of columns that offer valuable insights into the cronistas’ writings as they relate to questions of translation into the host language and culture.

This study is divided into 6 chapters. In Chapter 1, I discuss the theoretical framework supporting this research project. Here, I position Anne Malena’s concept of the migrant as a ‘translated being’ within the context of Lawrence Venuti’s seminal book *The Translator’s Invisibility: A History of Translation* (1995). Malena’s idea of the migrant as

---


9 This study focuses on crónicas by El Gato that appeared in publication from 1995 to 1997.
a translated being has not been developed beyond the two publications\(^\text{10}\) that have prompted the conceptual approach that I have applied to this study; however, Malena’s ‘translated being’ concept relates to the work of theorists such as Michael Cronin, Harish Trivedi and Homi Bhabha, amongst others. This chapter frames Malena’s concept within the wider theoretical field of cultural translation. Michael Jacklin’s book chapter “Translated Lives in Australian ‘Crónicas’” (2016) is also discussed. This work inspired my interest in the concept of the migrant as translated being and has a particular bearing on my project. Jacklin examines the magazine crónicas of Uruguayan born Michael Gamarra, who wrote as Ernesto Balcells during the early to mid 1980s; he thus is a contemporary of the cronistas in my study. I provide an overview of the research methodology employed in this study, and conclude with an analysis of two crónicas by Woggy Girl, in order to offer a working example of my approach to applying Malena’s concept of self-translation in my analysis.

Chapter 2 provides an overview on the nature of the newspaper crónica, and examines the secondary literature related to this genre of creative writing. It traces the crónica’s origins and its antecedents, exploring its characteristics and bringing to light the many ways that scholars have sought to define the genre. In addition, it situates the crónica within the literary movement known as modernismo, and identifies some of the key practitioners of this genre. I also discuss the crónica’s role in the migrant press, and provide an overview of Spanish literature in Australia, with a focus on the crónica.

Chapter 3 introduces a forerunner to the cronistas of the 1990s, Salvador Torrents (1885–1951), a Catalan anarchist who migrated to the North Queensland sugar-cane fields in 1916 and who became Australia’s first cronista. This chapter positions Torrents as an important historical figure and a prolific writer, a pioneer who made extensive contributions to crónica writing in an international setting. I discuss a selection of his columns, published in European and North American publications over a period of more than thirty-five years, that and offers a prelude to more recent crónica production in this country. Simultaneously, Chapter 2 draws attention to some of the themes presented in Torrents’ articles, such as racism, gender relations, and belonging, illustrating how they

presage those similar themes that appear decades later in crónicas by Woggy Girl, Blady Woggie and El Gato, whose crónicas are the primary focus of this study.

Clara Espinosa’s Woggy Girl crónicas are examined further in Chapter 4, where the interrelated themes of language and identity are a focus. I analyse what it is that Woggy Girl’s columns demonstrate about the migration-related challenges associated with linguistic and cultural translation, and the implications of this translation on the formation of a new identity. In addition, I examine Woggy Girl’s crónicas to determine what they reveal about the role that second language acquisition plays in either enabling or inhibiting a migrant’s passage into life in the host country. Lastly, I discuss what becomes an ongoing theme in this study – the possibility that migration be viewed as a long-term or life-long process, without a defined beginning, middle or end point.

The theme of gender relations is examined in Chapter 5, with a particular focus on the crónicas by Chilean-born Lucho Abarca (Blady Woggie). I approach the topic of gender relations from two perspectives: firstly, I examine what crónicas reveal about the changes in gender roles that take place as a result of interactions with members of the opposite sex within the receiving culture. Secondly, I focus on the gendered relationships between members of the same migrant community, and the associated shifts in the balance of power between Hispanic men and women as they negotiate the uneven terrain that at times characterises the process of integration into the host country. To frame this chapter’s analysis of Blady Woggie’s gender related crónicas, I revisit the way that, historically, the Latin American crónica has been an effective device through which to explore questions about the changed gender roles that may accompany migration.

In Chapter 6 I address a frequent topic in migrant literature – that of belonging. I do so through an examination of crónicas by Guillermo Hertz (El Gato), for whom this was a recurring theme. I approach this analysis by considering belonging in the context of two settings. The first relates to belonging within a migrant’s own linguistic and cultural community, and the second applies to belonging to the host country and culture. An additional focus in this chapter centres around the exploration of El Gato’s perspectives about the theme of belonging in a multicultural setting. Lastly, I consider the factors that enable, or conversely obstruct, the process of belonging to migrants’ adopted home, and I conclude this chapter by examining whether a migrant’s experience of belonging is evidence of successful translation into life in the host country and culture.
In closing this section, I would like to echo the views expressed by García (1997) and Jacklin (2010), who have both argued that Spanish-language creative writing produced in Australia is fragile, and in need of preservation. Both have described the challenging experience of searching for literary content in Spanish that has, for a variety of reasons, been very difficult to locate. For example, in collating the bibliographical section of *Spanish Fiction Writing in Australia* (1997), García commented that the process of collecting published content was “not particularly easy since the distribution chains of these materials are quite erratic” (4). Similarly, his attempts to locate unpublished work were equally fraught. The many notable contributions to literary contests such as the ones sponsored by The Spanish Club in Sydney were not often preserved by organisers, leaving a trail that proved difficult to follow. I share the same experience. While searching for the Sydney newspaper *Noticias y Deportes* at the State Library of NSW, I identified a gap in the collection of about 20 years, (from 1977 to 1996) and no other library in Australia held the missing editions. The current editor of *Noticias y Deportes* advised me that during the tenure of the previous publishers there had been a fire in the warehouse that had destroyed all archived editions of the paper. Attempts to locate the publisher from that period have proven fruitless, so the two-decade gap of lost material may never be accounted for.

Similarly, I am reminded of the fragility of the ties between crónica writers, their readers and scholars who endeavour to locate and engage with the producers of this genre of creative writing. My early efforts to identify cronistas writing under a pseudonym, whose work appeared in newspapers several decades ago, have been both challenging and time consuming. Current editors and publishers are often unaware of the true identity of writers who were published before their tenure. This is coupled with the fact that it has been difficult, if not impossible to pin down and communicate with former editors. In addition, some of the most successful cronistas from the 1970s onwards have proven to be difficult to locate, and are now advancing in age. I was sadly reminded about the tenuousness of this work over recent months when Guillermo Hertz, one of the three cronistas whose crónicas form the basis of this study, passed away unexpectedly only a few weeks after we had last been in contact. He had continued to support my research for the duration of my candidature by assisting me with queries, clarifications and further insights, and his generous participation in this project represented a last opportunity to capture, in interview, this author’s reflections on his substantial body of work.

My goal in this research has been to offer a critical commentary, through the theoretical framework described in Chapter 1, of the crónicas that are the focus of this study. In doing
so, this project aims to showcase a large, previously unexamined body of Spanish-language creative writing in Australia, presenting it in all its variety and colour, to both a domestic and an international audience.
I have to translate myself. But if I am to achieve this without being assimilated—that is absorbed—by my new world, the translation has to be careful, the turns of the psyche unforced . . . A true translation proceeds by the motions of understanding and sympathy; it happens by slow increments, sentence by sentence, phrase by phrase.


The starting point for an analysis of the concept of the migrant as a translated being comes from Anne Malena, who has written two articles about the links between translation and migration, a relationship that has attracted the attention of both translation scholars and cultural theorists. Malena uses the term translation both literally and metaphorically. Not only do migrants face linguistic challenges, but they are also required to translate their identity in a cultural way, in community, workplace and domestic settings.

Malena proposes that for migrants, this process of translation results in the formation of “new versions of their selves” (‘Presentation’ 9). These may be “‘perfect’ translations, creating the illusion they are native to the target culture, or retain traces of the foreign, proclaiming their difference and forcing transformation on the target culture” (9). I pause here to analyse this quote, as it is a central component of Malena’s description of the migrant as translated being, and thus key to the application of this concept in my study. Here I believe Malena is referring to at least two possible versions of new immigrant identities. The first ‘perfect’ version suggests total absorption into the target culture, and a complete erasure of pre-migration identity. This concept of a ‘perfect’ translation, and its alternatives, is a nod to the translation theorist Lawrence Venuti’s notions of in/visibility. In his seminal book *The Translator’s Invisibility: A History of Translation* (1995), Venuti asserted that the more fluent and transparent a literary translation, the more favourably a work is likely to be judged. He states that:
A translated text, whether prose or poetry, fiction or non-fiction, is judged acceptable by most publishers, reviewers and readers when it reads fluently, when the absence of any linguistic or stylistic peculiarities make it seem transparent, giving the appearance that it reflects the foreign writer’s personality or intention, or the essential meaning of the foreign text – the appearance that the translation is not in fact a translation, but the ‘original’. (1)

Consequently, Venuti concludes that “[t]he more fluent the translation, the more invisible the translator” (1). He proposes that transparent translations are achieved when translators employ ‘domesticating’ strategies, wherein foreign elements of the source text are erased in order to make the target text both linguistically and culturally accessible to its readers. In contrast, Venuti describes ‘foreignizing’ translational strategies as those that highlight and preserve difference in the source text, “sending the reader abroad” (20). 11

Malena draws on the concepts of domestication and foreignisation to demonstrate the range of translational possibilities available to migrants, and applies Venuti’s notion of invisibility to those migrants who achieve a high level of ‘translatability’. She contrasts this with the common experience of many migrants whose untranslatable features render them highly ‘visible’. In the same way that a translated text may have the “linguistic or stylistic peculiarities” that stop it from achieving transparency, so too do many migrants in the host country retain many ‘untranslatable’ features such as physical appearance, accent, and more importantly, social customs and beliefs.

Closer examination of Malena’s ‘perfect’ translation definition suggests an ironic use of the term, pointing to the elusiveness of a flawless cultural translation. This ironic intent is confirmed by Malena in email correspondence to me: “I was implicitly playing with Venuti’s notion of in/visibility, which led me to ironically use the term ‘perfect’” (Malena 10 Aug. 2015). This is reinforced by Malena’s reference to the concept of nativeness (to the target country) as an “illusion”, indicating the impossibility of the complete eradication of an individual’s pre-migration identity. While successful components of

11 The terms ‘domesticating’ and ‘foreignizing’ were formalised by Venuti; however, the translational strategies that they describe have a longer history. The German theologian, philosopher, and classical philologist Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768 –1834) described the two translation strategies thus: “Either the translator leaves the author in peace, as much as possible, and moves the reader towards him, or he leaves the reader in peace, as much as possible, and moves the author to him” (74).
self-translation may be achievable, the prospect of attaining perfection at any stage of the migration journey is unrealistic. Furthermore, the task of establishing a reliable measure of the key components of host cultural identity is also problematic. Rather, the process of translation may be seen as a chequered journey of cultural transformation interspersed with periods of retreat and re-emergence.

Malena’s second immigrant identity is the ‘untranslated’ and ‘resistant’ individual, who retains “traces of the foreign” (“Presentation” 9). According to Malena, this resistance is achieved through a two-way strategy of reinforcing difference and transforming host culture. Malena does not elaborate any further on this description, on what these transformations might be, or how they might be manifested. It is possible, for example, that migrants may be able to influence the host country by linguistic and cultural means. Collectively, migrant groups may be able to exert influence through language, such as by the introduction of loan words into the target country’s lexicon. In addition, the politeness conventions and practices of one migrant group may, over time, be transmitted to members of the host community. Similarly, a migrant group as a whole may be able to introduce festivities, regional cuisines, religions and philosophies as well as business practices and innovation technologies to the receiving culture. I will explore this topic further in Chapter 6, where the theme of belonging in a multicultural setting is addressed.

The notion of the migrant as a translated being, which is central to my study, is not one that has been further developed by Malena beyond the two articles that have prompted the conceptual approach that I have chosen. However, her ideas also relate to the work of other theorists, and thus Malena’s concept can be framed within the wider theoretical field of cultural translation; thus, I draw on the work of Michael Cronin, Harish Trivedi, Homi Bhabha and others to do this.

Malena’s concept of the translated being is adopted by Michael Cronin, whose 1997 book *Translation and Identity*, discusses the relationship between translation and migration, both through the linguistic exercise undertaken by most migrants arriving in the host country, as well as through the process of translating their cultural identity:

> The condition of the migrant is the condition of the translated being. He or she moves from the source language and culture to a target language and culture, so that translation takes place both in the physical sense of movement or
displacement and in the symbolic sense of the shift from one way of speaking, writing about, and interpreting the world to another. (45) [Cronin’s emphasis]

In *Translation and Identity*, Cronin stresses that translation is “not a matter of idle theoretical speculation or a hidebound classroom exercise” (45). He highlights the vital role that linguistic and cultural translation plays in determining a migrant’s experience of integration into the host country. He states that “[t]ranslating oneself into the language of the host community is not only a way of understanding how that community thinks and functions but also a way of allowing oneself to become a fuller and more active member of it” (53). Cronin’s contributions to the topic of linguistic and cultural translation are revisited later in this chapter, within a broader discussion of the translational outcomes experienced by migrants, both individually and collectively.

Harish Trivedi’s studies of cultural translation also have a bearing on this work. In his 2005 article “Translating Culture vs. Cultural Translation”, Trivedi traces the evolution of Translation Studies, from its origins as an offshoot of either Linguistics or Comparative Literature. According to Trivedi, the most significant development took place in the early 1990s when translation came to be viewed as much more than the transference of words from source to target language. Rather, it became more apparent that “literary texts were constituted not primarily of language, but in fact of culture” (par. 8). Trivedi draws on the work of the Homi Bhabha, whom he credits with developing “a comprehensive, sophisticated and influential formulation of the concept of Cultural Translation” (par. 16).

In his book *The Location of Culture* (1994), Bhabha stresses that cultural translation is not literary translation involving two texts from two languages and cultures; rather it is “the process and condition of human migrancy” and he describes translation as “the performative nature of cultural communication” (326). Bhabha also offers examples of the way writers such as Salman Rushdie, Hanif Kureishi and Jhumpa Lahiri have analysed their roles as “translators”. Even though they have not translated in the mechanical, linguistic sense, they express the degree to which they see themselves to some extent as cultural translators. Indeed, Salman Rushdie speaks on behalf of his cohort when he says, “we are translated men” (*Imaginary Homelands* 16). Here Rushdie draws on the etymological sense of the term “translation”, which is that of “removing from one place to another”, or “bearing across”. This is the core of the process that is investigated in my thesis.
A working example of cultural translation in Australia can be found in the citizenship test that would-be subjects are required to undertake as part of the process of nationalisation. Since 2007, applicants have been asked questions relating to Australian history, politics, culture, national symbols and values. For example, questions concerning the concept of ‘mateship’, a fundamental Australian concept that embodies loyalty, friendship and obligation primarily among men, form part of the test. At the time of writing, the Australian government had moved to toughen citizenship testing, to focus more deliberately on “Australian Values”. Some of the questions under consideration for inclusion in the test are: “Under what circumstances is it appropriate to prohibit girls from education?” “Does Australia’s principle of freedom of religion mean that it is permissible to force children to marry?” and “While it is illegal to use violence in public, under what circumstances can you strike your spouse in the privacy of your own home?” (Australian Citizenship Support 2018).

In their discussion about similar questions in the German Citizenship test, Boris Buden et al. (2009) claim that the purpose of these questions is to probe what it is “to be German”, or in this study’s case, Australian. In answering these citizenship questions correctly “one is in the literal sense culturally translated” into the host country, and “consequently provided with a new political identity” (197). While this citizenship test provides one institutional example of cultural translation in practice, it limits itself to testing whether applicants can provide the “right” answers to the featured questions. In other words, it equates “being Australian” with being able to prepare for and answer set questions “correctly”. It also serves a political purpose by transparently flagging those with a particular cultural and religious identity (197). Thus, the inclusion of questions relating to “Australian values” serve as instrument that has been created to determine who is deemed eligible to be part of the Australian nation and who is not. My study takes a wider view of the concept of cultural translation and concerns itself with what crónicas demonstrate about the processes and challenges involved in a migrant’s search for linguistic and cultural translation. It focuses on the migrants’ lived experience, on the day-to-day

---

12 Melbourne academic Ali Alizadeh (2008) has written a scathing poem, “Citizenship Test” which deals with some of the questions relating to ‘values’ and ‘culture’, and the answers that prospective Australian citizens are asked to know. The poem commences thus: “Answer the trivia about our gold medallists, obscure heroes, etc, and a thing or two (but certainly no more) about the Aborigines – but don’t let us find you sympathising with them” (30).
encounters and how they relate to the spheres of language, identity, gender and belonging, rather than a rigid interpretation of what ‘Australian-ness’ constitutes.

In A Translation of Worlds: Aspects of Cultural Translation and Australian Migration Literature (2010), Anette Svensson selects five novels that are concerned with immigration to Australia, to “explore the exchange of cultural information that takes place in the meeting between immigrant and non-immigrant characters” (9). Her study is an examination of Australian migration literature as viewed and analysed through the lens of cultural translation. Svensson regards migration as “a three-step process that includes an in-between, liminal phase between departure and arrival, where cultural encounters and identity constructions take place” (10). She views this second, transitional phase as one where the characters in the novels that she examines may find themselves “trapped”, and wherein:

Cultural translation is hampered and interrupted and their migration processes come to a halt. The ability to adapt or assimilate to the target culture and the acceptance of a double cultural identity are crucial in order for the characters to leave the liminal phase and acquire a sense of arrival. (10)

This transitional phase in a migrant’s journey, when cultural translation is taking place, between departure and arrival, provides a focal point for my study. It is at this time and in this space that migrants successfully or unsuccessufully translate themselves. In Sneja Gunew’s view, migrants are required to orchestrate “the creation of a new identity, both private and public. Inevitably, this incorporates a clash between the old self, forged in other social and physical contexts, and, at times, in other languages” (“The Migrant Experience” 169). The transformation of a migrant’s identity may take place in the context of a process known as “transculturation”. This term was created in 1942 by the Cuban ethnographer Fernando Ortiz and was later applied to Latin American literature by the Uruguayan theorist Ángel Rama. Ortiz’s term describes the exchange that takes place when two cultures intersect, and the new phenomenon or entity that emerges because of this interaction.

Similarly, Bhabha and Mary Louise Pratt have each formulated concepts to describe metaphorical locations where cultures converge and new identities may be formed. The former writes of a “Third Space” (1994), to describe “cultural encounters and their effects” (Svensson 23). Pratt’s term “contact zones” refers to “social spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other”. Although Pratt specifies that this contact frequently
takes place “in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power, such as colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths” (34), it is my view that the term “contact zones” can be applied equally to the encounters faced by migrants as they negotiate a culturally and linguistically distinct environment. In the chapter that follows, I argue that this power imbalance is experienced by many migrants who, upon arrival in their host country find themselves confronted by a myriad of cultural and linguistic challenges. For example, Eva Hoffman, the author and academic whose autobiography *Lost in Translation: A Life in a New Language* offers an account of her family’s migration from Poland to Canada in 1959, describes her early experiences of life in her host country thus:

... the sense of rupture was quite extreme and stark. There was a sense of absolute division, between the past and the present, between my old self and the new self, etc., and synthesizing the two took a very long time. It was a kind of labour to put it all together. (Phoenix and Slavova 340)

Similar sentiments are expressed by Lucho Abarca, the Chilean-born cronista whose crónicas written under the pseudonym Blady Woggie are examined in Chapter 5. In interview, he describes the sense of disempowerment that he experienced on arrival in Australia in 1974:

I was very strong in Chile ... because I was a very good communicator in the Spanish language. I’m a very good speaker ... but when I arrived to Australia, I become blind, deaf and mute and stupid, because they cut what was my strength, the capacity to communicate. So, I remained silent for about three years, and when people tried to talk to me I learned to say, “I’m sorry but I don’t speak English”. (23 May 2015)

In exploring the concept of cultural translation and the way that it relates to this study of crónicas in Spanish-language newspapers in Australia, it is the work of Michael Jacklin that has inspired my interest in the idea of the migrant as a translated being. In his 2016 book chapter “Translated Lives in Australian ‘Crónicas’”,14 Jacklin considers the process of translation as it takes place among members of a migrant community who attempt to adjust to the challenges of living in the host country. Jacklin focuses on the crónicas penned by Michael Gamarra, writing as Ernesto Balcells between 1982 and 1986, and

13 As per Abarca’s preference, interviews were carried out in English.

14 Jacklin’s book chapter was preceded by a 2013 conference paper, as listed in Works Cited.
published in the magazine Versión. Jacklin argues that Balcells’ crónicas enabled migrants to consider and express “their status as translated beings” (29) by providing “a mediating space that allowed the consequences and implications of ‘being translated,’ in this sense of being ‘carried across’ to new geographic, linguistic and cultural contexts, to be explored within a popular and familiar literary tradition” (29).

One of the columns that Jacklin uses to illustrate the concept of the migrant as a translated being is “El ‘honor de la familia’”, the title of which echoes Salvador Torrents’ 1925 crónica, which will be discussed in Chapter 3.15 This crónica depicts the way its protagonists attempt to negotiate the uneven terrain that is created when the traditional gender-roles with which they are familiar and comfortable are challenged. Here, the main character is suspicious that his wife might be having an affair, as she is out every Tuesday evening. He calls on Ernesto, his older brother, and asks that he help restore the family’s reputation, while remarking: “esto me pasa por haberme venido a este país; allá no me habría sucedido . . . en este país, créeme, que las enloquece; mira la mujer de Ramiro, y la de Fermín; los dos divorciados” [“this is all because of my coming to this country; it would never have happened at home. This country drives women crazy. Look at the wife of Ramiro, and Fermín’s wife, they’re both divorced now”] (32).16 Jacklin points to the irony in this crónica, which is that the wife who is being accused of cheating is instead secretly attending cooking classes hoping to surprise her husband with her new skills. In fact, it is the husband who is having an affair with a gringa [an Anglo-Australian woman], and is thus, in this crónica, the contributor to marriage instability (32). Indeed, the younger brother appears oblivious to the double-standard that he applies, which is a possible reflection of the machista tendencies in the home culture. Jacklin’s chapter also draws on “Por ser impresionable” [“On Account of being Impressionable”], “Boda por computadora” [“Computer Wedding”] (32), “La familia Rodríguez ‘Grant’” [“The Rodríguez ‘Grant’ Family”] (33) as examples of crónicas that Balcells uses to offer to his readers a demonstration of the way that migrant lives are translated via a range of topics that extend beyond those of gender roles, marriage and romance to discuss also the challenges associated with mastering the target language, and the uses and abuses of Australia’s welfare system.

The concept of translation and the way cronistas have used the literary genre of the crónica to give voice to the migrant’s experience of re-location and dislocation, to somehow make

---

15 Torrents’ crónica: “El honor en la familia”.
16 Jacklin’s translation.
sense and negotiate the challenges of being translated beings, provides a framework with which to explore these crónicas. Building on Jacklin’s research into Ernesto Balcells’ crónicas, this project further extends the study of Australian crónicas through the lens of Malena’s concept of the migrant as translated being, and focuses on the writings of Clara Espinosa Noriega (Woggy Girl), Lucho Abarca (Blady Woggie) and Guillermo Hertz (El Gato). Salman Rushdie’s view is that literal and metaphorical translation are accompanied by loss, but he maintains that “something can also be gained” in the process (16). I aim to consider what cronistas share with their readers about both the losses that come with translation, as well as the positive features that embody a new migrant identity.

My research examines the notion of translatability in the context of a spectrum. One end of the spectrum is occupied by the individual who demonstrates strong features of translation; at the other end, is the migrant who is resistant to translation. I stress that the experience of translation is fluid, and may shift along the continuum during the course of a migrant’s adaptation to life in the host country. Along this spectrum I add the “partially” translated being, a concept inspired by Aneta Pavlenko and James P. Lantolf’s article “Second Language Learning as Participation and the (re) Construction of Selves” (2000), which describes the condition of migrants who find themselves in this intermediate position. They write:

It is not accidental that many immigrants settle in communities in which they continue to live, as closely as possible, the lives they led in their native countries in order to follow their own customs and traditions, while at the same time benefitting politically and economically from being elsewhere. This is not to say that they do not learn the language of the community, since many do develop functional proficiency in the new language. Attempts to learn the majority language are limited to functional use only, since most of their quotidian interactions are, by choice, with members of their own group. (170)

The idea of a partially translated being is one that shares similarities with a linguistic and cultural concept articulated by Cronin, that of “translational accommodation”, which exists in contrast with “translational assimilation” (52). Both are translational strategies that migrants adopt in the host country as they adapt to the changed linguistic and cultural circumstances in which they find themselves. With translational assimilation, migrants “seek to translate themselves into the dominant language of the community” in an effort to integrate and assimilate, whereas with translational accommodation they opt to use
translation “as a means of maintaining their language of origin, though this does not rule out limited or indeed extensive acquisition of the host-country language” (52). The latter group seek to “assert language rites” in an effort to exert “a conscious form of resistance” (56) to the dominant language of the target country.

In order to evaluate to what extent these crónicas demonstrate a range of cultural and linguistic translation possibilities - translatability, partial translatability or untranslatability. I examine a range of themes that appear frequently in the crónicas by Espinosa, Abarca and Hertz: language and identity, gender relations, and belonging. In doing so, I also ask how crónica writing contributes to the process whereby members of a migrant community grapple with adjustments that accompany their journeys of translation into their new environment.

My study also examines what crónicas demonstrate about the barriers to translatability, and asks whether all migrants do indeed seek to be translated. In doing so, I investigate factors that may initiate and perpetuate the resistance to translation that I highlighted earlier in this chapter. This resistance may occur due to an individual or collective fear of assimilation that results in the loss of the source language and culture. In addition, migrants may resist translation if early efforts to integrate into the host culture prove to be insurmountably difficult.

Access to a range of migrant support services are factors that impact on a migrant’s ability to achieve cultural translation in the host country. These include a variety of different institutions and organisations that range from translating and interpreting services, English language tuition programs and culturally specific associations, places of worship, employment services for migrants, bi-cultural community health and welfare workers, as well as others. These services not only assist in promoting a better understanding of language and culture within the host country, but also cultivate a sense of social belonging and integration. Through these avenues, new migrants piece together the idiosyncrasies of many aspects of life in Australia, with the opportunity for them to iron out misconceptions and misunderstandings based on cultural ambiguity or cultural difference. In spite of the availability of the above services, there are many issues associated with access and equity that impede cultural translation. This can be due to factors such as low literacy and fluency in both English and the native language, social isolation, grief and loss associated with migration, disempowerment and alienation: all lead to an inability to navigate the support networks available.
Under these circumstances, migrants cling to the familiarity of their own cultural and linguistic identity. Furthermore, there may be a reluctance to undergo translation if there has been a forced migration process potentially coupled with trauma and torture, resulting in a sense of displacement and disenfranchisement and possible resentment. If social determinants of health are not met in the host country, then all other aspects of wellbeing and empowerment may be extremely difficult to attain.

Finally, I ask what these crónicas demonstrate about being both “lost” and “found” in translation. While it may be more straightforward to identify the various losses of identity markers that often accompany migration, it may be more challenging to establish what the gains are. The section that follows describes the research methodology that I use to address the above questions.

**Research Method**

The methodology applied to my research is two-fold: firstly, it has involved the collection of primary material; and secondly, the holding of interviews with the cronistas whose work is central to my investigation. My aim has been to analyse the primary material in the context of Malena’s concept of the migrant as a translated being, and to examine the role that crónica writing plays in the individual’s journey of translation into host country and culture. In addition, I consider the factors that either enable or obstruct this process of translation.

Primary material consists of crónicas that have been sourced from Spanish language newspapers held in The State Library of NSW. My principal focus is on the long-standing paper *El Español en Australia*, which has been in continuous publication since 1965, and which has published columns by all three cronistas who are the focus of study. In addition, I refer to *The Spanish Herald*, a bi-weekly newspaper based in Sydney, and launched in 1971, and which published the El Gato crónicas over many years. As my research has identified a very large body of work, my emphasis has been on a fixed time period from the early to mid 1990s. This timeframe has been selected because it coincides with a period during which crónicas by Espinosa, Abarca and Hertz were published, either in the

---

17 Hertz’s El Gato columns were initially published in *El Español en Australia*, however from January 1996, his crónicas appeared in *The Spanish Herald.*
newspapers mentioned above, or as in the case of Abarca, in book form also.\(^\text{18}\) All three had arrived within a seventeen-year period, from 1971 to 1988, during a time that saw the first significant influx of Latin Americans settle in Australia. The abolition in 1972 of the White Australian Policy and the introduction of the Racial Discrimination Act of 1975 were both influential in enabling this expansion of Australia’s immigration program, during corresponding periods of political and economic instability in various Latin American countries.

The second stage of my research has involved conducting interviews with the cronistas themselves. Interviews have been carried out in a standardised, open-ended style, with written questions forwarded to the respondents ahead of time. This interview format allowed for follow-up questions to be asked where appropriate, and for new directions to be explored as they arose naturally.

Through face-to-face and Skype meetings with Espinosa, Abarca and Hertz, I have had the opportunity to explore Gaetano Rando’s claim, made in relation to Italian diaspora literature, that “writers write what most concerns them, what is most relevant or close to their own experience” (par. 7); this has been a useful starting point for the commencement of a dialogue between me and the cronistas. In addition, I have explored how the cronistas perceived their role as community commentators in the migrant press.

I have undertaken close readings of the crónicas, and have drawn on interview material to situate the columns in the context of the cronistas’ individual journeys of adaptation to immigrant life in Australia. In addition, the authors’ recollections of readers’ responses to their crónicas, both generally and specifically, have been considered. During the interview process, I have been mindful that the columns that I examine were written up to 25 years ago, and on occasion individual cronistas have not retained personal copies of these crónicas. Thus, recollections of both the content and the context in which their writing took place have at times been altered by the passage of time. In addition, by their very nature, crónicas are often produced in a very short time period and are designed for rapid

---

\(^{18}\) A collection of Abarca’s crónicas entitled Las Historias de un Blady Woggie was published in 1992 in Santiago, Chile. Many of the crónicas that appeared in Las Historias had appeared in earlier versions in the magazine Vistazo, as well as in the newspapers El Español en Australia and El Expreso during the late 1970s and, as in the case of “Espikin Inglich”, again in 1991 in El Español en Australia.
consumption. This has contributed to the fragility and unpredictability of the format, content and availability of the work.

As a conclusion to this chapter, I draw on two crónicas by Woggy Girl, both published in *El Español en Australia*, to present a working example of the way that my study explores the concept of the migrant as translated being. In her 1991 crónica “Desintegración”, Woggy Girl uses the concepts of “integration” and “disintegration” to examine the ways that migrants attempt to settle into life in their new countries of residence. She writes that integration into life in the target country is sometimes facilitated by pre-existing connections with religious and community organisations in the source country. The networks, activities and support systems provided by these institutions enable the new migrants and their families to translate themselves into the target culture within a secure and familiar environment. Religious organisations, for example, provide migrants with a space “donde hallan amistades que comparten sus criterios y actividades que llenan horas libres del trabajo o de la esquela, todo de antemano ya programado” [“where they find a pre-planned system of activities and compatible friendships to occupy their leisure time”].

In contrast, Woggy Girl states that those migrants who no longer maintain strong psychosocial ties with family and friends in their source country are called upon to translate themselves into the target community in a different way. The family unit needs to “disintegrate” before new identities are formed. “Cuesta entender que en la nueva situación se es un ser totalmente anónimo, sin pasado y sin historia, con un eterno presente limitado por la barrera del idioma que impedirá lo (sic) conozcan en su real dimensión de personalidad” [“It is difficult to understand that in this new situation, one is a totally anonymous being, without a past or a history, with an ongoing, limited reality that prevents one’s personality from being known in its entirety”]. For this second group, translation is achieved individually. Each member of the family will establish their own identities separately, through their lives at work and at school, until the end of the day, when they reunite “para compartir el techo y la comida a veces como perfectos extraños” [“to share the roof over their heads and a meal, sometimes just like perfect strangers”]. Thus, this crónica is a consideration of two alternate ways in which migrants seek translation into the target culture, via both integration and disintegration. The latter scenario, however, is depicted by Woggy Girl as being one that comes with a cost, resulting in a distancing and a disconnection from other members of the family.
In “Uncete al buey”,19 Woggy Girl draws on the advice given to her as a university student in Bolivia by one of her professors, and in doing so she illustrates the concept of untranslatability. Woggy Girl notes that in addition to offering academic tuition, her professor would also share his views on a range of psychosocial matters. On one occasion his musings involve selecting a suitable spouse. He explains to his students what the expression “uncirse al buey de al lado” means to him: when you “yoke yourself to the ox by your side”, you “hold onto those who are near you”. Woggy Girl adds: “Nos decía que al elegir pareja a más de la “química hormonal” debían analizarse otros aspectos, especialmente relacionados con la cultura, costumbres, idioma, tradiciones, formas de expresión del afecto, etc.” [“He told us that there were other aspects to consider in addition to “chemistry” when selecting a partner, especially those that related to culture, customs, language, tradition, ways of expressing emotion, etc.”]

Woggy Girl states that while living in her country of birth, this advice did not strike a chord, “pues todos formamos parte de la misma cultura, todo esto nos parece natural y se toma inconsciente” [“because we were all part of the same culture, and we absorbed it naturally and unconsciously”]. Once one has emigrated, however, these concepts “afloran al superficie” [“rise to the surface”]. Her lecturer’s advice came to resonate with her as she reflected on the importance of sharing customs and traditions with one’s prospective spouse. While acknowledging the exotic appeal of embarking on a relationship with a person from a different culture, the cronista advises caution, stating that in the mixed marriage “existirá un vacío que a veces es el inicio de un resquebrajamiento que se ahonda y acaba con el matrimonio” [“there will be an emptiness that is sometimes the start of deepening cracks in the marriage, which finishes it off”]. Woggy Girl thus concludes that it is sensible for migrants to return to their countries of origin to look for a partner, so as to “‘uncirse al buey de su cultura’ para continuar con estabilidad su vida de transplantados (sic)” [“‘yoke one’s self to the ox of one’s culture’ in order to continue life as a migrant in a stable manner”].

In this crónica, Woggy Girl illustrates the concept of untranslatability directly. At its core, this cronista puts forward the view that while the temptation may exist to choose a partner from a different cultural and linguistic background, the importance of shared traditions, customs, language and modes of expression in the long-term success of a marriage is crucial. Woggy Girl claims that these cultural markers are not easily translatable between...
different cultures. The most reasonable solution is to “yoke one’s self to the ox of one’s culture” and pursue a relationship with someone from one’s own country of origin, and thus, culture, traditions and language. From her perspective, the possibility of exploring ways in which a migrant may translate him or herself, with a view to engaging within the “contact zone” environment of the target culture, is seen as a less desirable option, at least in relation to marriage.

“Desintegración” and “Uncete al buey” demonstrate instances of both translatability and untranslatability within the migrant setting. These are only two of the many examples of the way cronistas engage with questions concerning personal translation and the difficulties that arise due to untranslatability. The chapters to follow analyse the way that the cronistas Woggy Girl, Blady Woggie and El Gato each grapple with this shared migration experience, as played out in the pages of Spanish-language newspapers in Australia. Prior to this examination, I review the crónica genre, and its manifestation in the Australian setting.
Chapter 2

The Crónica: Its origins, characteristics and evolution

This chapter examines the secondary literature as it relates to the crónica, the literary genre at the centre of my investigation. It offers a summary of the key writings on the crónica and its origins and characteristics, as well its location within the literary movement known as modernismo. Studies on the features of the migrant press and the ways in which it serves its readers will also be explored. In addition, I will survey the studies that examine the important role that crónicas have played in the press to those migrants who attempt to adjust to the changed circumstances brought about by emigration.

Prior to the 1990s, academics had paid little attention to this literary genre; however, the past twenty years have seen a significant body of work emerge on the crónicas produced and published by Latin American writers in their homelands, as well as those penned by cronistas who fled their countries of origin and settled in the United States. After reviewing this material, I discuss crónica writing in Australia, a subject that is only beginning to be investigated.

Origins

The newspaper crónica is a literary genre that became popular amongst Hispanic and Lusophone communities in the nineteenth century and continued as migrants from these groups left their homelands and settled in their new countries of residence. Derived from the Greek chronos (time), crónicas are usually written in the first person and appear weekly or monthly in newspapers and magazines. They describe the happenings of daily life, social habits and the concerns of communities, often but not always in a humorous and satirical style. Writers of crónicas, or cronistas, are often male and commonly use a pseudonym.

Although the newspaper crónica came into being in the late nineteenth century, it had been evolving over many prior centuries. The earliest origins of the crónica can be traced to the 3rd and 4th centuries, when the chronicle emerged as “a usually continuous historical account of events arranged in order of time without analysis or interpretation” (“Chronicle”), and although early examples appeared in Greek and Roman times, the most familiar chronicles were those penned during the Middle Ages and Renaissance. They
served a useful historiographical purpose “by offering valuable information about the period that they covered” (“Chronicle”). The 16th and 17th centuries saw the emergence of Crónicas de Indias, which were writings “revolving around the discovery, conquest and colonisation of the New World” (Checa 286). While the works of Christopher Columbus, Hernán Cortés, Bernal Díaz de Castillo and other conquistadors, missionaries and soldiers may be better known, there were also crónicas penned “by Indian and mestizo writers to describe their world and the encounter with the Western conqueror” (Bielsa 41). In tracing the evolution of the modern crónica, the Mexican cronista and cultural critic Carlos Monsiváís writes that the chroniclers sought to “observe, annotate, compare and invent” (25). He describes the way in which the conquistadors and clergy used the chronicle to promote their interests, ideology and religion, and to carve out reputations that were of their own creation:

These soldiers and holy men sought to write neither history nor literature. For them, to chronicle was to seize the sensations of the moment, to capture chronos, to defend themselves from their enemy’s version of history, to implicitly and explicitly celebrate their own grandeur, to save others’ souls against their will, and to announce the blessings of Heaven. (26)

Monsiváís concludes that although the chronicles that were produced during the Spanish conquest were unlikely to have been written with a view to creating either history or literature, they did in fact do both. They provided invaluable source material from which national and ecclesiastical histories would later emerge, while simultaneously being of high literary quality (26).

A direct antecedent to the newspaper crónica emerged in 1711, when Joseph Addison and Richard Steele founded the daily paper The Spectator in London. This one-page publication featured a fictional narrator named Mr Spectator, who observed and commented on the interactions and behaviour of Londoners, while offering advice to readers on manners, relationships and social problems. In the paper’s first edition, the narrator describes his status as an observer: “I live in the world, rather as a Spectator of Mankind, than as one of the species” (qtd. in Morley N,pag.) At the height of its popularity, The Spectator enjoyed a circulation of 4,000 copies a day, although it was consumed by many more readers, as the paper was passed on to others through networks of family and friends.
The Spectator duly influenced the emergence in France of the feuilleton, another forerunner to the newspaper crónica. The feuilleton first appeared on 28 January 1800, in the Parisian newspaper Journal des Debâts, when the paper’s editor inserted ‘a leaf’, or a supplement that dealt with non-political matters such as cultural events, fashion and entertainment. As Mr. Spectator observed and commented on the manners, exchanges and happenings of daily life in London, so too did the feuilletonist “run all over the city [Paris], hunting for mass gatherings and sites of entertainment, and then represent his findings in a manner that was moving and engaging” (Dianina 187).

During the Romantic period (1800–1850), a literary movement known as costumbrismo came to the fore in Spain, and from the early 1800s, costumbristas such as Serafín Estébanez Calderón (1799–1867), Ramón de Mesonero Romanos (1803–1882) and Mariano José de Larra (1809–1837) emerged as major writers of this literary genre. Although costumbrismo is located within the Romantic movement, it is related to Realism in that its focus was also centred on the depiction of precise and particular events, occasions and behaviours. Costumbrismo has been described by José Manuel Losada Goya as “breve representación literaria de costumbres, incidentes, instituciones, personajes típicos y modos de vivir habitualmente contemporáneos” [“short literary representations of customs, happenings, institutions, quaint personalities and customary ways of life/living”] (453). By the 1830s, the cuadros de costumbres [sketches of customs] had taken shape “in the form of a brief newspaper articles aimed at a middle-class reading public” (Iarocci 387). Susan Kirkpatrick identifies the key factors in the development of costumbrismo in Spain as: the influence of an internationally established model, the emergence of the periodical press, three young writers (listed above) who simultaneously embraced the genre, entrepreneurs who were keen to exploit a market of new consumers, and a readership who readily embraced the cuadros de costumbres: the literary sketches that represented their social lives (28). Significantly, some of these conditions apply, to varying degrees, to the emergence of the crónica in the newspapers of Latin America in the late 1800s, as I will examine later in this review.

20 Costumbrismo differs from Realism in that the former “does not purport to analyse the society it depicts” (Aldana Reyes 31).

21 All translations from Spanish, unless otherwise noted, are mine.
Michael Iarocci describes the *costumbrista* as “a man about town, an observer who, with notebook in hand, takes in his surroundings to represent them as “slices of life” for his readers” (387). *Costumbristas’* common use of a pseudonym helped cultivate “a unique, personal narrative voice, in order to bring life to a quasi-fictional narrator” (388). Thus, Mesonero Romanos, Estébanez Calderón and Mariano José de Larra became better known as ‘El curioso parlante’ ['The Nosey Gossip’], ‘El solitario’ ['The Loner'] and ‘Fígaro’ respectively (388). The nineteenth century saw Spanish-America produce its own cohort of writers who wrote at least some of the time within the *costumbrista* tradition. The Argentinians Esteban Echeverría (1805–1851) and Juan Bautista Alberdi (1810–1884), and the Mexican Guillermo Prieto (1818–1897) are some of the many creators of the *cuadros de costumbres* that were widely disseminated through a variety of magazines and weeklies across the Latin American continent. Guatemalan publications such as *Las Hojas de aviso* (1861–1862) or *La Semana* (1865–1871), and the Mexican *Miscelánea* (1829–1832) and *El Museo Popular* (1840–1842) are some of the periodicals that favoured the *cuadros de costumbres* during the early to mid 1800.

Aníbal González’s book *La crónica modernista hispanoamericana* identifies two further antecedents to the crónica, namely the writings known as *Tradiciones Peruanas* [*Peruvian Traditions*] penned by Ricardo Palma in the late nineteenth century,22 and the French newspaper *chronique*. The *chronique* appeared predominantly in newspapers such as *Le Figaro* and *La Chronique Parisienne*, from the 1850s (64). A brief discussion of the *chronique* is pertinent to this study because as with the *costumbrista* sketch mentioned earlier, there is a demonstrable shift from Addison and Steele’s columns in *The Spectator*, wherein the narrator is a neutral observer, to a more decidedly first-person narrative. González points out that with both the *costumbrista* sketch and the *chronique* there is evidence of “ese reflejo de <yo> en la escritura” [that reflection of “I” in the writing] (67). He states: “el espectador se convierte en un sujeto con sus propias razones y pasiones, y de crítico benévolo y pasivo se torna […] en analista implacable y rebelde, deseoso de actuar” [the spectator becomes an individual with his own reasons and passions, from a benevolent and passive critic he becomes an implacable and rebellious analyst, keen to act] (67-68). This shift to an active first–person narrator represents a significant departure from early versions of the crónica genre and illustrates one of the continuities between the

---

22 These writings by Ricardo Palma (1833–1919) appeared in Peruvian newspapers and magazines from approximately 1863. The *Tradiciones* are fall into the genre of historical fiction, and are predominantly set in Lima.
costumbrista sketches, then the chronique and latterly the modernista crónica. Indeed, the first person perspective is a feature of the crónicas in this project, and to varying degrees, all three cronistas in this study wrote from the “yo” point of view. González observes that crónicas by modernistas such as Nájera, Martí and Casal are “generally characterised by a strong subjectivism, that is, by the writer’s tendency to observe and describe everything through the prism of the self” (28). This shift to the first person is one that places the cronista front and centre, creating an immediacy and emotional connection between writer and reader. The movement away from the neutral observer to the first person narrator is one of the key points of contact between the crónica modernista and its antecedents. Later sections of this chapter will examine additional points of convergence and departure between early iterations of the newspaper crónica, and its modernista version.

**Characteristics**

Recent studies have attempted to define the characteristics of the crónica, but not all scholars agree on one set definition of the genre. As mentioned earlier, critical commentary on the newspaper crónica was scant prior to the 1990s. In the late 1980s, the Mexican author and cronista Carlos Monsiváis observed this paucity of attention and commented thus:

> Why does the chronicle occupy such a marginalized position in our literary history? Neither the enormous prestige of poetry nor the omnipresent seduction of the novel adequately explain the almost complete disdain for such an important genre in the relationship between literature and society, between history and everyday life, between reader and literary taste, between information and entertainment, between testimony and raw material for fiction, between journalism and nation-building.

(qtd. in Corona and Jorgensen 1)

Following Monsiváis, other scholars have sought to comment on the nature and characteristics of the crónica. The Mexican writer and journalist Juan Villoro calls the crónica “the platypus of prose” and claims that it is “the most flexible of genres” (66).
This idea of flexibility, hybridity and “in-betweenness” is one that unites the various definitions and descriptions of the crónica.

Aníbal González positions the crónica “at the intersection of three textual institutions: philology, literature and journalism” (“Modernist” 73). In fulfilling its role as a piece of journalism, the crónica needed to be newsworthy and marketable. As a literary genre, “the chronicle had to be entertaining and creative while also possessing the solid, well-crafted nature of a work written with the philological awareness of the historicity of language” (73). In highlighting the role that philology played among modernista writers González states that

[p]hilology, as systematised by the Frenchmen Renan23 and Hippolyte Taine24, as well as the by the Spaniard Marcelino Menéndez Pelayo25, with its encyclopaedic cosmopolitanism, its vision of cultural renewal through the study of history, its interest in religion and above all its notion of language as an object, as a thing endowed with a concreteness and history of its own, was one of the modernistas’ chief models for their literary endeavour. (A Companion 7)

Susana Rotker also acknowledges that “the crónica comes from journalism, from literature and philology”, but adds that “its main interest is not to inform but to entertain” (qtd. in Bielsa 45). Ignacio López-Calvo makes clear the generic distinction between the crónica and reportaje [news article or report]. He stresses that while both genres may share a similar starting point, the cronista’s work offers a subjective perspective, which is delivered with personal style (126). Another reflection on the characteristics and function of this literary genre comes from Linda Egan, a specialist in Mexican literature and culture, for whom the crónica is defined by its “distinctive textual persona” leading us to anticipate an experience whereby we are “entertained and at the same time challenged in a peculiarly personal way, to be surprised by the crónica’s excess” (“Play on Words” 117).

23 Ernest Renan (1823-1892): philologist, historian and philosopher.
24 Hippolyte Taine (1828-1893): critic, philologist and historian.
25 Marcelino Menéndez Pelayo (1856-1912): scholar, literary critic and historian
In her 2001 book *Carlos Monsiváis: Culture and Chronicle in Contemporary Mexico*, Egan highlights the difficulties associated with the classification of this genre, claiming that, to date, theorists have tended to adopt either the literary or journalistic perspective when seeking to define the crónica. Egan offers a more expansive set of definitions: she expects the crónica to include history, but not be history as such; to be related to journalism but offer more than reporting; to resemble the essay whilst extending beyond; to resemble testimony without becoming testimonio; to be seen as being literary discourse, to be equally concerned with both form and function, and lastly to seek to “justify its truth claim” (*Carlos Monsiváis* 84).

Esperança Bielsa has also drawn attention to the challenges associated with defining this genre of creative writing. In her study of the urban crónicas of Mexico City and Guayaquil, Ecuador, the writer posits that they reside “in an in-between space”, in “a contact zone between high and low culture” (xii). Like Egan, Bielsa seeks to offer a more extensive description of the characteristics of the genre, while acknowledging its “inherent diversity and changeability” (38). She claims that the crónica “deals with real events and characters” while it simultaneously “narrativizes and fictionalizes in various degrees the real events it portrays”. The crónica has “descriptive intention” and is “a text with stylistic singularity through which the cronista addresses the reader with his or her own recognizable voice”. Bielsa also points to the fact that crónicas are frequently written in the first person and that therefore the author inhabits a “central position” in his or her article.

The crónicas that were penned by early Latin American cronistas during the late 1800s and early 1900s covered a range of themes and topics, and were presented in diverse literary styles. Andrew Reynolds notes that “many crónicas were written from abroad, due to the writers’ positions as foreign correspondents with major Spanish American and Spanish newspapers”. Several cronistas wrote about travel, with the Guatemalan writer Enrique Gómez Carrillo writing from as far afield as Israel and Japan (3). Others dealt with domestic and national issues, where opinions on history, politics and society were shared and discussed. The section that follows traces the emergence of the crónica modernista, and identifies the key practitioners of this genre of creative writing.
Modernismo, Journalism and the Crónica

In contrast to costumbrismo, which was associated with both Romanticism and Realism, the modern Latin American newspaper crónica originated during the modernismo period (1880–1920), and according to Aníbal González, accounts for approximately two-thirds of the literary material produced by well-known writers such as Cuban-born José Martí (1853–1895); the Mexicans Manuel Gutiérrez Nájera (1859–1895), and Amado Nervo (1870–1919); the Guatemalan Enrique Gómez Carrillo (1873–1927); and the Nicaraguan Rubén Darío (1867–1916) (Modernist Prose 73). It was Darío who coined the term modernismo and defined the literary movement as “freedom and lightness, the triumph of beauty over precepts in prose; and novelty in poetry: giving colour and light and air and flexibility to the ancient verse forms that suffered from paralysis after being tightly imprisoned in iron molds” (qtd. in González, A Companion 3). Roberto González Echevarría claims that Darío read French Symbolist poetry “and took seriously Rimbaud’s injunction that “one must be absolutely modern”. In that spirit, Darío chose ‘Modernism’ as the name for his movement”. This involved “writing poetry of uncompromising aesthetic beauty and discarding the sentimentality and rhetoric of Romanticism” (“Modernismo”) and his 1888 publication Azul... [Blue...] heralded the birth of a new period in Spanish American literary production.

Modernismo’s emergence in the late 19th century took place at a time of great economic and developmental progress in Latin America. Reynolds points to “revolutionary political events and a rise in democracy in the region, industrial advances, transformations in the way people communicated and travelled the globe, and the strong influence of global capitalism” (2) as indicators of this change. Favourable economic conditions in Latin America led to a rapid growth in journalistic activity and output, “both in terms of the numbers of publications and the daily numbers of newspaper editions” (8). Mass-market newspapers emerged, such as “the venerable El Comercio (founded 1839) in Lima, La Nación (founded 1870) in Buenos Aires, La Opinión Nacional (1870–92) in Caracas, and El Monitor del Pueblo (1885–93) in Mexico City” (González, A Companion 8). Julio Ramos, in his 2001 study of the newspaper La Nación at the turn of the nineteenth century,

---

26 It is important to make the distinction between Latin-American modernismo and ‘modernism’, the latter being a literary, artistic and architectural movement that emerged from Europe and the United States, also at the end of the 19th century and early into the 20th century.
claims that technological advancements, such as the launching of a much faster and more efficient telegraph service, improved communications which allowed for almost instantaneous coverage of news stories and advertising content (96). This environment in turn enabled a mutually beneficial relationship to develop between newspapers and journalists, as “newspapers relied on writers of literature for cultural and political content, and in turn, authors used periodicals as opportunities to publish their work” (Reynolds 9).

González underlines the triangular relationship between modernismo, journalism and the crónica. It was through this latter form that journalists were able to offer a written account and expression of the changes and progress that came with modernismo. Crónicas, with their focus on the “here and now” became the vehicles through which modernity was promoted to its audience (A Companion 25). González states that although early cronistas earned their living as journalists, they simultaneously welcomed the creative outlet provided to them through their crónica writing. With crónicas, cronistas would take a current event or topic and work it into a lively or humorous commentary, and González points out that “these articles were meant to be entertaining as well as informative” (“Modernist” 73). Thus, crónicas offered journalists some freedom from the strict conventions associated with journalistic discourse, and allowed them to escape into a literary style that was “decorative and frivolous”, in defiance of the “informative and utilitarian demands of journalism” (A Companion 27).

Reynolds shares this view:

Modernistas used the journalism industry to expand their literary interests, experiment with and develop their own literary style and secure positions of authority in the literary and journalistic fields of the time. Thus, instead of taking the modernistas away from an esteemed place in the literary sphere because of their widespread participation in the market-based newspaper industry, the mass medium of journalism actually brought modernismo closer to the artistic autonomy desired by writers of the movement. (2–3)

By the time crónicas started to appear in the mass-market newspapers in the late 1800s, there was in existence a reading public well accustomed to consuming both the costumbrista sketch, and the folletín, a newspaper serial related to the earlier French feuilleton, another antecedent of the crónica. Reynolds notes that like folletines, crónicas were “brief, consumable and portable texts that could be read without substantial time commitment” (11), that were often presented in instalments which to induce readers to
keep returning to the newspaper or magazine to consume the cronistas’ latest offering. This recurring feature of the modernista crónica, as with the folletines before it, assisted many cronistas in cultivating a loyal readership, eager to regularly purchase the newspaper for the next instalment. Reynolds notes another similarity, explaining that “the crónica, similar to that of the folletín was a genre in which modernista writers experimented with writing styles and ultimately became more proficient literary authors” (12).

The Latin American crónica bore many similarities to its antecedents, but there is a significant difference between earlier iterations of the crónica and the modernista version, that indicates the importance of the influence of modernista Hispanic authors as a group, which Aníbal González points out:

Unlike the chronique, the crónica modernista had as its authors leading figures and founders of literature and thought in Hispanic America; thus, its impact on the development of Hispanic letters of the nineteenth and even the twentieth centuries was much greater than that of the chronique in French literature.] (76).

Reynolds reinforces this point, noting that the crónica’s manifestation “in newspaper format allowed modernista writers to surge to the forefront of Spanish American cultural production” (1)27. In doing so, they established a popular and ubiquitous literary genre within Latin America and soon its vitality carried it further afield. The newspaper crónica’s reach extended to reading communities in a variety of settings: the section to follow examines the role of the newspaper crónica in the migrant press.

---

27 Cronistas such as Nájera covered a wide range of topics, such as political events and natural catastrophes. “Crónica de color de bitter” [“Bitter Coloured Crónica”] (1882), for example, dealt with the aftermath of an earthquake. In “La Hija del Aire” [“The Daughter of the Air”] (1882), the narrator confronts child exploitation in the form of a young girl who performs as a trapeze artist at the circus.
Historically, crónicas have played an important role in the immigrant press in the United States, assisting migrants as they adjust to their new environment by facilitating an ongoing connection with both the language and culture of the homeland. Examining the characteristics and role of the immigrant press culture as a whole, Robert E. Park’s book *The Immigrant Press and Its Control* (1922) identifies the following as key markers: the predominant use of the language of the homeland; catering for a population united by that language regardless of national origin; the necessity to decipher events from their own particular racial or nationalistic perspective; and lastly, promoting and furthering a sense of nationalism (438). Park’s view is that the immigrant press serves “a population in transition” (438), because it orientates and facilitates its readership via news and information whilst simultaneously maintaining connections with the lands of origin.

Writing from the North American perspective, Park discusses the concepts of The American Dream and The Melting Pot. The assumption was that migrants settling in the United States were doing so to seek a better life, and that it was only a question of time before they or their descendants integrated into American society, and by then there would no longer be a need for this kind of press.

Park’s views have been re-examined by Andrea Hickerson and Kristin L. Gustafson, who set out “to probe the relevance of the immigrant press as a theoretically distinct concept as articulated by Park” (1). Their study questioned whether Park’s concept of the immigrant press was still relevant, or whether the terms ‘ethnic’ or ‘transnational’ media would be more accurate. Research on ethnic media has largely emphasised the way in which “groups align or contrast themselves to mainstream society, sometimes permanently, but rarely as a pathway to integration” (5). The term transnational, on the other hand, can be seen to denote “a range of activities and entities from social movements to private and non-governmental to diasporas, to informal social and economic exchanges” (5). Hickerson and Gustafson claim that scholars of both ethnic and transnational media have characteristically de-emphasised the claim put forward by Park, that one of the key functions of the immigrant press is to assist with the process of assimilation. Their study involved interviewing editors, journalists and publishers with distinct immigration histories and profiles (1), and sought to “re-evaluate the function of the immigrant press” (6). They concluded that Park’s description of the features of the immigrant press continues to be applicable today, “more so than the major themes...
expressed in literature on ethnic and transnational media”. Significantly, Hickerson and Gustafson conclude that the immigrant press continues to be “an aid to assimilation” (1).

Park’s comments on the role of the migrant press have also been analysed by Nicolás Kanellos, who has written widely on the early 20th century Hispanic American immigrant newspapers. Kanellos agrees with many of Park’s observations; however, in his view, “the history of Hispanic groups in the United States has shown an unmeltable ethnicity” (“Cronistas and Satire” 4). Kanellos claims that Hispanic immigrant culture and its use of the printing press has not been characterised by assimilation (“Recovering” 439); instead, he cites the example of the migrant newspaper El Horizonte [The Horizon, 1879–80], which advised its readers against taking up US citizenship. In the newspaper’s view, “permanceremos (sic) extrangeros (sic) en los Estados Unidos y como tal nos consideran siempre”, [“we shall always be foreigners in the United States and they always consider us as such”] (qtd. in “Recovering” 439).

Kanellos states that the Hispanic migrant newspapers in the US also saw themselves as “defenders of the community”, and that their role was not only to protect the rights of the migrant, but also to shield the community “from the influence of Anglo-American culture and the Protestant religion” (“Cronistas and Satire” 4) and to purvey “an ideology of an Hispanic culture in exile” (“Recovering” 441). The crónica thus became an efficient vehicle through which to promote a concept known as México de afuera, 28 in the decades that followed the influx of economic refugees who fled the Mexican Revolution of 1910, settling mainly in San Antonio, New York and Los Angeles. The term México de afuera was coined by Américo Paredes, a Mexican-American folklorist and author, to describe a colony that existed outside Mexico, with the express aim of preserving and maintaining the Spanish language, Mexican culture and the Catholic faith, as well as insulating the community from the perceived “low moral standards practiced by Anglo-Americans” (Kanellos, “Cronistas and Satire” 4). Central to the concept of México de afuera was the idea that this community in exile would return “home” when it was safe to do so, once order had been restored and Mexico had returned to its pre-revolutionary state. The mostly male cronistas, using pseudonyms and thus benefiting from anonymity, used fictional

---

28 There are many translations for México de afuera. They include “Mexico Outside”, “Outer Mexico” and “Mexico outside Mexico”. This study uses the term in Spanish, as is the general convention in critical writings in English on this concept.
characters and sharp satire to promote this ideology, and in the process attempted to limit the influence of those Hispanics who chose to take the path of integration and assimilation.

Thus, the crónicas that were penned primarily in the Southwest of the United States by Mexican writers in the early part of the 20th century came to be used as a powerful way of disseminating the México de afuera ideology. They reinforced nationalistic and cultural pride and promoted the use of the Spanish language and adherence to the Catholic religion, as well as conservative family values and traditional gender roles. Cronistas such as Daniel Venegas, known as ‘El Malcriado’ [‘The Brat’], Benjamin Padilla, who used the pseudonym ‘Kaskabel’ [‘Rattlesnake’], and María Luisa Garza who wrote as ‘Loreley’, promoted this agenda by depicting and poking fun at those that they perceived to be too eager to adopt Anglo customs and values at the expense of their Mexican heritage. Julio G. Arce [‘Ulica’] was a highly successful newspaper publisher and cronista, whose syndicated weekly column “Crónicas Diabólicas” [“Diabolical Crónicas”] commented on day-to-day happenings in the Mexican migrant community. He used caricature and satire to emulate the colloquialisms and popular culture of the working-class migrant and through his humorous columns was well known for targeting the uneducated, disadvantaged women from the interior provinces of Mexico. Kanellos claims that it was through this female representation that Ulica chose to further his conservative agenda aimed at stemming “the tide of acculturation” while supporting “the survival of the Hispanic family and its culture in an alien environment” (“Cultural Conflict” N. pag.).

Kanellos’ descriptions of Ulica’s crónicas provide an insight into the way that he promoted the México de afuera ideology. In Inacio (sic) y Mengilda, a Mexican immigrant to the United States (Mengilda) is frustrated with her husband Inacio, who adheres to the values and customs of his homeland, whereas she enthusiastically adopts the American lifestyle. While she attempts to dress well and eat ‘American’ food, Inacio resists, and follows old habits such as going barefoot at home and refusing to get his hair cut in “ese rape aristócrato que se usa por acá” [“that very aristocratic shaved style that is used here”]. In exasperation at his lack of sophistication, Mengilda throws her husband out of the window, and then follows by throwing a monkey wrench at him, splitting his skull. In court, her lawyer argues persuasively that his client is merely a poor woman trying to improve herself and become more cultured, and she is unanimously acquitted. At this point in the crónica, Kanellos points out that Ulica’s voice “breaks in to emphasize to the reader that this is one of a legion of incidents that happen every day in the United States”
(“Cultural Conflict” N. pag.). In this and other of Ulica’s crónicas, the author comments on the tendency among ambitious and aspirational Mexican women to abandon their spouses and their ethnic culture, as they become enticed by white American materialistic values.

The theme of gender is also explored by Gabriela Baeza Ventura in her 2001 doctoral thesis La imagen de la mujer en la crónica del ‘México de afuera’ [The Image of the Woman in the Crónica from ‘México de afuera’]. Examining the work of six cronistas, she too investigates the way in which the cronistas’ portrayal of the Mexican woman served to reinforce this same traditional ideology. Baeza Ventura describes the strategies used by cronistas such as Ulica, who targeted Mexican women for criticism since they were seen to be more vulnerable to the effects of acculturation, “porque…ellas tienen más posibilidades de asimilarse y aceptar la nueva cultura y tradición americanas” [“because…they have more opportunities to assimilate and accept the new American culture and traditions”] (46).

Commenting on the nature of migrant literature, Baeza Ventura draws on the idea of “el aquí y el allá” [“(the) here and there”] to describe the forces that pull and push in either direction, a result of the migrants’ desire to both participate in the opportunities provided by the host country, whilst simultaneously continuing to be loyal members of the Mexican community (8).

Baeza Ventura applies Benedict Anderson’s concept of ‘imagined communities’ as a framework upon which to construct her work. In his 1983 book Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism, Anderson contemplates the phenomenon of nationalism, and defines a nation as being “imagined because even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion” (5)29. According to Anderson, these imagined communities became possible with the advent of print capitalism, which allowed for the formation of communities united by a common language, and consequently there arose the means by which dialogue could take place within these groups. In Baeza Ventura’s view, the ideology of México de afuera:

29 I have cited the 2006 edition of Imagined Communities.
permite que el inmigrante se identifique con un espacio, un lugar a donde pertenecer. De ahí la creación de una comunidad imaginada como la que propone Benedict Anderson, en donde los ciudadanos comparten mitos e ideas que los unen. (13)

[allows the immigrant to identify with a space, or belong to a place, and from this, to the creation of an imagined community as proposed by Benedict Anderson, in which its members share the myths and ideas that unite them].

Baeza Ventura identifies the intellectuals, community leaders and newspaper owners as supporters of the México de afuera ideology, because it allowed them to create a nation and a physical and ideological space, producing barrios [neighbourhoods] that she identifies as imagined communities (13).

In summation, Kanellos and Baeza-Ventura have highlighted the way in which cronistas such as Ulica and others used the crónica to defend the community (Kanellos “Cronistas and Satire” 4), and in doing so, sought to further an agenda that involved the advancement of conservative values and the preservation of Mexican cultural traditions, language and the Catholic faith for Mexican migrants in the United States in the early 20th century.
Spanish Literature in Australia and the Australian Crónicas

They exist, they write, but where is their writing?

Sneja Gunew and Kateryna O Longley, Striking Chords (xvii).

Thus far the studies on the role of the crónica in the migrant press in the United States have focused primarily on the way in which this literary genre served to promote the cultural values associated with the México de afuera ideology. In shifting the focus of this study to the Australian setting, it becomes evident that, with the exception of the work by Michael Jacklin and Louis Vincent Di Paolo, there is an absence of critical writing on the newspaper crónica in Spanish language publications. This is despite the fact that this genre of creative writing has been published in Australian newspapers and magazines since the mid 1970s. Before discussing Jacklin’s research on the crónica, I will first briefly review the writings on multicultural, and then Spanish language literature in Australia.

Research into literary production in Languages Other Than English (LOTE) in Australia commenced in the 1970s when Loló Houbein began to track the work of first generation immigrants who wrote in English, producing a bibliography in three editions over a decade. In 1986 Alexandra Karakostas-Seda complemented Houbein’s bibliography by adding the work of those migrant writers whose work was published in LOTE. Houbein and Karakostas-Seda later collaborated with Sneja Gunew and Jan Mahyuddin and 1992 saw the publication of A Bibliography of Australian Multicultural Writers. Wenche Ommundsen recounts Gunew’s reflections on the difficulties that this research involved: “it was a case of having to sift through old journals and anthologies in order simply to come up with the names of writers and examples of their work” (qtd. in Ommundsen par. 3). Other factors have also contributed to the difficulties associated with this process. Many writers who wrote in languages other than English published in anthologies and journals within Australia, but also frequently overseas. Some of the literary institutions publishing these works have fallen outside the mainstream, making their contents less accessible to researchers and the public. Nevertheless, as noted in this study’s introduction, while there has been a significant critical response to writings in Greek, Italian and Chinese, studies on creative writing in Spanish hardly exist. This lacuna has impacted on those seeking to research creative writing in Spanish in Australia. Ignacio García’s 1997 publication Spanish Fiction Writing in Australia was the first such attempt.
to draw attention specifically to literary production in the Hispanic community. García states his aim is “simply, to put their work on the maps of Australian multicultural writing and of creative works written in Spanish, and to preserve it” (5). He compiled data on approximately 130 authors, producing a comprehensive list of writers whose work was “created, published and read within the Spanish speaking communities in Australia” (5). In addition, García was able to assemble an impressive collection of these works at the library of The Western Sydney University’s Bankstown campus. While this selection covers literature produced in the 20th century, Spanish writing in Australia goes back much further.

The earliest writing in Spanish in Australia can be traced back to the mid 19th century when a Benedictine monk, Rosendo (or Rudesino) Salvado (1814–1900), and members of his order settled north of Perth in a community which they called New Norcia, after the birthplace of St. Benedict. The goal of the order was to teach farming practices and to spread Christianity to the Yued people of the Noongar nation. While in Europe raising funds to continue his work in New Norcia, Salvado wrote his memoirs Memorie Storiche dell’Australia: Particolarmente della Missione Benedettina di Nuova Norcia e degli usi costumi degli Australiani (1851). Although written first in Italian, his work was published in Spanish in 1853, in French in 1854, and in English in 1977 as Historical Memoirs of Australia, and particularly that of the Benedictine Missionary of New Norcia and of the Habits and Customs of the Australian Natives. The contribution made by Salvado and his fellow monks to Australian colonial literature of the late 19th and early 20th centuries was substantial, and they wrote extensively in Spanish about their voyages and travels, as well as keeping personal notes, journals, commentaries and correspondence with their contemporaries in Australia, Spain and elsewhere. Salvado left a large body of work which remains housed in the archives at New Norcia, and is accessible to scholars and researchers.

The Catalan anarchist Salvador Torrents (1885–1952) made notable contributions to early creative writing in Australia. His literary output from North Queensland over many decades spanned a variety of genres, namely the short story, the novella and a number of translations from French into Spanish. This self-taught intellectual is of particular relevance to this study since he was also the creator of the first Spanish language crónicas in Australia, through which he expressed his views on topics such as community, family, politics, workplace issues and gender. Historians Judith Keene and Robert Mason have each written articles on Torrents; however, although both have commented on Torrents’
writings, their focus has been largely of a biographical and historical nature. My examination of his crónicas in Chapter 2 will draw on the research that I have been able to undertake with the assistance of James Cook University’s Special Collections Library, where the expansive Torrents archive is held.

García claims that the first Spanish language book to be self-published in Australia was Rodó Blanco Labardén’s *Así es Uruguay* (1977) [*This is Uruguay*],\(^{30}\) which was followed in 1982 by Bernardo Landó’s poetry collection *Los Perros de la Noche* [*The Dogs of the Night*]. However, examples of creative writing in Spanish had already started to appear in the mid 1960s through the pages of Australia’s first Hispanic newspaper, *La Crónica*, whose editors Manuel Perdices and Manuel Vareda launched their publication in 1964. Both had arrived in Australia a year earlier, two among the approximately eight thousand migrants from Spain recruited to Australia as part of the Spanish Migration scheme, which ran from 1958 to 1963. Many of the new migrants worked in the cane fields of far north Queensland and picked fruit around Mildura, while others settled in the industrial regions of Wollongong, Geelong and Whyalla and in capital cities. While most of the migrants undertook unskilled work, others sought to establish businesses that would service the newly formed Hispanic communities, as Perdices and Vareda did, launching the first edition of *La Crónica* [*The Chronicle*] on 11\(^{th}\) July 1964.

García’s 1988 article “‘La Crónica’: Mirroring a Community in the Making” describes the first edition of this Spanish language newspaper as having eight pages, featuring local and international news and importantly, community notices. As the paper established itself, correspondents from the main centres of migrant concentration also contributed items of local interest to the paper’s readership. *La Crónica* continued to provide a forum for its readers to vent their frustrations about the challenges that they had previously faced privately. They now had an outlet to express a variety of concerns, including grievances about the migrant scheme, disagreements about the paper’s coverage of local soccer matches, and complaints about Victoria’s strict alcohol laws. Reports of racial violence were also shared. García states that the newspaper gave the Spanish community “a sense of awareness, a mirror through which to look at itself” (124).

In García’s view, *La Crónica* also provided migrants with an outlet through which to create Spanish-Australian literature. The first example of creative writing in Spanish

\(^{30}\) Aside from García’s mention of Rodó Blanco’s book, I have not been able to find any further details about this publication.
language newspapers appears to be “Mr Zamora en Queensland” which was written anonymously and published on 3 October 1964. Manuel Vareda’s verse appeared weekly in a column named “Los Ripios de la Semana” [“The Week’s Leftovers”] 31 which García describes as having been written “with not much poetic gist but a wealth of sociological information” (Spanish Fiction 6). La Crónica experienced stiff competition when, in 1965, the newspaper El Español en Australia was launched in Sydney with José Fernández as editor. Already struggling to remain economically viable, La Crónica’s operations came to an end in 1966. Although short-lived, the paper gave voice to a new community of migrants “at the most important and delicate time in the establishment of a lasting Spanish colony in Australia” (“La Crónica” 142). It is notable that the description that García offers of the role that this newspaper played in the creation of a Spanish speaking community resonates with the México de afuera ideology discussed earlier in this chapter.

From the mid 1970s the flow of Hispanic migration to Australia changed such that nationals from Chile, Argentina and Uruguay arrived in large numbers. This meant that El Español en Australia needed to appeal to a more diverse ethnic community and by the time that Fernández left the paper in late 1960s, a shift had taken place encompassing a broader readership and journalists who no longer identified exclusively with the Spanish identity.

During the last four decades, newspapers have come and gone, though El Español en Australia (1965–present), Noticias y Deportes (1975–present) and The Spanish Herald (1971–present) have been the most prominent, and all three continue to circulate either in print or electronic form. Others, such as El Expreso (1979), tried to establish a point of difference, by publishing a more left-wing offering; however, it remained viable for only a few months during 1979 and ceased operations when funds ran short.

In addition to these newspapers, a number of Spanish-language magazines such as Versión, Vistazo, 30 Días, Convergencia, Actas, Nosotras and Hontanar and others emerged since the start of the 1970s. Primarily featuring articles on current affairs, these magazines also allowed for the publication of short stories, poems and the crónicas that are the focus of my investigation. Michael Jacklin’s 2010 article “‘Desde Australia para todo el mundo hispano’: Australia’s Spanish Language Magazines and Latin American/Australian Writing” includes an analysis of the magazine crónicas of Lucho

31 ‘Ripios’ can also be translated as ‘bad poetry’ or ‘trite verse’.
Abarca (Blady Woggie), and Michael Gamarra, writing as Ernesto Balcells, among others. The themes covered by both writers pertained to the day to day issues faced by Spanish-speaking migrants adjusting to the changed circumstances associated with relocation, as well as the cross-cultural conflicts and misunderstandings that new arrivals frequently faced (180). Their crónicas offered “the migrant’s perspective on the circumstances and experiences of Hispanic migration and adaptation to an Anglophone society, as well as a commentary on the values and assumptions of the dominant Anglo-Australian society” (181).

Jacklin highlights the way in which the immediacy and the “here and now” qualities of the crónica encouraged an exchange between the cronista and the reader, and correspondence by way of the letters pages of both newspapers and magazines illustrate this practice. He describes the intention of the crónica as such:

All of these works intend to create a discursive space that allows Hispanic migrants, both writers and readers, to reflect upon dilemmas of identity or conflicts of culture, in prose that incorporates humour that is often sarcastic and sometimes quite bitter. (“Desde Australia” 181)

The “dilemma of identity” and the “conflicts of culture” are further explored by Jacklin in “Translated Lives in Australian ‘Crónicas’” (2016), a book chapter that focuses on translating the self in migrant writing. The term “translation” to refer to both a literal and metaphorical process in the migrant’s experience has been discussed in some length in Chapter 1, and forthcoming chapters will examine crónicas by Woggy Girl, Blady Woggie and El Gato through this lens. However, before doing so I focus in the next section on the case study of a very significant protagonist in the history of the Australian crónica – this country’s first cronista, Salvador Torrents.
Chapter 3

From Mataró to Mena Creek: The first Australian cronista

Crónica writing in Australia commences in the sugar-growing area of Far North Queensland where a Spanish anarchist named Salvador Torrents settled in 1916. Over many decades until his death in 1951, this self-taught intellectual wrote profusely on topics such as community, race, politics, gender and the plight of the obrero [labourer]. Historians Judith Keene and Robert Mason have each published articles on Torrents, and while they have discussed his literary works in general, their research has taken a biographical and political perspective of the man and his writing. This chapter, on the other hand, approaches Torrents as a significant literary figure responsible for the production of the first known crónicas in Australia. It examines the various themes introduced by Torrents, many of which reappear in the newspaper columns published half a century later by the Hispanic cronistas whose work is at the centre of my study.

Salvador Torrents was born in 1885 in Mataró, a city north of Barcelona, Spain. Judith Keene’s articles on Torrents (1998, 2001) have drawn a vivid picture of the anarchist’s life, first in Spain and France, and later in Australia, and her research has formed the basis of the biographical comments which follow. Keene’s account positions Torrents in a socio-economic class that he described as “trabajando mucho y comiendo poco” [“working a lot and eating little”] (“The Word” 314). Both his parents worked in factories, and he too had joined the workforce by the age of ten. In his teenage years Torrents was drawn first to the republican, and then to the anarchist movements, where he was exposed to the teachings of the Catalan rationalist educator Francisco Ferrer i Guàrdia. Ferrer i Guàrdia’s ideas were “the most significant influence on Torrents’ political and intellectual life” and it was he who inspired Torrents to adopt “the belief in the need for moral improvement acquired through self-education” (Keene, In Search 113).

In July 1909, after a government crackdown on Ferrer i Guàrdia and his supporters, Torrents fled to France. During that same year he received news from Mataró that his compañera [partner] Teresa Vives had given birth to a baby who was named Paz Universal, [Universal Peace] after Ferrer i Guàrdia’s daughter Paz. Teresa was by this stage in dire economic straits, unemployable because of her relationship with Torrents, who was known to be a follower of Ferrer i Guàrdia. Despite the happy news of his daughter’s birth, these years were, according to Keene, some of “the lowest points in his
life” (In Search 115), when the struggles to provide for himself and his family appeared to be almost insurmountable.

During a number of years following the upheavals of 1909, Torrents travelled back and forth between France and Spain, searching unsuccessfully for secure employment. In 1915, he and his friend Juan Jordana made the decision to leave Europe for Australia, and in late November of that year the two men boarded the Osterley and arrived in Melbourne some weeks later. Their final destination was North Queensland, where the Australian government had begun offering cheap land to settlers for sugar-cane agriculture (Keene, In Search 117). The Colonial Sugar Refining Company (CSR) was simultaneously experiencing a labour shortage and sought to expand its workforce (Douglass 5). Australian Federation (1901) had brought with it a shift away from the employment of workers from Asia and the Pacific Islands in favour of a “white” labour force; however, this was problematic as the British, Scandinavian and German workers who were selected to address this labour shortage proved unable to tolerate the harsh, tropical, working conditions. Southern European workers from Italy and Spain were then sought because they were thought to be more constitutionally able to withstand both the heat and the arduous conditions. Douglass reports that the North Queensland Register of 13 July 1907 commented that “apart from their attire, which in some ways is very curious, […] the men looked as fine a lot of labourers as could be seen” (7). Other opinions in the same paper were less positive. Some readers thought it unfortunate that the British were unable to form part of this workforce, and there was concern that “Spaniards would not adapt themselves” (North Queensland Register 20 July 1907) to the Australian way of life. Although these sentiments were expressed some years before Torrents and Jordana arrived in North Queensland in 1916, they echo the sentiments expressed in many of the crónicas that Torrents would later write in which he addresses topics such as race-relations, prejudice and labour conditions within the sugar-cane communities.

The demand for cane-cutters in North Queensland led the Australian government to offer cheap land to settlers for sugar-farming (Keene, “In Search” 117) and in 1916 Torrents and Jordana responded to this opportunity by establishing themselves permanently in Queensland. There were many months of working under very harsh conditions before the pair settled on a property at Mena Creek, some thirty kilometres from Innisfail. In 1919 Torrents’ application to become Australian was accepted, and subsequently he was able to facilitate the arrival from Spain of Teresa and Paz, whose desperate financial situation
in Spain had continued without relief. They joined a greater Innisfail community that was made up of migrants from England, Italy, Greece, China, Turkey, Malta, Germany, Russia as well as Spain. Torrents paints a vibrant picture of the cultural and linguistic communities that co-existed in and around Innisfail during the early to mid 1900s. In a journal entry entitled “Memorias de un obrero” [“Memories of a Labourer”] (ST 5/3), he describes the town’s population as being made up of “una mezcla que dudo que existe 32 en ninguna parte, un pueblo con tanta variedad de gente” [“a mixture that I doubt exists anywhere else, a town with such a variety of people”] (ST 5/3). He adds that on weekends, during social gatherings in the town, “de todo se habla menos el ingles” [“every language is spoken, except English”].

Salvador Torrents was a prolific writer. From the start of his voyage to Australia on the passenger ship the Osterley until his death in 1952, Torrents wrote across a variety of genres, including short stories, memoirs and the crónicas that are at the centre of this study. In addition, he translated correspondence and articles from French into Spanish. The Salvador Torrents archive, which is held at James Cook University, contains his notebooks, scrapbooks, letters and assorted photos and memorabilia. He was passionate about books, which he referred to in his unpublished journals as “el Bálsamo de mi existencia” [“the balm of my existence”] (ST 5/4), and he committed himself to a disciplined practice of spending his evenings reading, writing, translating and learning English after full days of hard manual labour. His grandson Galan Onaindia reports that Torrents would spend an inordinate amount of time in his study, pursuing scholarly activities in a room that held books from floor to ceiling. He adds: “because of all the writing, it was my job to post the letters, when I went to school, and then he would give me thrupence or sixpence to buy some lollies” (Onaindia, G).

From the early years of his writing life, Torrents’ crónicas appeared in Spanish-language newspapers such as Acción Fabril, El Vidrio and Iniciales, all of which were published in a variety of locations in Cataluña in the early 1900s. Torrents’ earliest crónicas appeared in the short lived Acción Fabril (1915–1916) a publication representing the interests of workers in the textile industry. At least one of Torrents’ crónicas appeared in Iniciales

---

32 Many spelling and grammatical errors appear in Torrents’ unpublished works. All quotations in this chapter appear in their original form, with no corrections or changes. As the errors are frequent, I have not used the sic marker to identify each error.
(1929–1937), a fortnightly publication that dealt with diverse themes that included individualism, naturism and sex education. El Vidrio described itself as “Organo de los Vidrieros, Cristaleros y Similares de España” [“the mouthpiece for Spanish Makers of Glass, Crystal and the like”]. Early publication of this monthly periodical took place from 1915 in Badalona, and following that in a variety of locations from which the Federation was administered. Most of the articles in El Vidrio dealt with topics related to industrial relations and labour market issues, with some letters and opinion pieces. It is not clear whether Torrents was involved in any way with the glass making industry prior to his departure from Spain, or how he came to be connected with this publication in the first instance. In any case, archival records show that he continued to submit his work to El Vidrio over many years during the 1920s.

Many of Torrents’ later crónicas appeared in the New York based Cultura Proletaria (1927–1952), a self-described newspaper of “ideas, doctrine and combat”. This anarchistic weekly emerged from the Cultura Proletaria Group which was made up of around thirty active members who met regularly and were led by the paper’s editor, Marcelino García, himself a migrant from Spain. The group was responsible for the production and distribution of the newspaper, and gathered weekly to wrap and address each edition, before posting them on the same day (Avrich 395). Although published in New York, contributions to the paper were not limited to those penned in North America. The page entitled De Todas Partes [From Everywhere] featured columns from writers across Europe, Central and Latin America, and from 1931 the paper published Torrents’ crónicas, letters and translations from Australia. He engaged actively with both readers of, and contributors to, this publication, and immersed himself in transnational debates covering a range of issues, mostly related to anarchism and politics, but also extending to themes such as race, gender and community. The cronista’s associations with Cultura Proletaria continued for a further two decades, and his last contribution to the publication took place in late 1950, only months before his death, and two years before the paper ceased its operations. From the mid 1940s onwards, Torrents’ writing would also appear in newspapers in Australia such as The Rationalist, once his mastery of the English-language was such that he felt comfortable expressing his views in what would be his fourth language after Castilian, Catalan and French.

33 On page 54 I address the challenges that I encountered in my attempts to locate Torrents’ crónicas in their original publication. Although it is likely that Iniciales published more than one of Torrents’ crónicas, I cannot confirm this.
Torrents was a keen observer of cultural and societal mores, and from the start of his travels to Australia, he filled many handwritten notebooks with his impressions, reflections, and with detailed vignettes of his experiences. A large number of these handwritten notes would later evolve into the crónicas that were published in the newspapers listed above, and for this reason I have decided to discuss also Torrents’ unpublished work in this chapter. Torrents’ crónicas, both published and unpublished, are important to this study not only from a historical perspective, but also because of Torrents’ observations about the Spanish migrant’s experience of life in Australia.

Locating Torrents’ crónicas in their original publication has been challenging. Although the cronista kept extensive scrapbooks in which he collated his published columns, he frequently did so without including the publication’s name. My attempts to trace the crónicas to their original publication by scouring through digital editions of El Vidrio, Iniciales and Acción Fabril have been hampered by the fact that the libraries in Europe that retain archives of these newspapers tend to have partial collections with frequent gaps. Thus, while I have been successful in locating some of Torrents’ crónicas in their original publication, many remain unidentified, as newspaper columns pasted in his many notebooks. For this reason, I have chosen to use the reference system created by Special Collections librarians at James Cook University. Unpublished crónicas will be identified as such at the beginning of each section of commentary. Likewise, I will also point out published crónicas.

In his handwritten notebook entitled “Poesias, Cronicas y Cuentos” [“Poetry, Crónicas and Stories”] (ST 5/1), he prefaces a crónica written in 1928 with “Una Advertencia” [“A Warning”]. He informs his readers as to what to expect should they continue to read his work. His writing will not be “algo de literatura o poesia” [“some kind of literary or poetic work”] which adheres to grammatical conventions. Rather, his offerings are the musings and inspirations of a man, who, after a hard day’s work puts pen to paper to express “los entusiasmos, las ilusiones, decepciones sufridas, siendo espectador y actor en esa comedia que llamamos ‘vida’” [“the enthusiasm, desires and disappointments suffered, being both spectator and actor in that drama that we call ‘life’”]. The way in which Torrents

34 “A Warning” prefaces a handwritten crónica entitled “La Honradez de D.Toribio” [“The Honour of Don Toribio”] which was later published on 15 Aug. 1928. This crónica is discussed on p. 62.
characterises himself and his work accords with the ‘organic intellectual’, a term first used by the Antonio Gramsci in his Prison Notebooks (1929–1935). In contrast to the ‘traditional intellectuals’, who “perceive themselves and are perceived as an independent group” Gramsci claims that ‘organic intellectuals’ emerge from and represent the communities from which they originate. They speak for and promote the interests of the class to which they belong (King 25). For Torrents, giving voice to the concerns and views of those who shared his libertarian ideals was a pursuit to which he dedicated his time and attention throughout his adult life.

Torrents’ works shine a light on the cronista’s world within his newfound Australian home. Judith Keene and Robert Mason have both examined Torrents as a political figure. Mason’s 2010 study investigates the way in which the migrant identities of Torrents and other Hispanic settlers in North Queensland “were formed by the pervasive intersection of local and international events” (166). Hispanic migrant responses to conflicts overseas such as the Spanish Civil War (1936–1939) and domestic occurrences such as the sugar-farmers’ strike in South Johnstone (1927) are some of the events analysed by Mason. In her article “In Search of Acracia, a Catalan Anarchist in Australia” (111), Keene explores Torrents’ life-long search for the opportunity to create a community that could exist without interference from church or state. His commitment to the anarchistic cause shaped the content of many of Torrents’ crónicas, and from the 1930s onwards the majority of his published works in Cultura Proletaria relate to politics in general, and anarchy in particular. My focus in this chapter centres on the crónicas that Torrents penned in his earlier life, from the start of his voyage to Australia in 1915 to the early 1930s. The themes covered in these earlier works extend beyond politics to cover a host of issues, such as community, race, gender relations, social justice, racism and violence. This chapter highlights a selection of the cronista’s work that I believe best illustrates the aforementioned themes.

The published crónica “Un Sueño” [“A Dream”] (ST 5/18),35 is one of the many that Torrents penned during his years in Australia, in which he expressed his commitment to the rights of the worker and his disdain for the military industrial complex. He describes a dream in which he finds himself in the main street of a nameless European capital city, where he encounters a group of men who are being held in custody. He asks a well-

---

35 “Un Sueño” was published on 30 Aug. 1928. Publication unknown.
presented gentleman “¿Qué delito han cometido estos hombres?” [“What crime have these men committed?”]. The gentleman replies that they are political prisoners, in trouble because “se meten en lo que no les interesa” [“they stick their noses into affairs that don’t concern them”]. He asks the same question to an obrero [labourer] who gives a different response, and explains that these men are only exercising their rights to be who they are and to express their opinions. The dream continues in a different location, this time in front of the “Palacio de Justicia” [“Palace of Justice”], upon which flags of prominent European nations are displayed. There he encounters a regiment of soldiers presenting an honour guard to senior military personnel who are all adorned with medals that demonstrate their status and seniority. He begins an exchange with another spectator, asking again about the reason for this ceremony. The stranger explains that these “hombres célebres” [“distinguished men”] are there to bring peace, and to guide the destinies of the nations they represent. Once again, an alternate view is sought from another bystander, who offers a contrasting perspective, for whom the military men “que lucían toda aquella quincallería en el pecho como si fueran representantes de alguna joyería” [“who flaunt all that hardware on their chests as if they were representatives of some jewellery store”] are the architects of the wars in which millions die without ever knowing why. This spectator expresses his dismay that wartime endeavours destroy the buildings that workers have constructed with “angustias y sudores” [“angst and sweat”]. The exchange between the two men comes to an end when secret police detain the second bystander, “por falta de respeto y patriotismo” [“for lacking respect and patriotism”]. At this point Torrents writes that he is awakened from his sleep, in an ill-humoured state, with the knowledge that he would be spending the workday toiling under the scorching sun. In “Un Sueño”, Torrents gives voice to the challenges faced by those who pursue equal rights and question the military response to conflict. He alerts the reader to the personal risks involved in standing up for freedom, and the price paid by those who make their views known in an environment where force may be used at any time to silence dissent.

Themes of equality and social justice are further explored in the poignant crónica “Los Frutos del Mundo Civilizado”, [“Fruits of the Civilised World”] (ST 5/1) which appears as a handwritten journal entry. Torrents gives voice to the tragic outcomes that take place when sections of the community are not given equal access to essential goods and services. This crónica charts the downward spiral of Acracio, a young man who wanders the world in search of a country whose socio-political values promote democracy, freedom and equality. His travels take him to the United States, where he is disappointed to encounter
a system that conspires to undermine the individual’s rights and liberties. He is particularly confronted to witness racial segregation in which “a los negros ni se los permitían entrar en un café con los blancos” [“blacks weren’t even allowed to enter cafés with the whites”]. Acracio’s political activities attract the attention of the authorities who deport him “por ser un individuo peligroso con ideas” [“for being a dangerous individual with ideas”]. His return to Barcelona marks the descent into tragedy when, with his friend Liberto, he desperately searches for employment to support his wife, Flora and his child, Palmiro. When he is unable to secure any work and Palmiro falls ill, their situation becomes critical. Without the means to purchase the necessary medicines or to access the money needed by legal means, Acracio is involved in a scuffle with the town mayor whom Acracio stabs to death after he refuses to lend him the essential funds. Relieving the deceased of his money, Acracio purchases the medications but finds he is too late to save his son. While Flora cries, Acracio and Liberto rage at “la inocente víctima de esa maldita sociedad capitalista” [“the innocent victim of this cursed capitalist society”]. Both men are imprisoned while Flora is left to die in hospital, “abandonada como un perro” [“abandoned like a dog”]. The crónica concludes with the words “Eso son ‘Los frutos del Mundo Civilizado’” [“these are ‘the fruits of a civilized world’”].

In “Los Frutos” Torrents probes the concept of a civilised society and illustrates in a passionate tone the tragic consequences that arise when the basic needs of a community’s more vulnerable members are not met. In addition, although Acracio is a fictional character, there is an autobiographical element to this crónica. Acracio, whose name is a variation on Acracia, (an ideal society that could exist without the intrusion of church or state) travels the world in search of a locale where libertarian values are practised and celebrated. Torrents, like the protagonist in this crónica, journeyed in search of a mythical Acracia, and Robert Mason states that the Spaniard perceived Australia as “a potential radical Utopia that stood in sharp contrast to the decadence and corruption of Old Europe” (Mason 5).

Like the fictional Acracio who laments the racially segregated US, so too does Torrents express dismay at the racial inequality he encounters in his adopted home. In a handwritten footnote to “Los Frutos”, Torrents translates Acracio’s confrontations with racism into a local context, and comments on the plight of Aboriginal people in Australia thus: “los pobres nativos, después de haberles robado lo suyo, los mataban como conejos. Hoy los llevan a una isla. Los hombres separados de las mujeres, para ixtinguir la raza”
(ST 5/1 p 30) [“the poor natives, after being robbed of what was theirs, were killed like rabbits. These days they are taken away to an island, men separated from women, in order to extinguish the race”]. Torrents does not elaborate on this claim; however, it is possible that he may have been referring to the removal, first to Hull River settlement, then to Palm Island, of significant numbers of North Queensland Aboriginal people from around 1914 onwards. According to the authors of “Alcohol and Power on Palm Island”, Aborigines were “drafted” there from other districts in North Queensland. They were removed for their “relief” or “protection” or for “disciplinary reasons” (Punt, Barber and Albers 90). Race relations continue to appear as a frequent theme in Torrents’ crónicas, as the “Impresiones” series discussed next demonstrates.

Earlier references have been made to the manner through which Mexican cronistas who wrote in the migrant press in the US early in the 20th century acted as observers and commentators. They also sought to adopt the role of community moralists. A similar illustration of the way in which Torrents observes, commentates and moralises on life in Australia can be found in his crónicas, “Impresiones de mi viaje a Australia I & II” [“Impressions of my Journey to Australia I & II”] (ST 5/18).36 In these the first of the two published crónicas, Torrents writes that he is pleasantly surprised that third class passengers on the Osterley enjoy the same dining privileges as all others, and are served plentiful food by waiters, “como si fuera un restaurante” [“as if it were a restaurant”]. Torrents is equally impressed with Fremantle, the first Australian port that the Osterley visits. In the second crónica, he comments that the city streets are “muy bien arregladas” [“very well laid out”]. He finds less pleasing what he perceives to be a culture adversely affected by alcohol, gambling, prostitution and the consumption of opium, and is scathing about the way that Anglo-Irish Australians abuse alcohol and call themselves ‘civilised’ when few of them are sober enough to stand up unsupported.

He comments also, when he observes the same Anglo-Irish passengers singing hymns to celebrate Christmas: “¡pobres gentes! Mucho trabajar por el alma y nada se cuidan de su cuerpo: todo lo esperan del cielo, nada hacen por mejorar la vida en la tierra” [“poor

---

36 This crónica appeared in two parts, published in as “Impresiones I & II”. The name of the newspaper and the publication dates are unknown. In addition to the published versions of “Impresiones I & II” the archive holds another similarly titled text which is unpublished and handwritten. This version is discussed later in this chapter.
people! They work hard on their souls but not their bodies. They expect everything from heaven, but do nothing to improve their lives on earth!”]. In the same crónica, Torrents shares with readers another experience of confronting poverty and racial inequality, this time on the streets of Colombo, where the Osterley had docked overnight en route to Australia. He is disturbed by the sight of the puspus men, who replace horses and pull along carriages “como verdaderas bestias” [“like real beasts”]. The cronista observes that the so called salvajes [savages], “despreciados por su color” [“scorned because of their colour”] are in many cases able to speak up to four languages, implying that they possess equal or superior cognitive ability as those who ill-treat them.

On disembarking at the first Australian port of Fremantle, Torrents expresses surprise and dismay to see little evidence of Indigenous Australians, and he concludes that “los europeos los han civilizado a todos (hecho desaparecer)” [“the Europeans have civilized them (made them disappear)”] (ST 5/18). With a sting in his tone, Torrents remarks that the Europeans whom he holds responsible for this disappearance, through assimilation, disease, displacement or violent conflict are the same individuals whose abuse of alcohol clashes with their self-appointed role as “civilizadores” [“civilisers”].

The theme of racism continues in his handwritten journals, which refer to the manner in which Spanish migrants working in North Queensland were received by their hosts. He writes: “Los que aquí no hemos nacido nos tratan como a negros. Se creen ser superiores, pero te puedo asegurar que nada les hemos de envidiar” [“Those of us who were not been born here are treated like blacks. They think that they are superior, but I can assure you that there is nothing that we need to envy them for”] (ST 5/1). The discrimination Torrents depicts here is later echoed by Ray Jordana, the son of Torrents’ friend, a fellow cane-farmer, who, in interviews with Alan Frost, describes the efforts that he made to master the English language through self-education, a topic already touched on by Torrents. Experience had taught him that official personnel such as bank managers, administrative staff and shop assistants were much more responsive and respectful of those who spoke “the King’s English”, and he saw first-hand the treatment that was handed out by “pipsqueak” officials to those with limited English language skills (Frost 201). Torrents’ observations on race are worthy of further analysis, as his position is a complex and shifting one. On the one hand, he identifies with and demonstrates empathy towards the natives of Colombo, and draws the readers’ attention to their cognitive abilities. He adds that although the British colonisers of Australia may see themselves as being superior to
later arrivals, there is no justification for this perception. However, when he writes that “nos tratan como negros” [“they treat us like blacks”], he demonstrates his discomfiture at belonging to a migrant group that is ‘tarred with the same brush’ as the Indigenous communities in and around Innisfail, or to the communities of islanders imported previously to work in cane fields, who are also dark-completed.

Racial issues would continue to feature in Torrents work, and an early encounter with a negra [black woman] is described in the handwritten version of “Impresiones” (ST 5/10). In the context of an exploration into the sense of isolation that Torrents and his fellow sugar farmers experience, he writes: “No hay más compañía que algún otro desamparado como nosotros, y los animalitos de los bosques y algún negro del país” [“There is no other company except for other helpless ones like us, the little bush animals and the odd black native”]. He then writes about the fear he experiences when a negra appears out of the bushes naked, and asks him for tobacco while ‘brindándome su cuerpo’ [“offering her body to me”]. He claims that although his body would have welcomed a sexual encounter, he was overcome with fear. He does not elaborate or expand upon the nature of this fear, and does not describe any further encounters with Indigenous members of the community.

The unpublished “Impresiones” paint a picture of the harsh conditions under which Torrents and his companions worked, particularly in the early years following his arrival at Mena Creek. He describes a typical working day on the cane-fields as follows: “mal terreno, muchas piedras y reices, poca practica, mucho calor y después de media hora toda la ropa podía escorrerse” [“bad soil, lots of rocks and tree roots, monotonous work, heat, and after half an hour you could wring out your clothes”] (ST 5/10). The manual labour, he writes, is “de los más brutos que existen” [“among the most brutal that exists”], and many of his co-workers are forced to abandon the cane-fields having exhausted all their physical resources. In his 1927 crónica “Tristes recuerdos” [“Sad Memories”] Torrents evokes his recollections of a specific day soon after his arrival at Mena Creek in 1916, when he was working on the cane-fields and had reached a point of such exhaustion that he could no longer continue. He writes that as well as feeling diminished by an overwhelming sense of fatigue, there was the added humiliation of appearing weak. He remarks that men working in the cane-fields are “mucho menos miramiento que a los animales y las máquinas de hierro” [“valued much less than farm animals and machinery”]. Torrents shares with his readers a lack of comprehension that men could be defined solely by their physical strength or weakness “en pleno siglo XX” [“in the 20th
century”). He questions a world order in which animals are valued according to the weight that they bear, and machines for the energy they are able to generate; men, correspondingly, are only valuable if they can withstand the intense physical demands of sugar-cane work. They are either strong or else they cease to exist. Men are readily available, whereas farm animals and machinery cost money and thus need to be looked after and respected. There is some sadness in the sombre tone of this crónica, as Torrents recalls with such clarity the day (18 October 1916), over ten years earlier when he could work no further. It is understandable that his great grand-daughter, Tracy Onaindia would hold the view that Torrents’ literary world offered some escape from the hardships of daily life. As she explained in interview, “when they talked about the good times they were infrequent and sometimes the only way that they could relieve themselves of the drudgery was to write and share ideas” (Onaindia, T).

In his published 1924 crónica “Tema Deportivo” [“On the Subject of Sport”] (ST 5/18), Torrents offers a further critique on his host country’s celebration of the use of mindless violence. He voices his dismay at the sight of two men, named ‘Piter’ and Tom, facing off in a punch-up in front of a cheering crowd who appear to have no idea as to the reason for the altercation. “Entonces empezó la comedia” [“Then the drama began”], he writes, as both men are applauded and encouraged, even as the two participants stagger and sway, knock out each other’s teeth, break each other’s noses and require support to remain standing. Torrents is surprised that the members of the crowd shift loyalties between the two men, seeming to be interested only in the continuation and escalation of the brawl. It becomes clear to the narrator that the audience support whoever it is who is throwing punches, without asking which of the two is at fault. He writes: “la cuestión es pegar y cuanto más fuerte mejor” [“the issue is to hit, and the harder the better”]. A policeman, also part of the crowd, eventually calls an end to the fight, and the two men shake hands and together they head to the pub for a drink. Torrents eventually discovers the cause of the fight: in the previous Sunday’s football match one of the men had delivered a poor pass which led to the loss of the game. Torrents’ conclusion is, “lo que habían perdido era la dignidad de HOMBRES” [“what they had lost was their dignity as MEN”]. As community moralist, he condemns both the use of violence, and the casual participation of those looking in on this spectacle. In his role as a commentator, he deciphers and interprets the conflict between the two men for his Peninsular Spanish readership. He does

37 Published 13 Oct. 1924. Name of newspaper unknown but likely to be either El Vidrio, Iniciales or Acción Fabril.
this by creating a crónica in which a description of the punch-up between the two men occupies all but the last lines of the column, which leads the reader to anticipate that the reason for the altercation, when exposed, would be serious and significant. Torrents builds suspense, but rather than a crescendo, there is a decided anticlimax. By finally revealing a minor sporting mishap as the cause of the disagreement, Torrents displays his incredulity that grown men in the host country would resort to an intense physical confrontation, at the expense of their dignity.

In the published crónica “La honradez de D. Toribio” [“The Honour of Don Toribio”] ST5/18),38 Torrents returns to an old-world setting to offer a satirical crónica that depicts a character named Don Toribio, a wealthy businessman. He is introduced as follows: “¿Quién no conoce a Don Toribio? Pues todo el vecindario habla de él, como el hombre más bueno y caritativo que puede conocerse” [“Who doesn’t know Don Toribio? Well, all the neighbourhood speaks of him as the best and most charitable man one could know”]. This protagonist displays the outward markers of respectability, occupying positions as President of the Catholic Circle and Secretary of the Anti-Tuberculosis League. He ensures that his fellow villagers notice that he attends Mass on a daily basis, displaying his high moral standing.

When the ageing Don Toribio seeks to marry Teresita, the youthful daughter of one of his employees, her family are pressured into agreeing to the union despite her declaration of love for her cousin. Don Toribio’s newly married state does not prevent him from continuing, with fellow parishioners, a secret practice established before his wedding: that of visiting a brothel run by Lolita. When Don Toribio unexpectedly arrives home one day to find Teresita in the arms of her cousin, a confrontation takes place which results in Don Toribio shooting and killing Teresita, “por haberle sido INFIEL” [“for having been UNFAITHFUL to him”]. In the aftermath of the shooting, the community rallies behind Toribio, declaring him a man whose mission it was to do good for all around him and who is instead “burlado por la sinvergüenza de su mujer. Vamos, que ha hecho bien en MATARLA” [“made a fool of by his shameful wife. Come on – he did well to KILL HER”]. When his case is finally heard, the defence lawyer’s portrayal of his client concludes with the claim that “Todos los hombres de la honradez de Don Toribio hubiéramos hecho lo propio” [“All honourable men like Don Toribio would have done

38 Published 20 Feb. 1925. Name of newspaper unknown.
the same if we were in his position”]. The all-male jury thus finds Toribio not guilty, agreeing that this was a crime of passion. On exiting the courtroom, Don Toribio returns to Lolita’s brothel, “como si nada hubiera pasado” [“as if nothing had happened”].

This crónica offers a stinging exposition of both Don Toribio and the socio-economic class to which he belongs. The protagonist is portrayed as a man who adheres to a misguided image of himself as an honourable man, displaying no remorse and accepting no responsibility for Teresita’s murder. His prompt return to Lolita’s brothel reinforces the protagonist’s moral bankruptcy. Torrents’ criticism of the Toribio’s vecindario [community] is equally sharp, for it appears that none of his neighbours question whether any blame should be apportioned to him. Rather, they condemn Teresita for what they see view as her betrayal of Don Toribio. It would be a matter of interest to discover whether readers responded to this crónica or others; however, as Torrents’ newspaper writings in Spain have yet to be located in their original publication, this is not clear. His readers, nonetheless, would be able to recognise the social landscape in which this crónica is situated, as well as the significance of labels that Torrents applies to satirise his protagonist.

In “¡Los guardias!” [“The Police”] (ST 5/18), 39 Torrents crafts a crónica that is framed by the appearance of police officers at two separate but linked events, and as with “La honradez de D. Toribio”, he offers a critique of a law enforcement and justice system that conspires to protect the interests of the privileged at the expense of those who are powerless and voiceless. During an unspecified economic crisis, countless families are forced by hunger, poverty and homelessness to wander from town to town, as they look for food and shelter and join the army of the unemployed. The first encounter with the police occurs when, in an attempt to feed his increasingly desperate family, a man steals some produce from a vegetable garden. Passing policemen are alerted when the man’s child calls out warning of their approach. The man is detained and incarcerated while his family are left to “engrosar las filas de los pordioseros” [“expand the queues of beggars”].

The lead-up to the second encounter with los guardias occurs in a very distinct socio-economic setting. A reception is taking place among financiers and industrialists, as they celebrate a successful negotiation with their employees whereby “los obreros se habían

39 Published on 29 Nov 1929. Name of newspaper unknown.
entregado sin condiciones” [“the labourers had surrendered without conditions”] to the new terms of employment, which involved longer hours and lower pay. The financiers celebrate lavishly with champagne and a banquet. At the end of the evening, one of the revellers advises his chauffeur that he would be taking the wheel, in order to demonstrate the superiority of his vehicle. Driving at high speed he runs over a woman, who dies at the scene. The crowd in attendance identify the victim as being the compañera of a working-class man who was well known for his efforts in bringing about “la regeneración del género humano” [“the regeneration of the human race”] and the same individual that the police had detained earlier for stealing food.

The crowd of by-standers demand justice for the victim, and prepare to take action, when again the warning call of “¡Los guardias!” interrupts the protestations on behalf of the dead woman. Those gathered soon disperse or fall silent, leaving only a few voices to rail against the driver’s actions. The police investigate and conclude that it was the victim’s carelessness while crossing the road that led to the accident. In a moment when the police presence may have resulted in the prosecution of the señor, the opposite takes place: the crowd is cleared, the victim is transported away and the businessman resumes normal life, “maldiciendo aquella pordiosera que le había hecho perder veinte minutos” [“cursing that beggar woman that caused him to lose twenty minutes”], and who had delayed the moment when he could share with his wife the good news of the victory that had been gained over the workers.

Torrents uses this crónica to critique the manner in which endemic corruption and ties between the law and the upper echelons of society have catastrophic consequences for the underclasses and the disempowered, who “sueñan con un mundo mejor” [“dream of a better world”]. The power wielded by ‘los guardias’, who protect the interests of those at the top of the socio-economic ladder, serves to ensure that fair treatment is out of reach for those who have neither the resources nor the influence to ensure access to an impartial criminal justice system.

Torrents’ contribution to the international discussion on the rights of the worker dovetails with the work of other cronistas who also wrote and contributed to a range of left-wing publications in the early decades of the 1900s. Nicolás Kanellos singles out for mention
the Puerto Rican born Jesús Colón (1901–1974) and the Cuban born Albert O’Farrill40 (1880–1947), who were both concerned with “the working man, his struggles and aspirations” (“Recovering” 446). Inadequate housing in the tenements, the dangers of falling victim to Latino con-men and the indignities of looking for work during the Depression were some of the themes frequently expressed in their crónicas. Both Colón and O’Farrill were based in New York, and it would be a matter of interest to discover whether Torrents had encountered their contributions to crónica writing, perhaps in the New York papers that he himself was published in, and vice versa.

The theme of honour is revisited by Torrents in “El honor de la familia” [“The Family’s Honour”] (ST 5/18),41 which appeared in publication in 1925. In this crónica two sisters discuss the steps they are taking to ensure that the family’s reputation is upheld at all costs. One of the sisters exclaims “el honor de la familia ante todo” [“before all else, the family’s honour”]. They exchange reports on the philandering behaviour of the wayward male members of their families, and they contemplate ways to ensure that details of their extra-marital activities do not become public knowledge. The crónica concludes with the sisters’ decision to go to confession, even though they claim that “Dios sabe adonde está la culpa, y nos sabrá juzgar” [“God knows where the blame lies, and he knows how to judge us”]. Once again, Torrents offers a critique of the pursuit of honour at all costs, coupled with an obsession with maintaining a façade of respectability. That the sisters decide to attend confession, even though it is not they who are participating in the reported wrongdoings, points to a further way in which they seek to absolve themselves of any guilt for their inability or unwillingness to change the behaviour of the perpetrators’ misdemeanours. Their actions also point to their powerlessness to make any substantial change to the status quo.

It was not unusual for Torrents to comment directly or indirectly on the role of women through his crónicas, and the anarcho-sindicalistic newspapers both in Spain and in New York that published his works frequently featured content relating to gender relations. In his lengthy crónica “Sobre la Mujer” [“About Women”] (ST 5/18),42 the cronista explains that during his nightly ritual of reading newspapers and books, should he stumble upon something pertaining to women “pongo un poco de atención” [“I pay a little (more)

---

40 O’Farrill also appears in publications as O’Farril.
41 Published 20 Feb. 1925. Name of newspaper unknown.
42 Published 15 Jan. 1929. Name of newspaper unknown.
attention”]. Torrents positions himself firmly on the side of gender equality, and he himself acknowledges that his position on women may be out of step with the mainstream. He encourages women to take action to overcome their inferior position in society, and to strive for their liberation. At the same time, he points out that women are equally capable of behaving poorly, and that both sexes are guilty of getting in the way of those who wish to rise above their situations. The cronista counsels women that “en vez de pasar el tiempo pintándose y vestirse como un muñeco para divertir y atonar a los hombres” [“instead of spending the time painting themselves up and getting dressed up like dolls in order to entertain and dazzle men”] they would be better advised to engage productively in activities that would lead to a positive change both in terms of their situation and also the way in which they are viewed by men.

In his view, “ni contratos ni bendiciones” [“neither marital contracts nor ceremonies”] between men and women are necessary, since the unions that take place do so in response to the laws of Nature, and need no legal or ceremonial validation. He encourages his readers to acknowledge and celebrate the achievements of both male and female anarchist and libertarian leaders, and makes specific mention of Louise Michel (1830–1905)\(^{43}\) and Mariana de Pineda (1804–1831).\(^{44}\) He concludes the crónica with the words of the Spanish anarchistic intellectual Federica Montseny (1905–1994), whose character Clara in her book *La Victoria* expresses her desire for equal rights, responsibilities, freedoms and opportunities for fulfilment. She adds “no quiero que un hombre me lleve del ronzal y que otro me levante por los hombros” [“I don’t want to be led by a halter by one man, nor to be lifted up on the shoulders by another”]. Montseny’s words encapsulate Torrents’ expressed views on a workable way forward for women that would, if successful, result in lasting and meaningful gender equality. The cronista’s engagement with the writings and activities of Spanish intellectuals such as Montseny reinforces his commitment to an ongoing participation in an exchange of anarchistic commentary, despite the geographical and intellectual isolation that living on a sugar cane farm in North Queensland entailed.

Torrents also advocates enthusiastically for the individual’s rights to choose their life partner without external interference. In his handwritten, unpublished crónica “Recuerdos

\(^{43}\) Louise Michel was a French anarchist, educator, medic and a key member of the Paris Commune (1871).

\(^{44}\) Mariana de Pineda: Born in Granada, Spain. A liberalist who was accused of conspiracy and executed in public at the age of 27.
de un día de fiesta” [“Memories of a Feast Day”] (ST 5/1), Torrents introduces the theme of enforced marriage, as also shown in Don Toribio with disastrous consequences, and illustrates the negative outcomes that take place when parental involvement prevents young lovers from choosing to be with whomever they wish. In this first person crónica, the narrator illustrates the predicament of a young couple who feel that they are “el uno para el otro” [“made for each other”], only to be kept apart by parents who have other plans. He offers advice to his readers, suggesting that lovers not allow any obstacles to interfere with their desire to be together.

Torrents’ commitment to gender rights continued for the duration of his writing life; indeed, in his last years he found himself somewhat less pressured by farming work, and his linguistic competence enabled him to correspond in English. His notebook entitled “Recuerdos de mi vida” [“My Life’s Memories”] (ST 5/4) contains some of his last literary offerings, many of which appear in the form of letters to family and friends, in which he shares his reflections and offers advice. In his missive to an unidentified recipient named Ted, to whom he refers as ‘my son’, he counsels the young man to approach marriage thusly: “If you do your best to understand your wife and she the same for you, you will pass the rest of your life happy”. This appeared to be a communicative strategy that had been successful in Torrents’ case, as in a journal entry in the last year of his life he acknowledges the role that a happy marriage had played in his life. “Lo bueno de mi vida la mayor parte lo debo a mi vieja” [“The good in my life is, in large part, due to ‘my old lady’”].

In his last years, Torrents’ summers, spent at his shack at Mission Beach, offered him many opportunities for reflection and contemplation. His final journal entries evoke the image of a man who had achieved a sense of goals fulfilled and a life lived true to his philosophies. Through his ownership of the sugar farm at Mena Creek he had managed to achieve a level of financial security; however, the wealth that he celebrated in his final years was not connected with money. He wrote on more than one occasion “Soy rico sin dinero” [“I am a wealthy man without money”] (ST 5/4). He reflected fondly on the strength of his familial relationships and the joy that he continued to receive from his regular practice of reading. He would spend his last years enjoying the tranquillity of the beach, and although he never really swam, he would float out upon the water all day (Onaindia, T), enjoying and celebrating the end of another sugar harvest.
The writings of this self-educated, sugar-farming anarchist from Mataró occupy an important place in the study of early Spanish-language literature in Australia in general, and of crónicas in particular. Now, as then, his œuvre provides his readers with acute observations of the Europe that he had shed, and the new Australia that he had joined. In addition, his work offers the reading community unique insights into his reflections of early migrant life in Australia, and into the Anglo-Irish culture of the host country in which he sought refuge. His contribution to the crónicas of Australia is particularly significant. As well as being the first known Spanish language cronista in Australia, his writings on gender roles and identity prefigure those that appear decades later, when migrants from both Spain and Latin America re-visit the same issues in their published works in Hispanic newspapers in Australia. What accounts for the sustained focus on the issues of gender and identity first introduced by Torrents? The reasons are two-fold. Firstly, issues such as a dissimilar understanding of gender roles between source and host countries meant that this subject will continue to be analysed by subsequent cronistas. Secondly, the process of migration can be seen as a catalyst, leading individuals to question their own sense of identity, due to the losses associated with leaving a homeland and the novelty of starting a new life in their host country. This latter point in particular leads to my analysis of the crónicas penned by Clara Espinosa (“Woggy Girl”), whose columns on language and identity are the subject of the next chapter.

45 Torrents, informed by his anarchist worldview, expressed progressive views in relation to gender, whereas crónicas written by Blady Woggie decades later [ironically] reflected less progressive views on the subject, as I will demonstrate in Chapter 5.
Salvador Torrents. 1915. Photograph. James Cook University Library, Salvador Torrents Archive, ST/2/1, Townsville.
Chapter 4

On Language and Identity: Communication and the Self

A few hours flight in a plane are enough to consummate this transplantation, which means our own ‘death’: the death of the initial identity the migrant was born with. The identity they grew up with in their country of origin, into which they were mentally and emotionally moulded . . . .

Clara Espinosa, (1998 178)

Aquí no somos, estamos, existimos.
[We don’t belong here, we’re just here, we exist].

Dario Buratovich, (26)

Identities are constructed within, not outside, discourse.

You know, sometimes I have the feeling I’m not one but two, three, four people. Is there an original person? An essence? I’m not altogether sure, for without language I am nobody.

Ilan Stavans, (2001 251)

Language and identity are inextricably connected. The cultural theorist Iain Chambers proposes that “Language is not primarily a means of communication; it is, above all, a means of cultural construction in which our very selves and sense are constituted” (22). This statement underscores the vital link between language and identity, a link that is of particular relevance to migrants who seek to carve out new identities in the host country, language and culture, and who encounter the difficulties associated with linguistic mastery of the host tongue.

This chapter addresses the inter-related themes of language and identity by examining the crónicas penned by Clara Espinosa Noriega (Woggy Girl), and published in El Español en Australia during 1990 and 1991. I analyse what Espinosa’s crónicas demonstrate about the various migration related challenges associated with becoming a translated being, both linguistically and culturally, and the implications of this translation on the formation of a new identity. Chapter One discussed Anne Malena’s claim that “migrants are translated
beings in countless ways” (“Presentation” 9), in that, having moved from a source to a
target environment, they are expected to acquire a new language or improve their existing
language skills, as well as to transform their identities. Here I explore Woggy Girl’s
crónicas and how they display this process of translation.

Central to my discussion of Woggy Girl’s crónicas is the idea of ‘self-translation’. In a
literary sense, this term refers to the process whereby authors translate their original work
into another language, as described by Anton Popovic (19). However, this study
approaches the term from a metaphorical perspective, and examines what crónicas in
Spanish language newspapers in Australia have to say about the process whereby migrants
translate *themselves* into the host language and culture, and what the implications of this
process are in relation to the formation of a new identity.

The experience of linguistic and cultural translation has been viewed in positive terms by
authors such as Ilan Stavans, who notes that Spanish, English, Hebrew and Yiddish have
alternately served as his primary language during various stages of his life. In his essay
“Lost in Translation”, he contemplates the differing roles that each of these languages has
played: “Spanish is my right eye, English my left: Yiddish my background and Hebrew
my conscience. Or better, each of the four represents a different set of spectacles (near-
sight, bifocal, night-reading, etc.) through which the universe is seen” (182). This visual
metaphor suggests that each language provides a portal of sorts through which to perceive
the world. For Stavans, the opportunity to live in more than one linguistic community
brings with it advantages and insights that may not otherwise be available to the
monolingual speaker. This view is echoed by Elin-Maria Evangelista in her book chapter
focuses on the possible benefits of writing and living in a second language, and states that:
“[H]aving access to more than one language, I believe, changes the way a writer
approaches language creatively, often allowing for a sense of freedom and experiment, of
being less restricted when writing from a distance” (177). Without diminishing the
challenges associated with migrating into a new language, Evangelista takes an optimistic
view of the prospects for self-expression and self-development in the host environment
and the subsequent potential for greater ‘translatability’, both linguistically and culturally.

For other writers, migration into another language and country is associated with loss and
dislocation, as Mary Besemeres describes in her book *Translating One’s Self: Language*
and Selfhood in Cross Cultural Autobiography (2002). She argues that language migrants experience a sense of loss in two ways. Passive loss is the loss that is experienced when one’s native language is not spoken in the target country. Active loss relates to “living in the second language, taking on the beliefs it configures and hence displacing and ‘betraying’ the beliefs embodied by the native language” (10). This “experience of loss of self between languages” (35) directs her study of seven bilingual authors that include Vladimir Nabokov, Kazou Ishiguro and Eva Hoffman. As mentioned in an earlier chapter, Hoffman’s memoir Lost in Translation: A Life in a New Language (1989), is an account of her emigration with her family from Cracow, Poland in 1959, and her subsequent life in “The New World” (North America). For Hoffman, departing from her country of birth resulted in a “sense of rupture” that was “quite extreme and stark” (Phoenix and Slavova 340), as it would be decades before she found herself able to embrace a new identity in her adopted country.

Hoffman’s experience of linguistic transplantation is shared by other writers who highlight a sense of discomfort associated with negotiating an existence within two or more linguistic communities. In his memoir Heading South, Looking North (1998) Ariel Dorfman referred to himself as “a hybrid, part Yankee, part Chilean, a pinch Jew, a mestizo in search of a center” (220). Similarly, Edward Said writes: “I have never known what language I spoke first, Arabic or English, or which one was really mine beyond any doubt” (4). Said conveys an uneasy sense of a lifelong fractured identity: “I have retained this unsettled sense of many identities—mostly in conflict with each other—all of my life” (5). For Chilean-born American writer Marjorie Agosín, living across two languages and cultures felt as though she was “being split in half, and belonging to no one” (143). Thus, bilingual authors’ experiences of dislocation, loss and fractured identities exist alongside more positive ones, in which authors and migrants alike view living in more than one culture and language in a positive light, as they embrace an opportunity for growth and enrichment.

It is important to note that the bilingual authors mentioned above have largely written in their second languages whereas this project, in contrast, examines crónicas published in the cronistas’ first language. My study’s focus on a monolingual approach to crónica writing is a result of the following: firstly, except for Guillermo Hertz, whose crónicas were written and published some twenty years after his arrival in Australia, Clara Espinosa and Lucho Abarca both commenced writing soon after migration, at a time when their
skills in the target language were not well developed. Secondly, their crónicas appeared in Spanish language newspapers and thus catered to a predominantly migrant readership. They were consumed by a reading public who shared a common language, although not necessarily originating from the same country. Lastly, I am interested in examining the “mediating space” which enabled cronistas and their readers to explore the various “implications of ‘being translated’” (Jacklin, “Translated” 29). Participation and engagement by both peninsular Spanish and Latin American readers in this domain was thus facilitated by their use of a common language that enabled writers and readers alike to reflect, and enter into a discourse with others on their changed status as migrants.

While an examination of the losses and gains associated with translation into a new language and culture are at the centre of my study, an additional focus of this chapter is to explore whether migration may be viewed as a long-term or life-long process, without a definite end-point. In their book chapter “Some Reflections on Migration and Identity”, Rina Benmayor and Andor Skotnes propose that:

The dominant tendency . . . is to define migration as a single movement in space and a single moment in time. The focus falls on the act of crossing, or the more or less finite period in which relocation takes place. Underlying this approach is the assumption that at a certain point, migration ends and a process of assimilation/integration and upward mobility begins. (8)

Benmayor and Skotnes put forward a more dynamic view of migration, one that is more often a “long-term, if not life-long process of negotiating identity, difference and the right to fully exist and flourish in the new context” (8). I examine the crónicas penned by Clara Espinosa’s Woggy Girl through the lens of this concept of migration as an on-going, and possibly never-ending process. In doing so I examine whether this idea of migration as a long-term process is borne out in Espinosa’s crónicas, and if so, how it impacts on the full or partial attainment of linguistic and cultural translation.
The Woggy Girl Crónicas

Espinosa’s columns appeared in publication soon after her arrival in Australia. Born in La Paz, Bolivia in 1946, she was, until her migration to Australia in 1988, a senior medical practitioner who specialised in public health. When her first marriage came to an end in 1986 she resumed contact with a high school friend, Antonio Morón Nava, who had settled in Australia some decades earlier. He invited her to travel to Australia and proposed marriage, which she accepted. Her writing practice was established soon after she and her teenage children secured residency in Australia.

Writing as Woggy Girl, Espinosa’s weekly crónicas were published in El Español en Australia in 1990 and 1991. With titles such as “Ritmo” [“Rhythm”], “Seducción” [“Seduction”], “Gritos en silencio” (“Cries in the Silence”) and “Que paren el tren” (“Stop the Train”), Woggy Girl gave voice to many of the losses and challenges that she encountered as a first-generation migrant, and it was through her crónicas that she found a welcome outlet to assist in the process of making sense of her new circumstances. Her crónicas tackled topics such as nostalgia, loneliness, a sense of belonging, religious customs and traditions, marital relations, intergenerational conflicts, financial pressures and changing values, all from a new migrant’s perspective.

For Espinosa, the process of carving out a new identity as a first-generation migrant involved letting go of that which had defined her during her 20-year career in public health in Bolivia. A combination of the onerous procedures involved in obtaining the necessary recognition of her medical degree, and the more immediate financial need to provide for herself and her children led her into taking a position as a bilingual Drug and Alcohol (D&A) Counsellor, a role that she held until her retirement in 2009. While working in this field, Espinosa turned her attention to the serious incidences of D&A abuse in the Spanish-speaking communities in and around metropolitan Sydney. She was offered a forum to highlight these issues through writing an educational column in the Sydney-based Spanish-language newspaper Noticias y Deportes, as well as via frequent SBS radio appearances and interviews with the broadcaster and author Ruben Fernández.

Espinosa’s D&A columns in Noticias y Deportes enabled her to widen the scope of her writing, and by early 1990, the newspaper El Español en Australia offered her the opportunity to present a weekly column related to her migration experience. In keeping
with the historical practice among Latin American cronistas of adopting a pseudonym (Kanellos, “Cronistas and Satire” 10), Espinosa chose ‘Woggy Girl’. She was already familiar with Lucho Abarca’s Blady Woggie crónicas, and decided “if I have to choose a name it will be Woggy Girl, because I was a wog and a female, just to differentiate myself from Abarca” (Espinosa).

Shielded by this protective cloak of anonymity, Espinosa delivered the first of her Woggy Girl crónicas to *El Español en Australia* and on 30 January 1990 “¡Mamá!” (27) was published. It presents a scenario familiar to children and adults alike – that of a small child waking from a deep sleep, fearful at finding herself in an unknown location, who desperately and inconsolably calls out for her mother. This scene from childhood is one that Woggy Girl sees played out in her adult life as she too wakes up at times in a state of disorientation and dislocation in her new, adopted country of residence: “me siento a momentos tan abandonada y sola, que miro a mi alrededor y no me veo a mi mismo, no reconozco el ambiente que me rodea y lo que es más, no puedo creer que sea a mí, a quien el estan (sic) pasando estas cosas” [“at times I feel so abandoned and lonely that I look around and I don’t see myself, I don’t recognise my surroundings, and what’s more, I can’t believe that these things are happening to me”]. Thus, this identification with childhood parallels the migrant experience, in that in a new country, one feels like a helpless child, especially when trying to express one’s self in a new language.

This sense of abandonment and disbelief is described by Woggy Girl as being doubly painful, magnified by a global sense of disconnection from one’s homeland. The crónica concludes thus: “Quizá cuando ese desgarrador grito acude a mi garganta, a más de clamar por mi madre, este (sic) clamando por mi madre tierra” [“Perhaps when that heartrending cry comes to my throat, as well as being a cry for my mother, it is also a cry for my motherland”]. This first column, and the many that followed, chronicle Espinosa’s passage through what she would later identify as a process of grieving, a construction that will be examined in the section to follow.
Migration as a grief process

The role that grief played as Espinosa sought linguistic and cultural translation is a key characteristic of her crónicas. During her work in D&A treatment, she encountered the discipline of grief counselling, and was introduced to a therapeutic model formulated by the National Association for Loss and Grief (1995), which identifies four stages in the grieving process. The first stage is one of shock and is characterised by experiences of numbness, disbelief, disorientation, anxiety, panic and confusion. The second stage is identified by the pain of separation and feelings of loneliness, anger, sadness and yearning. The next stage is one of letting go, and finally, the fourth stage involves finding new energy, and is characterised by acceptance, healing and growth. This grieving process is one that resonated with Espinosa’s personal migrant experience, and in later years she formed the view that her Woggy Girl crónicas were a manifestation of her passage through the various stages of the bereavement journey. Thus, in her own estimation, her crónicas unfold against this backdrop of grief, which is an ever-present element in the 47 columns Espinosa penned during 1990 and 1991.

Espinosa’s view of migration as a grieving process has parallels with Malena’s concept of the migrant as a translated being: the ability to move through the early grief stages with little obstruction positions the individual such that he or she may begin to emerge from this process and start to embrace, fully or partially, new beginnings and new identities, and as a result, achieve self-translation. The sections to follow consider the relationship between bereavement and translation, as well as examining whether Woggy Girl’s crónicas depict migration as an on-going or lifelong journey.

Espinosa drew on her medical skills and experience to both structure her Woggy Girl crónicas as well as to self-diagnose her own migration journey as bereavement. Over two decades of work as a public health specialist in Bolivia had called on her to produce extensive reports, proposals, evaluations and policies, and Espinosa claims that her career

---

46 This chapter does not focus on gender-based dynamics in its exploration of migratory grief, as gender is the focus of the chapter to follow. Questions around whether the experience of migratory grief was a predominantly female process lie outside the scope of this study, and the topic requires further investigation.

47 The definition of partial and full translation, as well as the barriers involved are discussed in detail in Chapter 1, pages 16-18.
as a physician, coupled with her proficiency at writing in a sequential and analytical way shaped her writing practice once she started contributing regularly to *El Español en Australia*. Doctors, she explained, are required “to make descriptions of what they find, see, hear and touch” (Espinosa), skills that she drew on for the two years in which she wrote as Woggy Girl. Espinosa’s strong identification with her role as a doctor has led her to claim “I am not a writer. I am a doctor. I am not a poet. I am not a journalist. I am a doctor. […] I write because I feel the urge, but that does not make me a writer” (Espinosa). This powerful identification with her primary role as a clinician rather than a writer shaped both the composition and tone of many of her crónicas, as discussed below.

Structurally, Espinosa’s crónicas follow an ordered, sequential formation, which varies little from one individual column to the next. While crónicas often employ humour, and draw on satire (Kanellos, “Cultural Conflict” N. pag.) to comment on aspects of daily life and the concerns of communities, Woggy Girl’s are generally characterised by a relatively sombre and clinical tone. Her columns start by providing a definition of the crónica’s title, orientating the reader to the original meaning or the usual application of the noun or phrase. For example, in “Un jardín de rosas” [“A Rose Garden”] (26), Woggy Girl dedicates the first half of the crónica to providing background information and a brief synopsis of *I Never Promised you a Rose Garden*, the semi-autobiographical novel by Joanne Greenberg, who used the pen-name Hannah Green. The next section is dedicated to applying the concept of ‘a rose garden’ to the migrant experience. Lastly, Woggy Girl further expands on the term through an escalation in tempo and resonance in the latter half of this crónica. Having reflected on the ‘rose garden’ that would-be migrants create for themselves as they dream up plans to re-settle in a more developed country, Woggy Girl concludes the crónica by contrasting what was expected of the move, with “la dura realidad” [“the harsh reality”] of life as a new migrant. The hopes and dreams that were so passionately yearned for prior to moving have not eventuated. The crónica concludes with the adage “no te prometí un jardín de rosas” [“I didn’t promise you a rose garden”],

48 *I Never Promised you a Rose Garden* (1964) is an account of the three years that its protagonist Deborah Blau spent in mental health facilities while she received treatment for schizophrenia. During her hospitalisation, she creates a make-believe world called the Kingdom of Yr, which provides an escape from the harshness of day to day life. She develops a successful working relationship with her therapist, Dr Fried, whose encourages her to re-integrate into the real world, despite its imperfections. The title is a reference to her psychiatrist’s claims that the journey from a make-believe world to the real one would be difficult and problematic. A film version of this novel was released in 1977.
thus tying together the initial definition and image of hope and promise with the less optimistic reality.

Woggy Girl’s development of the rose garden metaphor provides the reader with an insight into the disappointment felt at the realisation that the migrant experience has not eventuated as originally planned. Here Espinosa engages in self-diagnosis, in gathering and ordering her thoughts and ideas methodically and sequentially, finally coming to the same conclusion as does the protagonist of “I Never Promised you a Rose Garden”: that the real, lived experience can bring with it an unwelcome reality.

“Un jardín de rosas” was written early in Espinosa’s self-described process of grieving. Arriving in Australia as a migrant meant the loss of a life lived near friends, family and colleagues, as well as the loss of customs, social status and social conventions. Most significantly, the loss of her professional identity as a senior doctor proved to be the most painful and difficult adjustment, despite finding meaningful work in the field of Drug and Alcohol counselling. Even though she continued her professional life in the public health service, it involved closing the door to her work as a medical practitioner.

Espinosa realised that she shared the experience of many professional migrants whose qualifications are not recognised by the host country, and describes her experience thus: “I had to witness my own ‘death as a professional’ while I was still alive” (177). Here Espinosa echoes Rosa Cappiello, who, in her first person narrated book Oh Lucky Country (1991), wrote: “in the act of migration we had ordered ourselves a fine funeral for our identities, to be reincarnated in sewers as factory workers, in machinery, in knots, as tender morsels for despotic men” (5). Espinosa developed her comparison of migration with grieving in other literary forms, including a conference paper (1998), and later a book chapter (2001) in which she draws on personal experience to examine this phenomenon. She questions why it is that many migrants tend to become ‘stuck’ both in grief and in the process of transformation into a new identity, without being able to progress further.

---

49 Rosa Cappiello was born in Naples, Italy in 1942 and migrated to Australia in 1971 with no English language skills. She worked in a variety of unskilled jobs before writing I semi negri (‘The Black Seeds’) in 1982 then Paese Fortunato (‘Oh Lucky Country’) in 1984.
Espinosa received coverage in the mainstream press when The Weekend Australian’s health writer Justine Ferrari wrote “Migrants Face a Death of Self”, an article that focused on Espinosa’s 1998 conference paper. Ferrari highlights the full extent to which Espinosa’s migration experience produced a deeply felt loss of identity. In Espinosa’s words: “the moment you are in Australia, you aren’t a doctor anymore. A very important part of me had to die” (41). In the same article, Professor Harry Minas, psychiatrist with the Centre for Cultural Studies in Health at Melbourne University maintains that the sense of loss that migrants feel often resembles “the grief of a bereavement or the loss of an important element of a person’s life”. Minas points to the “disjunction between all of their own life experience up to the point of migration” and argues that their “life experience is no longer recognised or acknowledged and sometimes (is) not regarded as useful.” He adds that the various old “ways” of thinking, feeling, understanding problems and resolving them “are no longer appropriate or effective”. Espinosa’s response to the loss of her primary identity as a doctor and to other migration related challenges was to create the Woggy Girl crónicas, which she feels assisted in the process of passing from one stage of grief to another.

Migration to Australia caused Espinosa to question her identity in a way that had not been necessary prior to her departure from Bolivia, where she felt that she had “a well-established identity as a health professional.” In Australia, she says, “I was nobody, just a migrant, so I needed to express all the turmoil that was going on inside me” (Espinosa). It was through the creation of the Woggy Girl crónicas that Espinosa sought to give voice to her experience of moving through the stages of grief over the loss of her primary professional identity as a doctor and the associated markers that came with that role.

Part of Woggy Girl’s grieving process involved extended periods of “in-betweeness”, experiences which are described in “Vivir en el limbo” [“Living in Limbo”] (26). The cronista applies this religious symbolism which refers to a state of being neither in heaven nor in hell, to describe the migrant experience of finding him or herself belonging to neither one’s homeland nor to the host country: “Porque ya no somos de “allá” ni seremos nunca de “aca” (sic)50. Los inmigrantes de primera generación, giramos en alma y a veces también en cuerpo en ese misterioso “limbo” intermedio.” [“Because we are no longer from “there”, neither will we ever be from “here”. First generation migrants spin around

50 Appears without accent in original.
both spiritually and at times, physically in that mysterious, in-between “limbo”). The concept of ‘limbo’ in the migrant experience initiated reader response from Julio Martínez, whose correspondence appeared in the letters page of El Español en Australia. In “Vivir en limbo es igual a la nada” [“Living in Limbo is like not living at all”] (23), the letter-writer claims to have experienced various states of being in limbo, but describes the limbo associated with migration as being one of the worst. In 1973 Martínez and his family emigrated to Australia from Spain, and “El país […] nos abre sus brazos y después, cuando más lo necesitas, cierra sus brazos, nos quiere ahogar y nos deja en el limbo” [“The country opens its arms to us, and then, when we need it most, it turns its back on us, wants us to drown and leaves us in limbo”]. He does not specify the way that the host country rejects or excludes them; however, his sense of abandonment is enough to initiate a return to Spain. There too, he encounters a cold shoulder. “Cuando allí llegas lleno de ilusiones, te dejan en la estacada” [“When you arrive there, full of hope, they lock you out”]. His conclusion is that this is the reality for many migrants, who may be “residente de dos patrias, y no querido por ninguno” [“resident of two countries and not wanted by either”]. The sense of disconnection, both with one’s homeland and with the host country suggests a difficult process of translation, magnified by the failure to gain re-acceptance in the country of birth.

The theme of the migrant’s experience of living in limbo is drawn on again in “Visita” [“A/The Visit”] (20). In this crónica, Woggy Girl considers the topic of returning to one’s country of birth after living in the host country for some time, where she claims, the migrant “se adquiera una identidad prestada” [“acquires a borrowed identity”]. In the adopted country, she writes: “somos concientes que estamos representando un papel que definitivamente no nos pertenece y se llega hasta ser un extraño para uno mismo” [“we are aware that we are playing a role that clearly does not pertain to us and one becomes a stranger to one’s self”]. Woggy Girl describes the clash experienced by those who struggle to reconcile their pre-and post-migration identities in an account of a return to the ‘home’ country. Here, she states: “debemos nuevamente vestir el traje de nuestra identidad real” [“we have to wear our real identity suits, once again”]. This suit, however, may no longer fit so well, as “no es de nuestra medida” [“it’s not our size”]. The state of limbo arises, because as Stuart Hall declares in his essay “Minimal Selves”: “Migration is a one-way trip. There is no ‘home’ to go back to” (44). There is discomfort being the person that ‘was’, and equally there is uneasiness about being the person that one ‘is’.
The figurative suit that Woggy Girl describes plays a tangible part in Espinosa’s experience when returning to Bolivia in 2011 for a 40-year medical school reunion, an event about which she felt apprehensive, as she wondered how to explain that she no longer practised medicine. “What do I say to them? I am not a doctor. I’ve lost my doctor status” (Espinosa). In preparation for her trip, she bought some suits, and when somebody asked her why she needed to buy suits, she replied “because I need to disguise myself again as a doctor. As long as I am in Bolivia I am a doctor” (Espinosa). This act of camouflage resonates with the Nancy Huston’s claim that living between languages and cultures requires that the migrant be involved in “theatre, imitation, make-believe” (55). By stepping back into her previous life, Espinosa’s grief centred around the loss of her primary identity is triggered once more. At the same conference, the cronista recalls that she was approached by the American wife of a medical colleague who commented that she had heard all about Espinosa’s stellar performance at University, and how much she had been admired. Espinosa remembers asking herself about her decision to migrate: “What did I do? Yes, what did I do?” Events such as this illustrate the way in which some first-generation migrants experience the process of translation as being protracted, painful and interspersed with setbacks, over what may be an extended period of time. One of the key factors shaping a migrant’s self-translation possibilities is language proficiency, which I address in the section to follow.

**Language**

The challenges associated with host language proficiency frequently lead migrants to seek refuge in the comfort of their native tongue, and the immigrant press plays an important role in providing a space not accessible to the majority culture, where authors and the larger reading public congregate and engage in a discourse in the source language. Woggy Girl’s crónica “Gritos en el silencio” [“Cries in the Silence”] (26) (17 Apr. 1990) provides one such example in which a figurative hand is extended to fellow Spanish-language readers, with an invitation to offer mutual support in the context of a shared language. The inspiration for this crónica’s title came from the 1984 film *The Killing Fields*, 51 which

---

51 A feature film set in Cambodia, during Pol Pot’s Khmer Rouge regime. A New York Times journalist and his Cambodian interpreter are caught in conflict with the advancing Khmer Rouge army. In her crónica, Woggy Girl states that the film’s title refers to the predicament of thousands of Cambodians who were detained in re-education camps “sin derecho a expresar en voz alta sus opiniones” [“with no right to
was translated to *Los Gritos del Silencio* for its Latin American release. Woggy Girl’s crónica is set within the context of the early stages of grieving, when the migrant endures enormous pressure to portray a calm external façade that contrasts with one’s internal turmoil. This crónica calls on other migrants who experience this intense desperation:

Continuemos pues, gritando en silencio que nuestros gritos se juntarán en el espacio y unificados allí, retornarán a nosotros para fortificarnos y quizá más adelante, hacer realidad la formación de una colonia latinoamericana unida por el puente común del idioma español.

[Let’s continue then, crying in silence, so that our cries gather in space, and once together there, return to strengthen us, and maybe down the line, they will allow for the formation of a Latin-American colony, united by the common bridge of the Spanish Language].

Woggy Girl’s vision of a Latin American colony, brought together by a common language evokes Benedict Anderson’s concept of an “imagined community” (2006). The “puente común” [“common bridge”] of the Spanish language is envisaged as an agent enabling members of the Latin American community to offer solace and strength to one other, to share as a community the individual experiences associated with new identity formation and other migration related issues. United by a common language as readers of the same newspaper publication, Woggy Girl looks to a time when this dream of shared migrant experiences may at last be realised.

The role of a shared language in fostering the imagined communities that Anderson described is reinforced in a short editorial published in 2003 in the Sydney–based online magazine *Hontanar*:

Los hispanoamericanos y españoles, especialmente aquellos que ya no vivimos en nuestro país de nacimiento – por lo que en ocasiones nos asalta la duda sobre nuestra actual identidad – podemos decir con absoluta confianza que nuestra patria común es el idioma. (“Valorando nuestro idioma”, 2003)

express their opinions in a loud voice”). Nonethess, their silent and collective cries of protest reached to faraway lands.
[Hispano-Americans and Spaniards, especially those of us who no longer live in our country of birth – and who on occasion feel struck by doubt as to our real identity – can say with absolute confidence that our common homeland is language].

This idea of a ‘virtual’ homeland defined by a shared tongue resonates with Richard Rodriguez’s concept of a Public and Private Language (1982). For Rodriquez, the son of Mexican immigrants to California, the Spanish language spoken at home during his early childhood had been what he called his ‘private’ language. This changed when his family was strongly advised by school staff to speak English, the ‘public’ language, at home. Before that, he claims that:

Spanish speakers […] seemed related to me, for I sensed that we shared, through our language, the feeling of being apart from los gringos. It was thus a ghetto Spanish that I heard and spoke. Like those whose lives are bound by a barrio, I was reminded of my Spanishness, of my separateness from los otros, los gringos in power. (16)

For Rodriguez, hearing his private language spoken at home brought with it a sense of comfort and belonging and he felt “embraced by the sounds of the words” (16). This sense of inclusivity and connectedness with other fellow Spanish speakers is what Woggy Girl initiates when she calls for “the formation of a Latin-American colony, united by the common link of the Spanish language”. Although she is appealing here to a public readership, the invitation extended to the Latin American consumers of her crónicas is one that involves the private language, the language of home, comfort and familiarity. “Gritos en el silencio” thus evokes a safe haven where both Woggy Girl and her readers can occupy a space wherein common difficulties associated with translation into the host language and culture are shared and understood.

While host language proficiency enables the migrant to participate in public language discourse it is also a powerful agent in determining a migrant’s identity formation. This is effectively illustrated by Espinosa’s daughter Clara Maldonado (writing as Bel Vidal),
herself a successful bilingual writer. In her profile of Alberto ‘Pocho’ Domínguez, Vidal introduces the reader to the Uruguayan-born migrant to Australia, who came to be known as the first Australian to die in the September 11 attacks of 2001. Mainstream media coverage in Australia presented ‘Albert’ as a Uruguayan migrant, a father of four, and a Qantas baggage handler. Omitted was the fact that ‘Pocho’ was a well-known figure in the Spanish speaking community in Australia as a founding member of various Uruguayan and Latin American social and community organisations, and had been a longstanding radio broadcaster, first at SBS and then on a variety of community radio stations. ‘Pocho’ had also contributed crónica style columns to Spanish-language newspapers such as the short-lived El Expreso and Noticias y Deportes. Prior to migrating to Australia in 1972, he had been a highly successful speed cyclist, representing Uruguay in the Olympic and Pan American games in the 1950s and 1960s.

Vidal argues that one of the reasons that Domínguez’s many contributions and achievements were so poorly recognised by the mainstream media in Australia may have been a result of the selective way in which the Domínguez family assimilated into the English-speaking society. While they had integrated in a practical and structural sense, “their private lives and social activities revolved around people who spoke their own language” (9). Domínguez thus developed “a bifurcated identity” (3). In the Spanish-speaking setting, the private ‘Pocho’ was “more assertive, having retained most of the characteristics from his former life”, whereas the public ‘Albert’ was depicted as being much milder in temperament, whose co-workers “described him as ‘a very gentle man’”.

Maldonado herself, writing this time under the pseudonym Clara Liosatos in the short story “The Silver Spoon Club”, explores the concept of being highly regarded and respected in one’s own linguistic and cultural community, and at the same time feeling like “a nobody” in the environment of the host country, Australia. Liosatos writes “The Silver Spoon Club” in the first person, and tells the story of a successful un-named female Bolivian writer who has just been recognised at the launch of a bilingual anthology by writers with Hispanic heritage. Her recognition at the literary event is dampened by the knowledge when she leaves the auditorium and returns to the city streets, she will once again “become nobody”. Simultaneously, “even if you don’t want to, you stand out; because you look different, dress different, speak with a different accent” (72). Towards

---

52 In Bel Vidal’s account, ‘Domínguez’ appears without an accent (‘Dominguez). Elsewhere, both spellings are used.
the conclusion of her short story, the protagonist states: “I think of how much of me has been ‘lost in translation’. I am somebody when I speak, when I perform, when I write in Spanish. I am nobody in English” (76).

This sense of a bifurcated identity that Liosatos describes stayed with her mother, Espinosa, for many years following her migration to Australia, and it was the acquisition of advanced language skills that propelled her towards a time when embracing a single identity became possible. The section below discusses the crucial role target language acquisition plays in a first-generation migrant’s journey of adaptation to the host country.
¿Prisión o puente?

Language may be an enabler or an inhibitor, either facilitating the migrant’s passage into life in the new country of residence, or impeding and obstructing this process. The theme of host language acquisition was discussed in a two-part article published in *El Español en Australia* by psychologist Ester Germán: “Lenguaje: ¿prisión o puente?” [“Language: a Prison or a Bridge?”] (5). Germán states that the journey of integration into Australian society is frequently hampered by the cultural differences that new migrants face. She adds that “el lenguaje es uno de los puntos más delicados en este proceso” [“language is one of the most delicate points in this process”]. Woggy Girl’s crónicas “Atrapados” [“Trapped”] (30) and “Encarcelamiento” [“Imprisonment”] (30) both echo Germán’s point of view. In the first, the cronista describes “un verdadero rechazo por Australia” [“a real rejection by Australia”], based in large part on the various frustrations experienced while adapting to the changes accompanying migration. Many of these obstructions arise from the difficulties associated with communication in English. In “Encarcelamiento” [“Imprisonment”] (30), this entrapment takes the form of a metaphorical jail, in which migrants feel constrained by their lack of English, and by the barriers to effectively engage in public discourse. If efforts at English language acquisition are not successful, migrants run the risk of experiencing poor employment opportunities due to their inability to communicate effectively (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2011). In addition, these migrants may be vulnerable to suffering instances of social isolation, disempowerment and an inability to ‘navigate the system’.

Woggy Girl’s concept of ‘encarcelamiento’ elicited reader response from Dario Buratovich (26) who introduces another dimension to the discussion of language as being either a prison or a bridge. In his letter “Sobre Woggy Girl” [“About Woggy Girl”] (26), Buratovich discusses the way in which “el encarcelamiento continúa” [“the imprisonment continues”], even once the migrant has learnt to understand and speak the host language correctly. This predicament is worse “ya que se llega a conocer perfectamente el carácter del carcelero” [“because one gets to know the character of the jailer perfectly”]. The indefinite imprisonment caused by linguistic barriers can be so challenging that Buratovich proposes that “muchas veces . . . lo mejor, aún sabiendo hablar es el silencio” [“often, the best thing is silence, even if one knows how to speak”]. Buratovich adds that migrants are prevented from crossing the bridge into the host country’s language and
culture because “hay barreras que serán siempre infranqueables” [“there are barriers that will always be impassable”].

One of the “impassable barriers” to which Buratovich refers is that of humour. He quotes Osvaldo, the lead character in the film Made in Argentina, who reflects on his life in the US and says “no tengo con quien reírme, nos reímos de cosas distintas” [“I have no-one to laugh with, we laugh at different things”]. The perceived absence of laughter in English, Buratovich claims, causes “la chispa nuestra se apaga” [“our spark to be extinguished”]. While one can be an Australian citizen, one will always have the world view of a migrant. He explains thus: “estamos afinados en otro tono, y por lo tanto somos discordantes, no sonamos bien en la orquesta, es decir, no somos australianos” [“we are tuned to a different key, and therefore we are out of tune, we don’t play well in the orchestra, meaning that we are not Australian”]. Buratovich writes about the silent world in which Spanish-speaking migrants live, especially those who choose to live outside the ‘ghettos’ of Fairfield and Liverpool. He takes this point one step further, arguing that “en cierta medida no conocer el idioma sea una bendición, porque del gueto no se sale” [“to some extent not knowing the language could be a blessing because one does not leave the ghetto”].

Buratovich’s letter identifies several important points regarding humour, and the potential barriers that it creates to successful translation into host language and culture. Firstly, the ability to process and appreciate humour in one’s second language requires a sophisticated level of linguistic mastery, the absence of which impedes successful translation into the host language and culture. Migrants may experience a sense of exclusion at not being able to ‘get’ (in a linguistic sense) host language humour. Secondly, there is the observation that migrants in the host country “laugh at different things”, and that the difficulties associated with the translation of humour between cultures leaves the migrant isolated and excluded. Lastly, Buratovich claims that this isolation and inability to connect through humour in turn leads to the extinguishment of a significant aspect of a migrant’s identity when his or her humour is not appreciated or understood by members of the host community.

The author Brigid Maher opens her book Recreation and Style: Translating Humorous Literature in Italian and English (2011) with an anecdote that illustrates the barriers that exist when, despite every effort, migrants feel excluded from the host culture because of not being able to connect through humour. Maher draws on an account by Stanislaw Baranczak of the Polish poet, journalist and playwright Antoni Słonimski, who fled to
England where he lived for twelve years after the start of World War II. Although known for his wit and hilarity in Polish, Slonimski struggled to impart the same humour in English, despite his best efforts. In 1951, frustrated by his inability to be funny among his English friends, Slonimski returned to his native Poland. Maher reminds the reader that not only is humour one of the most difficult aspects of language to dominate, it is also difficult to translate. In addition, “humorous style is also an important part of many people’s sense of self” and “the translated Slominski was no longer Slominski” (1). The need to re-claim a part of his identity was thus enough of a driver to convince him to return to post-war Poland.

Maher’s recognition of the role that humour plays in a migrant’s ability to integrate into the host culture is highlighted by Espinosa’s experience. In interview, Espinosa identifies humour as the catalyst that enabled her to embrace a single identity. This took place some ten years into her residency in Australia and long after she had ceased crónica writing. Espinosa had always been told by her Spanish speaking family and friends that she was amusing, yet only when she had mastered this linguistic device in the host language and when English-speaking friends and colleagues remarked “Clara, you are so funny!” did she recognise the significance of this breakthrough. This led her to report a deeper sense of having ‘arrived’ linguistically and culturally (Espinosa).

Indeed, a key early step towards the attainment of self-translation occurred in 1991 when, having returned to Australia from a visit to Bolivia, Espinosa felt ready to discard her Woggy Girl persona. In email correspondence, Espinosa states that “before my trip, the writing was fluid, but when I came back I started to struggle. I didn’t find anything to say anymore” (12 Mar. 2017). The desire to “kill-off” her alter ego, but to continue writing crónicas using the pseudonym “Mujer” [“Woman”], reflected a readiness to embrace a new identity, one that positioned the cronista closer to the Australian mainstream. Her Woggy Girl crónicas had served, and ultimately exhausted, their purpose: vehicles through which to process the grief that accompanied migration, in particular the shedding of an identity constructed around her role as a senior medical professional.

By Espinosa’s reckoning, _El Español en Australia_ published 63 Mujer crónicas.\(^53\) They covered a range of themes including gender roles and parenting, childhood health and

\(^{53}\) Espinosa’s columns were entitled “Con ojos de mujer” [“Through the Eyes of a Woman”], and were published from 29 Oct. 1991.
welfare, women and the priesthood, and the influence of television. Espinosa sought to present these topics from a female perspective, and in her first crónica in this series, “Con Ojos de Mujer” [“Through a Woman’s Eyes”], published in October 1991, she explained her intention thus: “Los ojos de una mujer son un poco polifacéticos, ven los problemas desde ángulos diferentes, como fêmeas, como madres, como esposas, como trabajadoras obreras y como profesionales” [“A women’s eyes are somewhat multi-faceted, they see problems from various angles, as women, as mothers, as wives, as manual workers and as professionals”]. Although writing the Mujer crónicas represented the shedding of Espinosa’s migrant skin, and reflected the musings of a more integrative and expansive mind-set, structurally they adhere closely to those that she penned as Woggy Girl. The Mujer crónicas follow the same ordered and sequential format that was characteristic of the Woggy Girl columns, and the somewhat earnest tone that was present in her early crónicas is evident again in this later body of work. Indeed, the observation made by Espinosa’s Spanish-speaking family and friends that she was funny was not manifested in the body of crónicas examined in this study. This may be a reflection of the subject matter addressed in Espinosa’s columns, many of which dealt with the cronista’s intense grief at the loss of her pre-migration identity.

While Espinosa’s sense of humour is not evident in her crónica writing, humour is a linguistic device that has been used by first generation migrant writers to foster a sense of belonging within an exclusive language community. Although in this chapter I have focused on Woggy Girl’s work, it is important to note that her fellow cronistas, namely El Gato and Blady Woggie, have both penned satirical crónicas that have employed humour as a mechanism to address the themes of belonging, as well as gender relations, which is the subject of the chapter to follow.
Clara Espinosa Noriega.\textsuperscript{54}

\textsuperscript{54} Photo supplied by Espinosa. Photographer and date unknown.
Chapter 5

On Gender Relations: Latin Lovers in Australia

Uno de los mitos más extendidos entre los hombres latinoamericanos recién llegados a este país es que las australianas se mueren por nosotros. Por eso de que somos morenos tostaditos, el tipo latino. Como quien dice, una mezcla entre Rodolfo Valentino, Julio Iglesias y Porfirio Rubirosa.

[One of the most widely held myths among newly arrived Latino men is that Australian girls are crazy about us – because we’re the smooth, Latin lover types. As they say, a mixture of Rudolph Valentino, Julio Iglesias and Porfirio Rubirosa]55

Lucho Abarca, (1992 43)

Migration can bring about significant changes in gender roles and a component of successful translation into the host language and culture is that that migrants understand and respond to altered perspectives and expectations in their host countries. Migrants face an intricate web of gender related challenges that encompass two main themes. Firstly, there are those encounters that emerge as a result of interactions with members of the opposite sex within the receiving culture. Secondly, there are the gendered relationships between members of the same migrant community, and the associated shifts in the balance of power between migrant men and women in the host country. Historically, the Latin American crónica has been a powerful vehicle for the exploration of themes associated with the changed gender roles that accompany migration. In this chapter I examine the crónicas by Lucho Abarca, who wrote as Blady Woggie, and analyse the issues that relate to changes in gender roles and relationships in the Latin American migrant community in Australia. I discuss crónicas that appear in the anthology Historias de un Blady Woggie, which was published in Santiago, Chile in 1992, as well as in the newspaper El Español en Australia in the early 1990s. As noted in Chapter 3, earlier versions of the crónicas discussed in this chapter had appeared in newspapers and magazines in 1978 and 1979. The dates of publication of each crónica will be identified at the beginning of each commentary.

In his crónica “Desventuras del ‘Latin Lover’” (1992), Blady Woggie reports on the advice offered to newly arrived Latin American community members at the migrant hostels, which encapsulated the following views: Australian men spend the whole day in the pub, and have thus abandoned their wives, who are bored and take themselves to clubs to play on the “poker machines”. However, what they are really doing is going out to look for their “Latin lover”. Blady Woggie claimed that he had encountered dozens of different versions of this colourful tale, but the finale of each remained steadfastly unchanged: “el gringo feliz con su cerveza; la gringa, feliz con su “latin lover”, y el moreno tostadito, feliz con su ‘sex appeal’”. [“The gringo’s happy with his beer; the gringa’s happy with her “Latin lover”, and the “moreno tostadito” is happy with his sex appeal.”] These observations or stereotypes, whether “verdad, mentira, mitología o exageración” [“true, false, myth or exaggeration”] (Abarca 44) are critiqued in Abarca’s interpretation of changed gender dynamics experienced by new and emerging communities in the host country. They also set the scene for this chapter’s analysis of the cronista’s use of humour, in particular irony, to portray the dilemmas faced by new migrants as they re-negotiate changed gender roles, in the process of self-translation.

This commentary on gender relations in Abarca’s crónicas is orientated within a broader context of gender relations in the migrant setting, with a special focus on the critical examination of the columns penned by Mexican cronistas who had migrated to the United States during the early 20th century. Gender theory is commonly considered to have emerged in the late 19th century with the first wave of feminism (Whitlow 1083), the focus of which was the acquisition of civil rights, such as the right to vote. From the 1960s, second wave feminists “sought equality with men in education, the workplace and under the law” [italics in original] (Whitlow 1084). The third wave of feminism, which is generally thought to have emerged in the 1990s, heralded a variety of new themes including “the construction of individual identity, including gender and sexuality” (1085). The cohort of feminist writers from this wave included Judith Butler, who asserted that gender is a social construction. In her foundational book Gender Trouble, Feminism and the Subversion of Identity (1990), Butler argued against the essentialist view of “woman”

\footnote{A version of this crónica appeared in the magazine publication Vistazo (15-31 Mar. 1979), with the title “Don Juanes from Overseas.”

\footnote{‘Moreno tostadito’: A suitable translation to this term would be “a Latin Lover type” which has already been used earlier in the quote. Abarca’s suggestion to me is: “looking as a Macho Man from southern Italy, in a B grade movie.”}
and “man” as a category. Rather, she proposed that gender is performative, the result of repeated gendered acts. She promoted gender as a fluid quality, subject to shifts and variations during different times and in different places and contexts. Others such as Simone de Beauvoir had also theorised about the distinction between sex and gender. De Beauvoir argued in her pioneering book *The Second Sex* (1949), that “one is not born, but rather becomes, a woman” (2009 293). This concept of gender as a social construction has impacted on the gender studies that have emerged from Latin America in the last forty years, and as with the North American and European experience, there has been “a progressive shift from a focus on women to gender over time” (Chant and Craske 7). This shift has enabled a discussion on gender that incorporates diverse perspectives around both women and men. An examination of the gender relations in Latin America starts with a discussion of the phenomena of *marianismo* and *machismo*.

The term *marianismo* in this context is thought to have been coined in 1973 by Evelyn Stevens in her essay “Marianismo: The Other Face of Machismo in Latin America”. It is a term that “teaches that women are semi-divine, morally superior and spiritually stronger than men” (91). Stevens claims that the origins of *marianismo* “lay in Old World cultures, travelled to the New World with the *conquistadores*, and thereafter came to their fullest expression in *mestizo* Latin America” (Chant and Craske 9). The model for ideal *marianist* behaviour is embodied in the Virgin Mary, whose qualities of piety, submissiveness, gentleness and sexual purity prevail. According to Chant and Craske, “[t]his hybrid complex of idealised femininity offered a series of beliefs about women’s spiritual and moral superiority over men that acted to legitimate their subordinate domestic and societal roles” (9). Stevens describes the *marianist* model thus:

> Among the characteristics of this ideal are semi-divinity, moral superiority, and spiritual strength. This spiritual strength engenders abnegation, that is an infinite capacity for humility and sacrifice. No self-denial is too great for the Latin American woman, no limit can be divined to her vast store of patience with the men of her world. Although she may be sharp with her daughters – and even cruel to her daughters-in-law – she is and must be complaisant toward her own mother and her mother-in-law, for they too, are reincarnations of the great mother. She is also submissive to the demands of the men: husbands, sons, fathers, brothers.
Stevens presented the concept of *marianismo* as “the other face” of *machismo*, a term used to describe “the stereotypical Latin American masculinity that is characterised by an overt, active heterosexuality; courage that blends in to aggression; and a male bonding that includes physicality without generally questioning the male’s heterosexuality” (Hardin 3). It is a form of sexism that shares some characteristics with patriarchy. Violeta Sara-Lafosse explains that *machismo* and patriarchy are “sexist forms of behaviour, for both treat the woman as a sexual object, and thus a person subject to domination” (107). Sara-Lafosse highlights a key difference between the two terms. Whereas the patriarch, in his assumed role as head of the family, takes responsibility for the welfare of his children the *macho* man does not, viewing his offspring as the “the concern of the woman” (107).

It is useful to consider the concepts of *machismo* and *marianismo* within context of the culture and history from whence they emerged. In his book *Latin America: Cultures in Conflict* (2006), Robert C Williamson identifies several factors that account for the development in Latin America of these dual concepts. Firstly, the author notes that “few indigenous cultures lean toward machismo”. Rather, “the social structure originated in a conquest based on slavery and serfdom” (112). According to Williamson, this *conquista* is re-enacted on a daily basis, taking the form of a *machista* conquest of women (112). Secondly, Williamson cites a “strong masculine bias in Western, and notably Spanish culture, as influenced by Moorish male dominance” (112), with few of the gains made by women in the Renaissance, Enlightenment and French Revolution being enjoyed in Spain and its colonies. Lastly, “the dualism deeply implanted in Western and Eastern thought” has resulted in the assumption that “the two genders represent almost uniquely separate biological and psychological entities” (112). According to Williamson, this gender division, wherein “men are external and visible, and women are hidden and interior” remains current today, “blended by class and ethnic shadings” (112).

Although the concepts of *marianismo* and *machismo* are central to an examination of gender in Latin America, both models have come under criticism in large part because they tend to ignore other factors such as socio-economic status, education, and ethnicity, and others. In her comprehensive critique of the *marianismo* concept, Marysa Navarro (2002) calls the Stevens’ model “seriously flawed”, “an extrapolation from impressionistic data that has been used mistakenly to account for gender arrangements of

---

58 Williamson attributes this quote to the editor of a Colombian periodical, *La Mujer* (1878). This periodical was published from 1878 to 1881.
the study of masculinity has developed into the study of masculinities, reflecting the culturally varied, socially dynamic and historically contingent nature of what it means to be a man, machismo remains in the singular. This singularity has the potential to reinforce the sense of machismo as a uniform, unchanging, and all-dominating influence on men and their sense of masculinity, while ‘containing’ men within a limited range of potential forms of identity. (135)

Furthermore, Pease and Crossley claim that the factors that influence masculinities “are broad and are constituted by both larger macro factors such as class, race, culture and social hierarchies, and micro factors that include the personal impacts of divorce, political change, personal life histories, and the local impact of global forces” (139). Notwithstanding, many of Blady Woggie’s crónicas are indeed characterised by a distinctly machista tone, as later sections of this chapter will demonstrate.

**Migration and Gender: A historical view**

Historically, crónicas have provided a forum in the Spanish-language press to comment on the changes to gender roles and relations that take place as a result from the migration process. Before examining this topic in the next section, I consider briefly the general theme of gender relations in the migrant setting.

Pease and Crossley highlight that “migration provides men and women with the opportunity to transcend traditional sex roles” (134). Their article cites Paul Boyle and
Keith Halfacre, who observe that migration can act as “an escape route from oppressive patriarchal societies” (9). According to Pease, gender relations can become “more egalitarian as a result of migration” and this important change is frequently due to the fact that “women’s economic power is often increased at the same time that men’s financial contributions to the family are diminished due to either under-employment or low-paid jobs” (80). While migration can enable the re-negotiation of gender roles and relations, Pease and Crossly’s review of the literature reveals that certain elements of gender relations may remain unchanged, and on occasion, “may even be reinforced” (134). This finding has implications for my analysis of Blady Woggie’s crónicas, as I will discuss in sections to follow.

In her article “Migration as Gendered and Gendering Process” Alice Szczepaniková proposes that examinations of gender relations and migration need to consider that “background influences, that shaped migrants’ decisions and opportunities to leave and reach their destination countries, constitute an important basis for understanding migrants’ experiences and practices”. In short, “there are complex histories and legacies behind migration processes” (5), as well as factors such as class, race, and education that play a part in an analysis of the interplay between gender and migration.

Although men and women experience some of the same migration related-challenges, the studies suggest that females tend to adapt more readily to migrant life. This could be related to an improvement in the status of immigrant women in a more developed host country, itself a result of easier access to resources, services and employment outside the home (Itzigsohn & Giorguli-Saucedo N.pag). In addition, as Szczepaniková points out, various researchers have observed that “migrant women prove to be more adept at locating and using financial and social services available in the new society, and in using social-networking skills to gain extra sources of support” (3). These “gains in gender equity are central to women’s desires to settle, more or less permanently, in receiving societies” (587), according to Patricia R. Pessar. Men, on the other hand, tend to “long for a rapid return home in order to regain the status and privileges that migration has challenged” (587). In addition to the loss of authority and respect, Pease claims that migrant men in his study complained of losing power to women, to being “displaced” by spouses who were frequently able to enter the labour market in the receiving country more rapidly than their male partners (87-88). These gender-related losses and gains will inform my analysis
of Blady Woggie’s portrayal of male-female interactions in his crónicas later in this chapter.

**Suitability of the crónica as a commentary on migration**

Earlier I discussed the efficacy of the newspaper crónica as a vehicle to examine the various challenges that come with migration. These challenges include learning a new language, questions of identity and the focus of this chapter, representations of gender and gender roles. Ruth Brown affirms the suitability of the crónica as a means to work through migration related issues:

> Given the historical role of the Latin American crónica as a genre that helps both authors and readers to make sense of emerging social realities, it is fitting that the chronicle style has been adopted by contemporary journalists who write about Mexican migration to the US. (63)

While Brown’s focus is on present day crónicas, here I consider the way that Mexican writers who migrated to the US in the early 1900s used the crónica to engage with their readers on gender-related matters. I examine how these gender-related crónicas became vehicles through which to halt, or at the very least forestall, the process of acculturation. In doing so, they demonstrated a deliberate resistance to translation into the host culture.

In previous chapters I mentioned Nicolás Kanellos’ contributions to this topic, and his study on the gender related crónicas penned by journalists who subscribed to the _México de afuera_ ideology, so references to his material here will be brief. Other literary scholars such as Eleuteria Hernández, Magdalena Barrera and Gabriela Baeza Ventura have also focused on gender in the migrant crónicas published by Mexican exiles in the early 20th century, including the highly influential cronista, Julio Acre (“Jorge Ulica”). Acre’s _Crónicas Diabólicas_ (1916–1926) were syndicated in a weekly column. Ulica’s crónicas were widely consumed by readers who responded enthusiastically to his satirical depictions of the day-to-day happenings within the Mexican immigrant communities in the Southwest of the United States. Kanellos (1998 2008), Hernández (1993), Barrera

59 _México de afuera_: as noted in earlier chapters, this term describes the colony of Mexicans in the United States, whose objectives were to preserve and maintain the Spanish language, Mexican culture and the Catholic faith.
(2009) and Baeza Ventura (2001) have each remarked on Ulica’s consistently unfavourable depiction of Mexican women.

Central to the México de afuera ideology was the promotion of conservative family values and traditional gender roles, and Hernández states that in Ulica’s crónicas: “Las mujeres son las que más sufren de su mordaz crítica por ser ellas el centro, la base de la familia, las que mantienen la unión familiar y las que continúan con las tradiciones familiares y culturales.” [Women are the ones who suffer most from his scathing critique as they are at the centre, at the heart of the family. It is they who preserve family unity and who perpetrate family and cultural traditions] (34). Hernández describes Ulica as being “antifeminista” (34), and posits that the cronista ignored the gains that women, through first wave feminist movements, were experiencing both in their homeland and in the United States. She suggests that Ulica’s stance was a reaction against the advancements made by women’s rights groups.

According to Hernández, Ulica’s focus is on the private domain of the home, and specifically the kitchen, which is portrayed as a location that is vulnerable to the effects of acculturation. He states that “el momento en el que la mujer adopta nuevas, fáciles y prácticas formas anglosajonas de cocinar, desintegra la armonía de la familia por el desastre que causa” [“the moment that the woman adopts new, easy and practical forms of Anglo-Saxon cooking, family harmony disintegrates as a result of the disaster caused”] (35). In her article “Of Chicharrones and Clam Chowder: Gender and Consumption in Jorge Ulica’s Crónicas Diabólicas”, Magdalena Barrera supports Hernández’s view, and maintains that “Ulica sees American-style food, fashion, and household products as wearing away Mexican immigrants’ ties to their country of origin” (50), and at the centre of this consumption are the women. By taking place in the home, the cultural conflict is brought out of the “public” sphere and into the “private”: “the very space that the elites imagine as the ideal refuge for Mexican culture in U.S. society” (57). Such was Ulica’s concern for the losses at stake when it came to males who subscribed to the México de afuera ideology, that he issued this warning to those who were tempted to cross the border into the United States. In his crónica “Inacio (sic) y Mengilda”, he advised Mexican men to stay at home: “Porque aquí andan las cosas muy mal y el género masculino va perdiendo a pasos agigantados, ‘sus sagrados prerrogativos y sus inalienables derechos’” [“Because things are going very badly here and men are losing ‘their sacred prerogatives and their inalienable rights’ at an alarming rate”] (qtd. in Kanellos, Hispanic 123).
Ulica was not the only cronista to establish himself as a powerful voice endorsing the preservation of the “sacred prerogatives” and “inalienable rights” that were being threatened by the women who were perceived to have rejected the *Mexico de afuera* ideology. Ignacio G. Vázquez, who wrote crónicas under the pseudonym Quezigno Gazavic was also highly critical of Mexican women living in the United States. He saw them as being particularly vulnerable to acculturation, and his crónica, published in *El Heraldo Mexicano* in San Antonio, Texas, was viewed by Gabriela Baeza Ventura as a cautionary tale directed at women who betrayed the *Mexico de afuera* ideology.

In her 2009 article “Treachurous Women in the Crónicas of Quezigno Gazavic: A Strategy in Creating Community”, Baeza Ventura analyses a rhymed crónica by Gazavic whose main protagonists are Tanasio and his wife, Ramona. It is an account of “the despicable repercussions of a woman’s betrayal of her husband who is left to suffer while she enjoys a new life in the United States with a new husband who cares not if she is unfaithful to him” (77). Tanasio is characterised as “pure, innocent, honest, good and truly Mexican” (78), while Ramona is described as “una floja” as well as “a sellout”, “a Mexican woman enamoured with American ways that prefers material objects over their faithful husbands” (78). However, an unequal platform is established as Tanasio is given a voice to articulate his self-described misfortune at the hands of his errant wife, while Ramona remains silent. The reader learns of her only through “letters that she writes to Tanasio, and physical descriptions given by her husband and Gazavic” (77). Baeza asserts that Ramona is pilloried on two fronts: on the one hand, she is seen to be “easy prey(s) of the tempting tentacles of U.S. life” (79), on the other she is depicted as a “renegada” [renegade/deserter]. In addition, Tanasio claims that his wife has embraced the life-style of a “pelona” or “flapper”. She wears short skirts, drives a car and goes to the theatre with her female friends. Gazavic asserts that women like Ramona betray their husbands in two ways: they not only abandon them, they also relinquish their Mexican identity in favour of an American one.

---

60 The full title is “Tanasio y Ramona: Narración continuada y en verso de las pintorescas aventuras de dos sujetos ‘de allá de casa’”

61 “Flojo/a” in this context can variously be translated as a non-contributor, a lazy ‘good-for-nothing’ person, or a ‘deadbeat’.
I discuss Gazavic and Ulica’s portrayal of women in the context of the México de afuera ideology to demonstrate that cronistas were able to use their positions as community commentators and moralists to warn their readers about the dire consequences associated with assimilation into North American culture. Their warnings were an attempt to stall what they saw as a wave of deculturisation that threatened the viability of the México de afuera colony whose integrity they sought to preserve. Thus, the gender-themed newspaper crónicas of Acre, Vázquez and others are demonstrative of a resistance to translation.

In previous chapters I observed how some migrants avoided translation into host cultures because their attempts at assimilation had been hampered by extant linguistic and cultural barriers. In contrast, crónicas by Ulica, Gazavic and others actively resisted translation for social, cultural and ideological reasons, thereby protecting the México de afuera colony. Similarly, Blady Woggie’s crónicas, penned some sixty years later in the early 1990s, grapple with gender roles and relations in the process of translating the Chilean immigrant experience in his adopted country, Australia.

**Early writing in Chile and Australia**

By the time his first crónicas appeared in the Spanish language press in Australia in 1978, Lucho Abarca had already established himself as a successful journalist in his native Chile. Although his family had limited financial means, his father enjoyed “classical music, good literature, history books, etc.” (Abarca 23 May 2015). This love of the written word inspired Abarca, and as a young adult he encountered a natural affinity with, and talent for, writing. After undertaking a variety of occupations including tailoring and land-surveying, he commenced journalism studies at the University of Chile.

In his role as a journalist, Abarca wrote for several national newspapers, and produced radio and television programs for the University Student Union. The popularity of his articles in the youth magazine *Ramona* led to the publication of *Viaje por la juventud*, a selection of his “artículos irreverentes, desfachatados y humorísticos” [“irreverent, brazen and humorous articles”]. The book sold 50,000 copies. Sadly, the chaos surrounding the military coup of 1973 prevented the publication of the second edition of a further 50,000 copies. During the months following the coup, the police accused Abarca of being a political activist and detained him. He felt that he was “a marked man” (Abarca 23 May
Fearing for their safety, he and his compañera Lucia Newman, also a journalist, sought refuge outside Chile, and both emigrated to Australia in September 1974. From 1978, Abarca resumed his journalistic career in Australia, writing for Spanish language newspapers and broadcasting on the multi-cultural radio station 2EA. His newspaper crónicas were published under the pseudonym “Bladi Woggi” (later “Blady Woggie”), a name that “sirve igualmente para un fregado como para un barrido” [“serves both purposes”]: Abarcas’s pseudonym equally embodies hostility as well as warm friendship, and its diverse connotations reflect the range of tones that characterise Blady Woggie’s crónicas.

The theme of gender relations appears early in Blady Woggie’s columns in the Spanish-language press in Australia. In his first published crónica, “Bienaventurados los aconsejadores” [“The Lucky Advisors”], Abarca explores the question of whether Anglo-Australian women find Latino men attractive. This topic proved to be a recurring subject in Abarca’s crónicas for years to come.

As a new arrival in Australia, Blady Woggie is bombarded by offers of practical advice by fellow Latino migrants, including where best to shop, bank and buy a second-hand car. There were a range of different opinions and disagreements when it came to practical tips from his well-meaning fellow migrants. However, one shared piece of advice that was consistently unchanged and unchallenged was that “las australianas se enloquecen por los latinoamericanos” [“Australian women are crazy about Latin American men”]. In pondering over the unanimous agreement that Latino men attracted Australian women like bees to honey, he started to explore whether in fact, the complete opposite applied. The question of the relative desirability of Latinos and Australians to each other in large part shapes many of Blady Woggie’s gender related crónicas, as this chapter demonstrates.

---

62 I acknowledge the earlier spelling of ‘Bladi Woggi’ but for the sake of continuity I shall use ‘Blady Woggie’ henceforth.

63 ‘Blady Woggie’: ‘Blady’ is the Spanish spelling for the pejorative adjective “Bloody”. In Australian English the term ‘Wog’ was originally used in a derogative manner to describe migrants who originated from Southern Europe. Its application has since expanded to include other ‘olive skinned’ migrants from the Middle East and South America. While its sting has diminished somewhat and it is sometimes used affectionately, it is still often used in an offensive manner.
For Abarca, writing regular crónicas for publications such as *El Español en Australia, Vistazo* and *El Expreso* in the late 1970s and the early 1990s provided the cronista with a means through which to comment on a variety of migrant experiences. Concurrently with other cronistas such as the Uruguayan-born Michael Gamarra (“Ernesto Balcells”), the Colombian-born Uriel Barrera (“Belarmino Sarna”), Abarca produced crónicas that he claimed were a distillation of aspects of migrant life not represented in “las frías cifras del Departamento de Inmigración” [“the cold numbers that appear in the Department of Immigration’s statistics”] (Abarca 5). He presented his own perspectives or those that he had encountered through other migrants. At times, he was the main protagonist, at others he was either the omniscient narrator, or “un inmigrante más” [“just another migrant”] (Abarca 5). Through his writing his aim was to “open [his] umbrella very wide” (Abarca 23 May 2015), to provide universal appeal to all readers, from the most discerning to the most casual.

Abarca’s crónicas demonstrate opposing tonal qualities, and fluctuate between seriousness and frivolity, between stern criticism and casual humour in his observations of the migrant groups to which he belonged. Abarca claims that he continuously collected ideas for his columns, keeping handwritten and later electronic notes that would later make their way into crónica form. He describes his writing process thus: “The way I write, I need only two or three ideas for a good short story, the rest, it’s a bit like when you are cooking…a little bit of salt, a little bit of pepper, a little bit of olive oil…a little bit of seasoning, a little bit of ‘aliño’” (Abarca 23 May 2015). This ‘recipe’ provided Abarca with a way to tell the stories that he felt that the Spanish language press at the time had overlooked: stories that highlighted the various dilemmas, conflicts and cultural clashes that resulted from the migration process.

The process of writing and engaging in a dialogue with fellow Spanish speakers provided Abarca with a communicative outlet at a time when his language fluency in English was limited, and this in turn gave both cronista and his reading public an opportunity to examine and reflect upon themes such as changed gender relations. The section to follow examines a selection of Abarca’s crónicas, as they relate to gender relations between his fellow Latinos and Anglo-Australian women.

64 *Aliño*: Salad dressing
Gendered Interactions between Latin American Migrants and Members of the Host Community.

As outlined earlier in this chapter, many Mexican cronistas writing in the North American migrant press in the early 1900s depicted Mexican migrant females in an unfavourable light: they were frequently represented as being too eager to adopt the host country’s culture, at the expense of traditional Mexican values. Acculturation was deemed undesirable as it was seen as a threat to the México de afuera ideology, whose ultimate aim was for the exiled community to return “home” when order had been restored. In contrast, the Blady Woggie crónicas, written many decades later in Australia, explored questions of acculturation and commented on attempts made by Latino men to connect with Anglo-Australian women. His crónica “Desventuras del ‘Latin Lover’” [“The Misfortunes of the ‘Latin Lover’”] is an example of this struggle, as it demonstrates the narrator’s attempts to understand the changed landscape around the host country’s conventions related to forming relationships with Anglo-Australian women. First published in its shorter form in 1979,65 the crónica appeared in the context of second wave feminism in Australia, at a time when a range of issues related to family, sexuality, reproductive and workplace rights were the focus of feminist activity.

“Desventuras…” is a crónica in two parts: the first demonstrates a failure in cross-cultural translation. In the second, the narrator charts his process of coming to terms with culturally appropriate ways of connecting with ‘gringas’, which he shares with his readers. As the narrator, Blady Woggie voices his gradual realisation that the cultural conventions and expectations brought about by his fellow Latinos to Australia were not easily translated into the vernacular. The quote below prefaces Blady Woggie’s account and describes the incident that brought this realisation to life:

65 A brief version of “Desventuras…” appeared in the magazine Vistazo (15-31 Mar. 1979) as “Don Juanes from Overseas”.

104
Ingenuamente, hemos creído por un tiempo corto que algunas costumbres nativas nuestras, como el piropo callejero y sus posibilidades creativas de vínculos de amistad, eran internacionales, o podían ser trasplantados hacia Australia. Algunos tardamos menos, a otros les ha tomado más tiempo, y una minoría no ha aprendido aún que lo que jamás hará una mujer en este país – y creo que en todos los países anglo-sajones – es coquetear, disimulada o abiertamente, con un desconocido. (44)

[Naively, we’ve believed for a while that some of our local customs, such as the wolf-whistle and all the possibilities it created for friendships to be formed, were international, or could have been transplanted to Australia. For some of us it hasn’t taken long to realise, (for others it’s taken a little longer and a minority have yet to understand) that a woman in this country – and in all Anglo-Saxon countries, I think – will never flirt with a stranger, either in a subtle way or openly.]

Blady Woggie conveys the theatre of cross-cultural misunderstandings by using a city bus as his stage. The only two people on the bus are the bus driver and the narrator, who buries himself in a copy of “Los Hermanos Karamasov”. A very attractive young woman boards the bus, and there is a brief exchange of glances and half-smiles. The young woman opens a can of soft drink, and starts drinking. Just at the point when Blady Woggie is about to “hacer una tontería, de intentar hablarle” [“do something silly, like try and talk to her”] (46), she un-self-consciously throws the empty can over her shoulder, towards the back of the bus, where it begins to roll noisily up and down the aisle. The cronista is “impresionado por tamaña impudicia. Por su descaro y absoluta indiferencia a la impresión que me podría tomar de ella,” [“taken aback by such immodesty, by her audacity and total indifference to the impression that I may have of her”] The disappointment that Blady Woggie feels is a result of the unfulfilled sense of promise that came with her smiles and her glances. The cues that the cronista interprets as gestures welcoming an encounter amount to nothing, and in a defeated tone, he remarks: “había deshecho el hechizo de un solo tarrazo” [“she had broken the spell with one toss of a can”] (46). Her actions are thus a departure from the marianismo model which would dictate that she behaves with modesty, humility and a sensitivity to the influence that her actions may have upon those around her.

His disenchantment grows as the young woman starts eating a greasy serving of chicken and chips: “Comer, tal vez no sería la expresión correcta. Más acertado sería emplear los
terminus engullir, zampar, devorar. Con voracidad de lobo” [“Eat is perhaps not the right word. More accurate terms would be to gobble, to scoff down, to devour – with the voracity of a wolf”] (46). Having eaten her “fritanga” [“fry-up”], the young woman covers up a burp, then sucks each of her fingers, one by one, wipes off the grease from her lips, and finally picks the remaining morsels of food from her teeth. In witnessing these private rituals in a public setting, Blady Woggie is the speechless onlooker. He is stunned by the overwhelming assault of sights, smells and sounds that emanate from the young “gringa”, in a sensory experience that proves to be the complete antithesis of the romantic liaison for which he was primed. This incident is represented as a watershed moment in Blady Woggie’s residence in Australia:

Esa noche me mataron para siempre las ganas de ser romántico en Australia. Allí se murieron las últimas hilachitas de galantería que me quedaban. Allí me mataron la ilusión de la aventurita fugaz y bella. A tarrazos, a pollazos a fritangazos, que es una manera harto bellaca de morir.

[That night, any desire to be a romantic in Australia was quashed. There, the last remaining threads of gallantry that remained died off. There, any illusion of a beautiful, fleeting little affair died too – with each successive blow of a can, a chicken, a fry-up – which is a wicked way to die] (47).

At the heart of this encounter is a clash between Blady Woggie’s expectations regarding appropriate engagement with the opposite sex in Australia, and the brutal reality. His native country’s norms of courtship that he assumed would translate into the receiving culture had failed him miserably. Compounding this failure is the sense of invisibility that he experiences, as the young woman’s only focus is on the eager consumption of her takeaway meal. There is the added realisation that “el pudor, ese ingrediente tan importante en el misterio y atractivo femininos, en estas lejanas tierras, es una rara flor” [“modesty, that very important ingredient in feminine mystery and allure, is a rare quality in these faraway lands,”] (47).

Central to this, and many of Blady Woggie’s gender-themed crónicas, is a depiction of the way that Latino men adhere to their source culture’s way of engaging with women, oblivious to their failure to strike the appropriate note with Anglo-Australian women. In the second section of the “Desventuras” Blady Woggie charts his cultural awakening to
more appropriate and acceptable strategies for successful engagement with Anglo-Australian women.

The tragi-comic figure in this second vignette is ‘el Lolo’ a fellow Chilean with charming good looks and boundless self-confidence, whose motivation for attending English classes with Blady Woggie is to acquire the linguistic skills to “enloquecer gringas” [“drive ‘gringas’ crazy”] (48). The local employment office is the setting for el Lolo and Blady Woggie’s encounter with two female staff members, whom they name “Angelito Flaco” [“Skinny little Angel”] and “La Pantera” [“The Panther”]. El Lolo has Angelito firmly in his sights, and orchestrates a strategy for winning her attention, then asking her out. Prior to their second employment visit, el Lolo contemplates serenading Angelito with a song in Spanish, and presenting her with a bilingual version of “Veinte Poemas de Amor y una Canción Desesperada”, a selection of love poems by Pablo Neruda.

Blady Woggie steps in to advise el Lolo against this course of action: “le advertí que tuviera cuidado, que en Australia esas cosas no se estilaban” [“I warned him to be careful, that in Australia this was not the done thing”]. The hopeful suitor ignores his friend’s advice, and at their second appointment, el Lolo sees no need to wait at the reception desk, and instead heads straight over to Angelito’s desk, even though she is attending to another client. He greets her with “Hello, darling!” takes a seat on the edge of her desk and thumbs through her paperwork, oblivious to his invasion of Angelito’s personal space, and the interruption of a private meeting. Unsurprisingly, Angelito’s response is swift and decisive, and she immediately reprimands him. The two Chilean men leave the office with their tails between their legs. While el Lolo is crushed by the experience, it is Blady Woggie who draws on his newfound appreciation of his host country’s social conventions and he succeeds in mending bridges with la Pantera, whose real name is Barbara, and the two become firm friends.

Blady Woggie’s resulting conclusion here is that meaningful relationships with Australian women are both possible and rewarding. Significantly, Blady Woggie determines that the onus is on the Latino male to employ “cierto cuidado” and “cierta delicadeza” [“a certain care and delicacy”] when establishing friendships with Australian women. He also counsels his male readers to steer away from “los viejos y manidos trucos de nuestro

66 English title: “Twenty Love Poems and a Song of Despair”
profuso inventario machista” [“the old, hackneyed tricks from our ample machista inventory”] (54). In doing so, he employs his crónica as a vehicle to assist in his analysis of this new cultural landscape. Simultaneously, he imparts this newfound knowledge to a cohort of Latino readers whom he determines are bound to benefit from this guidance.

**Gendered relations within Latin American migrant communities in Australia**

Earlier in this chapter I discussed some of the changes to gender roles and relationships that are brought about by migration. I will now turn to crónicas by Blady Woggie that address the gender theme, to determine what his columns have to say about the shift in the balance of power that takes place between Latino men and women as they journey through the translation process in the host country, Australia. These crónicas also address the adjustments that occur in the domestic setting as Hispanic migrant couples go through the motions of setting up homes, starting families, establishing work routines and negotiating transport arrangements. In addition to addressing these themes, Abarca ventures into territory that is immediately recognisable as being a familiar and fertile battleground for gender-related conflict. From this vantage point, he is able both to observe and participate in the discourse surrounding gender stereotypes.

The cronista satirises women’s map reading skills and geographical knowledge in “¡Pero si nunca tuvieron brújula!” [“But if They Never had Compasses!”] (1992). Here Blady Woggie is the first-person narrator, commentator and would-be peacemaker in a melee that ensues at an afternoon gathering involving the cronista and four married Latin American couples. While watching the opening ceremony of the Olympic Games on television, one of the female guests mistakenly identifies Caracas as a country rather than the capital city of Venezuela, to the extreme embarrassment of her husband and to the intense amusement of the other males present. The women rally in support of their friend, as the men extract the maximum mileage from the situation. Although mocked by their husbands, Abarca gives the females a voice to retaliate. They question why it is that the men are working in menial factory jobs rather than teaching at the University of New South Wales, if indeed they are so knowledgeable. During this tense exchange, Blady

---

67 An earlier version of this crónica appeared in *Vistazo* (1-15 May 1979).
Woggie remarks: “me comporte como un verdadero caballero. […] Me mantuve aparte de la batahola, y apenas esbocé un par de sonrisas, y traté más bien de jugar infructuosamente el papel de apaciguador” [“I behaved like a real gentleman. […] I distanced myself from the ruckus and gave only a couple of half smiles. Rather, I tried in vain to play the role of peacemaker”] (78–9). As a guest without a partner at this gathering, Blady Woggie writes that “no tenía un blanco específico a quien dirigir mis bromas” [“I didn’t have a specific target at whom to direct my jest”]. His unaccompanied status at this gathering thus frees the cronista to occupy a more neutral stance, to observe and comment on the escalation of this gendered conflict from a somewhat removed perspective.

Later in the crónica, and away from the heat of conflict, Blady Woggie changes his stance to satirise women’s poor geographical and navigational skills. He comments that in the extensive variety of items that women carry in their handbags there are “[m]iles de cosas, hasta las más impensadas. Pero, lo que nunca jamás vamos a encontrar, es una brújula. Jamás una brújula.” [“thousands of things, including the most unlikely items. But what we are never, ever going to find is a compass. Never a compass”] (80–81). According to Blady Woggie, the only reason that young women pay attention to the position of the sun is to achieve a golden tan that will make them irresistible to the men around them. He concludes this anecdote by pointing out that while the feminist movement has produced female prime ministers, supreme court judges, boxers and astronauts, “todavía no se conoce ninguna mujer que sea topógrafa” [“to date, there are no female topographers”] (81).

Not surprisingly, female readers reacted unfavourably to this crónica’s sexist stereotyping of women when this column was first published in Vistazo in May 1979. One letter warned: “el señor ‘Blady’ debe tener en cuenta que si algún día su hija lee sus blady crónicas puede montearlo con justa razón como ‘Blady old man’” [“Mr ‘Bloody’ should keep in mind that should his daughter one day read his blady crónicas, she would be more than justified to nickname him ‘Bloody old man’”] (Ponce 46). In another letter, reader Inés Oyarzo wrote:

(Pero) el señor que escribe con el seudónimo Blady Woggie es una ofensa a la lectora por su machismo descarado, inútil y contraproducente bien creo que merece un tirón de orejas y de los grandes. […] la ofensa gratuita a la generalidad de las mujeres más que un chiste es una grosería a la cual debe ponérsele coto de alguna manera. (46)
(But) the gentleman who writes using the pseudonym Blady Woggie offends the reader with his barefaced, pointless and counterproductive machismo – I think he deserves a great big slap on the wrist. Rather than being funny, his insults towards women (in general) are crude and should be stopped.

Reader response of this kind was not infrequent and indeed on occasion Abarca anticipated a negative reaction even before his crónicas went to print. For example, in his 1979 column “Bichos Raros” [“Strange Creatures”], the cronista is critical of Hispanic migrants to Australia who reject their native tongue in favour of English. Both characters depicted are female and Blady Woggie comments “ya veo venir cartas acusándome de machista de nuevo” [“I can just see the letters accusing me once again of being machista”]. Although readers continued to criticise the cronista for a perceived anti-feminist agenda, Blady Woggie makes the contentious claim that one of his “most successful” (13 June 2015) crónicas, “¿Oye mijito…por qué no me enseñas a manejar el auto?”, [“Hey honey, why don’t you teach me to drive the car?”], celebrated a female’s “triumph” in a domestic dispute with her husband.

My analysis of “¿Oye mijito…por qué no me enseñas a manejar el auto?”, is based on premise that moving to a new country can provide “a space in which gender relations can be renegotiated” (Willis & Yeoh qtd. in Chant and Craske 247). This renegotiation, and the inter-marital conflicts that arise as a result of it, form the basis of this crónica, which was inspired by events that a person close to Abarca had shared with him. It was published first in El Expreso (13 Nov 1979), and then in Vistazo (15 Feb. 1979). A later version appeared in his anthology Las Historias de un Blady Woggie (1992).

As with the crónica “¡Pero si nunca tuvieron brújula!”, the setting for this column is one that is immediately recognisable to the reader as another potential conflict zone for marital relations, especially those who undergo challenges and renegotiations as a result of migration. The storyline involves a married couple, Rosita and Bartolo, who are settling in to migrant life in Sydney. After much persuasion and cajoling, Bartolo persuades Rosita to use their combined savings to buy a second-hand car. While Bartolo enjoys the convenience of driving himself to and from work, Rosita notices no appreciable improvement to her day-to-day life, which continues as before: buses to and from work, and household chores upon her return home.
Rosita decides to take action, and asks that Bartolo teach her to drive. Despite his immediate resistance to the idea, Rosita nonetheless applies for and acquires her learner’s permit. From this point on, Bartolo concocts a series of car safety excuses as to why Rosita should not start driving lessons. Realising that Bartolo is obstructing the process, Rosita becomes indignant and the couple engage in what Abarca describes in interview as “a sort of domestic Tom and Jerry guerrilla warfare” (13 June 2015). Rosita disrupts his showers in the morning by running the hot and cold taps in the kitchen, alternately freezing and burning him, while acting oblivious to his cries. She prepares peanut butter and Vegemite as sandwich spreads, but includes in his lunchbox a raw potato for his dessert. Rosita is clearly depicted as an enthusiastic embracer of Australian culture through Blady Woggie’s deliberate inclusion of Vegemite sandwiches, which in themselves are a material reminder that they are now in another Western nation where different rules apply. Nevertheless, her attempts to persuade her husband to change his mind fail to produce a result.

One evening after dinner, she manages to coax a reluctant and resentful Bartolo into agreeing to take her out for her first driving lesson. Again, he stalls, hiding in the bathroom while Rosita hears him clearing his throat, flushing the toilet over and over, and opening and closing drawers. He eventually emerges from the bathroom, “agresivo y malhumorado” [“aggressive and bad tempered”] (21), to the sound of their child, singing a song he had just made up: ¡Mi-mamá-va-a- Manejar!... Mi-mamá-va-a- Manejar!...[“My mum is going to drive! My mum is going to drive!”] (21). Bartolo responds violently, by kicking his child in anger. Rosita comforts the child, and he joins his parents for the driving lesson in their old Holden. Unsurprisingly, Bartolo’s instructional style is neither constructive nor conducive to Rosita’s learning: “No daba instrucciones sino que maldecía, invocaba a los dioses y garbateaba al menor detalle” [“rather than giving instructions, he cursed, invoking the gods and picking on every minor detail”] (22). The couple’s son starts singing his made-up song again, and Bartolo loses control. He turns around and slaps his son in the face, to which Rosita utters to herself “Dios mío” [“My God”]. At that point, the car stalls, diagonally, in the middle of an intersection, traffic builds up behind them, and drivers sound their horns loudly.

In this crónica’s powerful and moving climax, Rosita gets out of the car without a word. She takes the hand of her tearful child, carefully removes the learner plates and places them safely in the glovebox, possibly for use at a later date. Without any further
acknowledgement of her husband, she leaves Bartolo behind, alone in the vehicle. Holding her child’s hand, she consoles him tenderly and they leave on foot. She cries silently as they walk home together, careful to do so without her son’s knowledge. By the time Rosita and her child return home, she has regained her composure. A final post-script tells the reader that the family recovers from the driving lesson incident and domestic life returns to normal. They do not find themselves in the Family Court, and there are no further attempts to teach Rosita to drive. The family lives on “happily ever after”.

I describe this crónica at some length to highlight its significance as both a social commentary on gender relations in the migrant setting and as a powerful piece of creative writing. In interview, Abarca claims that its success with readers was due to the fact that “it has everything. It has humour, and drama and comedy and tension”. As a critique of gender relations in his community, it appeared to touch “a sort of raw nerve” (13 June 2015), and reader response was extensive. According to Abarca, both male and female Latin American migrants approached him and informed him that they too, had experienced Rosita and Bartolo’s inter-marital conflicts around the issue of learning to drive. Importantly, Abarca reports that a group of Latin American feminists visited him in person, to thank him for helping their cause by writing a piece that focused on a feisty and determined woman’s quest to challenge her husband’s presumed authority over the use of a co-owned material asset; however, the good-will from this lobby group proved to be short-lived. Abarca comments that some weeks later, he published “¡Pero si nunca tuvieron brújula!”, the aforementioned crónica in which he satirises women’s sense of direction, “and then me and the feminists, we were enemies again” (13 June 2015), which suggests that Blady Woggie viewed this as a return to a default position that reflected a machista perspective on gender issues.

“¿Oye mijito…por qué no me enseñas a manejar el auto?” resonated deeply with readers in the Latin American community to which Abarca belonged and it occupies an important position in this study of the migrant as translated being. Firstly, it illustrates the conflicting circumstances that are commonly experienced by first generation female migrants like Rosita who seek translation into the host culture. In their article “The Impact of Machismo on Hispanic Women”, academics Yolanda Quiñones Mayo and Rosa Perla Resnick highlight the dilemma faced by female migrants to the United States, who find themselves “caught between adherence to traditional systems that they have accepted as giving them an identity and the need to change” (258). Rosita finds herself in this situation. Although
co-owner of the car with Bartolo, she does not have access to the advantages that increased mobility would afford her, and her workload both inside and outside the home continues unchanged. In contrast, the convenience of driving had improved Bartolo’s lifestyle appreciably: “Y el muy fresco de Bartolo, ningún problema. Terminaba su trabajo y se venía manejando a casa. Y llegaba justo cuando ella había terminado preparar la comida” [“As for the wily Bartolo, no problem there. He’d finish work and drive home. And he’d arrive just as she had finished preparing the evening meal”].

The car thus becomes a symbol for the independent person that Rosita seeks to become, as she attempts to engage in the new opportunities presented by the host country, be they joining the workforce or in this case, learning to drive. For Bartolo, the convenience and utility of car ownership is challenged by the prospect of Rosita driving, and he is fearful of what this freedom might bring to their marriage. Bartolo’s self-image as head of the family is threatened by the prospect of his wife spending time away from home, “the sanctuary where women should remain to fulfil their societal obligations as wives and mothers” according to the “firm patriarchal notions of gender relations” (Moraes-Gorecki 26) that accompany Latin American migrants when they settle in Australia.

Proud yet insecure, Bartolo is unable to address these issues directly with his wife and draws on the only tools available to him, namely anger, aggression and ultimately violence. Here, Bartolo attempts to reinforce and consolidate his position of power. This intransigence demonstrates the practice noted earlier by Pease and Crossly, who describe the way that some migrants adhere to, and reinforce traditional gender roles, exhibiting a stark unwillingness to negotiate any power sharing in the relationship. By calmly removing herself from the scene of Bartolo’s abuse, Rosita takes control of an area of her life that she is able to influence, that is, as her child’s protector. Her refusal to engage in any way with her husband prevents him from challenging her at that moment.

The crónica’s post-script describes a return to the status quo for Rosita and Bartolo:

Ahora, todo ha sido superado y han vuelto a ser la misma familia unida y feliz. La vida sigue, tranquila, serena y plácida como siempre. […] Por supuesto, no fueron

---

68 See page 96.
a la Corte de la Familia porque ellos se quieren mucho, y porque ambos son muy maduros, muy adultos. Además, han decidido que es muy difícil que Rosita aprenda a manejar el auto: es muy nerviosa.

[Now, all has been resolved and they have returned to being the same, united and happy family. Life, as always, continues to be calm, serene and placid. Naturally, they did not end up in the Family Court because they love each other very much, and they’re both very mature and adult. Moreover, they have decided that it’s very difficult for Rosita to learn to drive the car: she’s very nervous.] (Abarca 23)

In returning home to an abusive husband, and with no immediate prospects of learning to drive, Rosita is depicted as a victim. However, Abarca claims in interview that this was not his intention. Rather, he states that his goal was to infer irony, thus achieving the opposite effect. Although there is no evidence for this in the text, Abarca claims (13 June 2015) that Rosita does indeed learn to drive in due course, but on her own terms and without her husband’s input or involvement. The cronista states that Rosita, “as all the women in our community, didn’t take the shit. They, the women, they rebelled,69 they learned to drive (the) car and in the end, they became free” (Abarca 13 June 2015). Abarca goes as far as to say that Rosita’s final actions at the crónica’s climax are “a gesture of, I would say, the liberation of the woman”, a conclusion that he claims was received with particular favour by his female readership.

My reading of the conclusion, and specifically the postscript, does not lead me to the conclusion that Abarca describes, which is that Rosita does eventually learn to drive. Rather, the text states that although Rosita reacts to her husband’s violent outburst with dignity and grace, she is nonetheless silent, and does not stand up to her spouse’s aggression, either at the time of the car stalling incident, or later. She returns to this repressive home environment, wherein she assumes her traditional role of wife and mother, without having fulfilled her desire to learn to drive. Bartolo has managed to

69 Abarca’s choice of the word “rebelled” is of interest. In learning to drive, women such as Rosita were merely exercising a basic right to independent transportation, using an asset owned, in this crónica, by both husband and wife. The use of the word “rebellion” implies an act of large scale revolt, and is disproportionate to the act.
convince her that her “nervous” temperament makes her an unsuitable candidate for a learner driver. However, in interview, the cronista later claims that his readership at the time of the crónica’s publication understood Blady Woggie’s ironic intent, and accepted that Rosita’s ‘triumph’ extended to her learning to drive at a later date, thus achieving the independence that access to private transport brings. Abarca claims that the driving-lesson scenario and subsequent outcome of Rosita’s eventual ‘triumph’ were sufficiently familiar to readers that they grasped the cronista’s intended conclusion. Despite the author’s assertions, I have not found evidence to support Abarca’s claims that “everybody who read it understood,” and that “it could be one in one hundred readers that can read as she accepts the status quo” (Abarca 13 June 2015).

This discrepancy between the written word as it appears in the text, and Abarca comments to me in face-to-face interviews may be an attempt by the author to backpedal and reframe what he now recognises as a sexist text, presenting the crónica in a more palatable way to a contemporary readership. Abarca’s views on gender related matters may have evolved over the forty years since the original publication of the this crónica, and he may wish to distance himself from the chauvinistic elements expressed in this text. Although my analysis of this crónica leaves some unanswered questions, it remains nonetheless a powerful example of the effectiveness of the crónica genre as a vehicle for the expression of the cronista’s views on gender related matters in the migrant setting. Abarca explains his reasons for presenting the story in this milieu:

> It worked because I decided to denounce the situation using a sort of fictional, short story. With lots, but lots of outrageous humour. If I had used the other option, meaning writing a serious journalist(ic) column, about (the) male chauvinism, it would not have the same effect. I didn’t want to editorialise the situation. I wanted to amaze and amuse… (Abarca 13 June 2015)

Abarca claims that “dressing up” the story and embedding it in humour allowed his readers to engage with the topic more readily and more directly, and that married couples saw the reality of their lives reflected “in a sort of mirror” (Abarca 13 June 2015). The truth, as the cronista sees it, is offered to the reader, even though the specifics of the crónica may vary from the original version of events. The result is an experience for the reader that leaves a more lasting impression than that which would be expected had conventional journalistic techniques been used.
In closing this chapter, I propose that Blady Woggie’s columns provided a platform from which the cronista canvassed a range of perspectives in relation to the theme of gender in the host community. Simultaneously provocative and playful, Blady Woggie’s crónicas were frequently identified by their machista tone; however, closer scrutiny reveals on occasion a more complex and nuanced position, a curiosity around observing and deciphering the negotiation of changed gender roles and expectations of Hispanic men and women in a new cultural landscape.

Early in this section, I discussed the way that Blady Woggie’s crónicas charted his own progression through the stages involved in shedding some of the source country’s conventions and expectations around courtship and romantic liaisons with Anglo-Australian women. Through characters such as the ill-fated Lolo, he depicted both the consequences of failed cross-cultural translations, as well as sharing with his readers his new-found appreciation of appropriate and acceptable strategies for engagement with Anglo-Australian women. Finally, Blady Woggie’s crónicas highlight, with dramatic effect, the experiences of female Latin American migrants who aspire to attain the freedoms and privileges that self-translation into a progressive, liberal host country promises to deliver. Their efforts are obstructed by Latino men who not only resist their spouses’ efforts to attain independence and autonomy, but also deny themselves the opportunity to embrace somewhat more expansive gender roles.
Chapter 6

On Belonging: At Home in Multicultural Australia

[T]he migrant’s sense of disorientation about their home and their sense of belonging – which can be a consequence of the pluralisation of self-identities, languages, biographical plans and places that inevitably occurs in a migratory experience – turns out to be a more or less active search for a new home and a new beginning.

Diana Glenn et al., (1)

A different Australia emerged in the 1950s. A multicultural one, and 30 years on we’re still trying to fit in as ethnics and we’re still trying to fit the ethnics in as Australians.

Melina Marchetta, (202)

The theme of belonging is a frequent feature of migrant literature, and the three cronistas in this study, Clara Espinosa, Lucho Abarca, and the subject of this chapter, Guillermo Hertz, have all written widely on this topic. Belonging can be viewed in the context of two settings – the first relates to belonging within a migrant’s linguistic and cultural community and the second applies to that of the host country and culture. In this chapter I address the topic of belonging by examining a selection of crónicas written by Guillermo Hertz (El Gato). These works appear in his anthology Lo Mejor del Gato (1997), a ‘best of’ selection of his columns that were published in the newspapers El Español en Australia and The Spanish Herald during the mid 1990s. My analysis will also draw on a selection of additional columns from the aforementioned newspapers that do not appear in the anthology. I ask what El Gato’s columns demonstrate about the factors that either enable or obstruct the process of belonging. I also enquire as to whether a migrant’s experience of belonging serves as evidence of a successful translation into the host country and culture.
The first crónica to appear in Lo Mejor del Gato is “Bienvenidos a ‘La Columna del Gato’”). Written some 25 years after Hertz’s 1971 arrival in Australia, it paints a nostalgic picture of the way that El Gato and his cohort of fellow Latin Americans fostered a sense of belonging to a fledgling community of new migrants in their initial efforts to adapt to life in the host country. El Gato describes the hostels at Villawood and East Hills as environments in which new migrants rallied in support of each other’s efforts to secure employment and to achieve some financial freedom. Recent arrivals to the hostels were advised of casual work opportunities and transported there by those who owned vehicles:

“La Victa está empleando gente”… “Hay cincuenta vacantes en Cable Makers”… “El turno de la noche en tal parte necesita veinte operarios”. “El uruguayo que vive al lado escuchó que Goodyear necesita diez personas para el humo negro”…. “¿Pregunta por Mr Jones y hacélo (sic) rápido antes de que lleguen los gringos! “¿No tienes movilización? …No te preocupes, hermano. Yo te llevo” (12)

[“Victa’s employing at the moment”…“There are fifty vacancies at Cable Makers”… “The night shift at such-and-such place needs twenty workmen”. “The Uruguayan guy who lives around the corner heard that Goodyear needs ten people for the black smoke.”71 “Ask for Mr Jones, and do it quickly – before the gringos arrive!” “You don’t have any transport? Don’t worry, brother. I’ll take you.”]

Families cared for each other’s children to enable parents to accept after-hour shifts. There was a “sudamericanismo” [“South Americanism”] (13) that meant that fellow Latinos would vouch for each other and an employer would extend a helpful hand to a new migrant “tal y como a él le habían ayudado” [“in the same way that he himself had been helped”] (13). The picture that this crónica paints is one of a community that, by fostering a sense of belonging among its members, enabled its newly arrived migrants to step outside the confines and comforts of their pre-migration professional identities, to accept work opportunities despite being over-qualified for them, all with the confidence that more suitable work would eventuate in due course: “En nuestros tiempos los ex-gerentes destripaban terrrones sabiendo que algún día la suerte cambiaría” [“Back then, those who

70 Italics in original
71 A section of Goodyear Tyres that Spanish-speaking process workers called “Humo negro” because it was always full of black smoke.
had been bosses would shovel dirt knowing that one day, their luck would change” (14). Thus, the support structure that the migrant hostels provided, both on a practical and social level, played an important role in helping Hertz and his family to confront the obstacles that came with the search for employment. The environment did not immediately offer recognition or kudos to immigrants who had abandoned other professional careers in their homelands. Rather, this vignette illustrates the protective effect that a sense of belonging provided to newly arrived migrants.

In this chapter, I ask what El Gato’s crónicas demonstrate about the concept of belonging within a multicultural setting. Belonging has been the subject of critical interest across a variety of disciplines. In 1943, Abraham Maslow published his article “The Theory of Human Motivation”,72 in which he identified belonging as a basic human need, and positioned it third in his hierarchical structure, after physiological and safety needs (381). More recently, cultural theorists, geographers, sociologists and others have contributed to this multidimensional field of study. Marco Antonsich has undertaken an extensive cross-disciplinary review of critical studies on belonging (2010). Antonsich introduces his study by stating that “[b]elonging is a notion both vaguely defined and ill-theorised” (644). His article attempts to bring clarity to the analysis of this topic by building on the contributions of theorists such as Nira Yuval-Davis (2006) and Tovi Fenster (2005). Antonsich proposes an analytical framework based around two dimensions of belonging. He calls the first ‘place-belongingness’, which he describes as “belonging as a personal, intimate, feeling “at home” in a place” (645). Borrowing from bell hooks73 (213), Antonsich states that “‘home’ stands for a symbolic space of familiarity, comfort, security, and emotional attachment” (645). The experience of place-belonging is influenced by a range of factors, namely autobiographical, relational, cultural, economic and legal.

The second dimension is described as “the politics of belonging” and involves “the official, public orientated ‘formal structure’ of membership, as for instance is manifested by citizenship” (645). According to Antonsich, there is a negotiation that continually takes place between “the side that claims belonging and the side that has the power of ‘granting’ belonging” (650). This is best illustrated in the processes involved in the asking for, and granting of residency or citizenship permits. Nevertheless, the gaining of political

---

72 This was followed in 1954 by Maslow’s book *Motivation and Personality*.
73 bell hooks is the pen-name of Gloria Jean Watkins, a US born intellectual, cultural critic and feminist theorist.
belonging does not automatically generate “a sense of place-belongingness” (650); this is particularly relevant to the migrant experience wherein one may belong ‘on paper’, without necessarily feeling included and accepted by the host country.

According to Jack Bowers belonging is closely intertwined with estrangement. In his 2016 book *Strangers at Home: Place, Belonging, and Australian Life Writing*, Bowers claims that a discussion on one requires consideration of the other (2). He explains this connection thus:

> In order to get a sense of the way belonging and estrangement are entwined, we need to recognise the complexity, even the ambivalence, that is at the heart of the relationship between individuals and what they find in the world. Belonging, like identity, requires, quite literally, something to belong to, a “home” in which we seek not to be a “stranger.” (2)

Between belonging and estrangement lies a space – an ‘in-between-ness’ that many migrants experience, and out of which they may seek to establish a new sense of ‘home’. The “home”, as described by Edward Relph, in *Place and Placelessness* is “not just the house you happen to live in, it is not something that can be anywhere, that can be exchanged, but an irreplaceable centre of significance” (qtd. in Bowers 3). It is also “the smells, the relationships, the experiences, it is the memories and stories” (Bowers 4). In the introduction to *Imagining Home: Migrants and the Search for New Belonging*, Diana Glenn, Sonia Floriani and Eric Bouvet describe that a migrant’s search for a new “home” whether physical or metaphorical, “can be either in continuity with the pre-migratory life experience, or inspired by both the pre-migratory past and the post-migratory present and future” (2). The authors propose three models of home. First, there is the *diasporic* home, which is “a projection of the migrant’s wish to feel at home more in the pre-migratory context than in the post-migratory one” (2). The second is the *transnational* home, which is “located beyond the borders of homeland and the adopted new land”. Lastly, there is the *cross-cultural* home, “which emerges from the negotiation between the home that was a long time ago and the home that could have been” (2). The authors stress that although the “recast sense of home” may be definitive, it may equally be transient and fluid (2), suggesting that a migrant’s version of a new home may evolve and shift with time.
Questions of belonging are, of course, interrelated to those of identity, particularly in the context of a migrant’s attempt to translate him or herself into the host country, language, and culture. Stuart Hall describes the process of identity formation as “a moveable feast: formed and transformed continuously in relation to the ways we are represented or addressed in the cultural systems which surround us” (“The Question” 598). He adds that “identities are formed at the unstable point where personal lives meet the narrative of history” and that “identity is an endless ever-unfinished conversation” (“The Stuart Hall Project”). These statements have a particular bearing on this discussion: a migrant’s new Australian identity is in a constant state of evolution; the more solid the sense of identity, the stronger the experience of belonging in this host country and culture, and vice-versa.

I consider belonging not as an achievement to be reached in the short term, but as a life-long process, an approach that parallels the way in which migration was examined in Chapter 4. Zlatko Skrbis, Loretta Baldassar and Scott Poynting describe the progressive and unfolding nature of belonging thus: “[b]elonging is not a static phenomenon but rather a set of processes that are central to the way in which human relationships are conducted. Individuals and groups are caught up in a continuing and dynamic dialectic of seeking and granting belonging” (261-2). Yuval-Davis also supports this view, stating that: “belonging is always a dynamic process, not a reified fixity” (199). This fluid, changeable nature of belonging allows also for a multiplicity of such experiences, and migrants may discover that a new sense of belonging “does not replace former belonging; it exists as another layer, another set of connections and relationships” (Fitzsimmons 91). Indeed,

subsequent migrant generations are often adept at mixing and borrowing cultural beliefs and practices sometimes blending them into new forms of belonging as in Bhabha’s notion of hybrid identities, at other times emphasising one identity of belonging over another depending on the context and thus employing their hybridity “strategically.”

(Poynting et al qtd. in Skrbis et al 263)

The concept of belonging as an intermittent, often fleeting experience, is illustrated in crónicas such as El Gato’s “Animales y otras cosas” [“Animals and Other Things”]. Unpredictably and without warning, moments such as being awoken in the morning by the unique sounds of kookaburras and magpies, or catching a glimpse of the Sydney Opera House are enough to inject uncertainty and ambiguity in El Gato’s mind in relation to his
connection with the host country: “Después de veinticinco años en este país aún me sorprendo pensando en qué estoy haciendo por estos lados. Quizás no con tanta frecuencia como en los primeros tiempos, pero puede pasar en cualquier parte y en cualquier ocasión”. [“After twenty-five years in this country I still surprise myself by asking what I am doing over in these parts. Perhaps not with the same frequency as I did earlier on, but it can happen in any place and on any occasion”] (6). This inconstant, and inconsistent nature of the experience of belonging provides a starting point for the analysis of El Gato’s crónicas, which will follow after a brief review of the circumstances that led the cronista to start writing in his adopted home, Australia.

El Gato in Australia: The Early Years

The circumstances that foreground Hertz’s introduction to crónica writing differ from those that led fellow cronistas Clara Espinosa and Lucho Abarca to put pen to paper in the Spanish-language press in Australia. Abarca fled to safety in Australia during the early years of the Pinochet dictatorship in Chile, and arrived to an uncertain future in a country with an incomprehensible host language. Clara Espinosa, a medical specialist in public health, left an unhappy marriage in Bolivia for a fresh start in a country that she felt offered opportunities for her teenage children. Professionally, this move came at a high cost, as the pathways to practising as a doctor in Australia were onerous, and the financial imperative to provide for her family led her to accept more accessible employment in an allied health field, hence she never resumed her medical career.

Hertz’s circumstances were quite different. When he left Chile in 1971 with his wife and four young children, it was at the start of Salvador Allende’s presidency (1970–1973). In an interview Hertz claims many Chileans who migrated to Australia in the early 1970s did so because they were “terrified of the new socialist movement in Latin America” (Hertz). He too shared some of these concerns; however, this was not the major factor influencing his migration. To Hertz, Australia was the “last wild frontier” (Hertz) that promised adventure and opportunity. There was an additional inducement: migrants with his skill-set were actively being sought with promises of work, and they also received a subsidy of two thousand dollars to assist with their migration costs. Unlike Espinosa and Abarca, who were not quickly able to resume the careers that had helped define them in their homelands, Hertz promptly found employment in his chosen field. After a few months of
factory work, he was able to re-establish himself as an industrial engineer, and continued in this profession until his return to Chile in 2006.

Hertz’s introduction to crónica writing came soon after he picked up creative writing as a hobby in 1992, twenty years after his arrival in Australia. He soon experienced success as a writer of poetry and prose, and received numerous literary awards for his contributions to Spanish language literature in Australia. In 1995, he wrote a series of twelve crónicas, “Que veinte años no es nada”74 [“Twenty Years are Nothing”] following a business trip to Chile after an absence of 25 years. Through these crónicas, Hertz attempted to come to terms with the differences between the Chile that he had left behind and the country to which he returned. A Chilean secretary at the newspaper El Español en Australia convinced the then editor Arkel Arrúa to publish the series that proved so popular among his readers that Hertz was offered a twice weekly column. Hertz continued crónica writing for twelve years, and by his estimation, produced approximately 2,000 columns during this period.

For both Clara Espinosa and Lucho Abarca, crónica writing had provided a welcome outlet through which to process the changed circumstances that accompanied their migration to Australia. Writing in their native language enabled them to reflect on the challenges that accompanied the process of linguistic and cultural translation into the host culture. For Hertz, writing served an additional purpose: when he found himself unexpectedly unemployed in 1995, this impacted greatly on his mental and physical health. Hertz’s crónica writing was a lifeline: “[L]o único que me mantuvo dentro de las confines de sanidad fueron las columnas del Gato. Es paradójico, pero cuando uno tiene más problemas lo mejor es recurrir al sentido de humor como terapia” [“The only thing that kept me within the confines of sanity were the El Gato columns. It’s paradoxical, but when one has the most problems the best thing is to resort to humour as a form of therapy”] (Lo mejor 7).

Despite the success and longevity of his columns and other associated creative writing works, El Gato claims that he never considered himself a writer, explaining that “el verdadero escritor es alguien que vive para y de sus escritos” [“the real writer lives for and from his writing”] (emphasis in original) (“La impuntualidad” 100). Nonetheless, he

---

74 “Que veinte años no es nada”: the title of these columns was extracted from a tango by French-born Argentinian singer Carlos Gardel, entitled “Volver” [“Return”].
was mindful and sensitive to reader response,\textsuperscript{75} expressing his gratefulness for social encounters with faithful readers whose feedback he considered useful “como barómetro de la aceptación, rechazo, indignación o a veces indiferencia acerca de mis columnas. La indiferencia y el olvido, […], son por supuesto lo que más hiere” [“as a barometer to measure acceptance, rejection, indignation or at times indifference to my columns. Indifference and oblivion, are of course the most painful”] (“El Gato y la comida” 70).

The cronista’s choice of pseudonym was a straightforward one, as he explains its origins: “a raíz de mescolanzas genéticas, […] aparecí en este mundo con pelo negro y ojos azules” [“as a result of a genetic hodgepodge, I came into this world with black hair and blue eyes”] (Lo mejor 10). His aunt remarked that he resembled a kitten, and from early childhood until this day, ‘El Gato’ has been his alter ego. In interview, he explained his affinity with cats thus:

I love cats because they don’t belong to anyone. People belong to their cats and cats can do whatever they please, and when I want to identify myself with someone I do it with felines: free in your attitude and not caring about what others think. El Gato is what I would have liked to be…one hundred percent. (Hertz)

Hertz’s declaration that cats “don’t belong to anyone”, appears somewhat paradoxical. On the one hand, in his El Gato crónicas Hertz often expressed a desire to belong to both his native community as well as to his adopted home. On the other hand, there is a shift in his outlook that highlights an attraction to being an autonomous person, unaccountable to others. This desire for autonomy is significant enough for Hertz to embrace the identity of a cat, and to be recognised by others as a feline. Along with the characteristics of not belonging to anyone, this feline analogy also conjures up a sense of aloofness, self-assuredness and nonchalance. By stating that humans “belong to their cats” and assuming this feline identity, he invites his audience to develop a sense of belonging to El Gato himself and to form part of his devoted readership. The freedom of attitude to which Hertz alludes complements the desired attributes of a cronista: a free and autonomous voice that can be shared with his readership. Writing as El Gato, Hertz achieves independence by

\textsuperscript{75} Hertz claims that during the course of the 12 years that El Gato’s columns appeared in the Australian press, he received around 1,500 letters from readers, “y pocas de ellas anti-felinas” [“and only a few of them were anti-feline’] (Intro to Lo Mejor 2008 version).
exercising his role as a cultural commentator without the need for approval or endorsement. By tapping into his alter ego, Hertz finds the courage to voice not only his own sentiments and thoughts, but also the concerns of the migrant community to which he belonged.

Hertz draws a distinction between the El Gato crónicas and those short stories and poems written and published in his own name. He positions himself as an intermediary, giving life to El Gato’s impressions and observations. In his introduction to Lo Mejor del Gato he offers the following description of his alter-ego:

El Gato es un ente sardónico, sarcástico, nostálgico y con un profundo desprecio por las convenciones, instituciones y ‘vacas sagradas’ que tenemos en nuestro alrededor. Maúlla lo que piensa sin darse tiempo a pensar en lo que maúlla. Y si se encuentra metido en problemas debido a esos maullidos, mueve elegantemente la cola y cambia el tema. (8)

[The Cat is a sardonic, sarcastic and nostalgic being with a deep contempt for the conventions, institutions and ‘sacred cows’ that surround us. He meows whatever he thinks without thinking about it first. And if he finds himself in trouble as a result of these meows, he moves his tail elegantly and changes the subject].

Moreover, when writing as El Gato, Hertz is able to charm his way out of problematic situations fully aware that his comments carry a fair degree of controversy and provocation. By expanding upon his perceptions of feline characteristics he introduces new dimensions to his persona, that are better described as uncompromising, blunt and indifferent to political correctness.

Hertz simultaneously uses and creates original feline-inspired vocabulary that positions El Gato within a semi-fictitious milieu. Thus, his wife is referred to as ‘La Gata’, his children are ‘Los Gatos Chicos’. The ‘Gatomóvil’ is his motor vehicle, and his residence is ‘La Gatonera’. Likewise, the Sydney suburbs that feature in El Gato’s crónicas are named ‘Gataroy’ and ‘Catsville’, and Hertz claims that “pasaron a ser conocidos como suburbios casi reales de Sydney para quienes seguían semana a semana las andanzas del felino” [“they came to be known as almost real suburbs by those who followed the feline’s movements from week to week”] (Lo mejor 7). The effect of embarking on this colourful
vocabulary is to deliver a distinctive, playful quality to his crónicas, that as a result provide some comic relief amidst the more controversial of his columns.

It is important to point out that El Gato’s crónicas appeared in the migrant press twenty-three years after Hertz’s arrival in Australia in 1971. This is in contrast to Clara Espinosa and Lucho Abarca, who both started writing their crónicas soon after settling in Sydney. Thus, while Espinosa and Abarca wrote as new migrants, Hertz’s crónicas are written from the distinct perspective of a migrant reflecting on the experiences, views and insights that spanned more than two decades in the host country. This perspective has a bearing on the topic that follows: establishing a legitimate sense of attachment to a multicultural society such as Australia.

**Belonging in a Multicultural Setting**

This chapter opened with a vignette from El Gato’s crónica “Bienvenidos a ‘La Columna del Gato’” [“Welcome to El Gato’s column”] (12), which highlighted the way that the Hispanic migrant community in Sydney cultivated an atmosphere of mutual support and belonging. This supportive environment in turn offered a degree of protection to men, women and children as they embarked on their journey towards translation into the host country and culture. I now shift to focus on the crónicas that address the topic of multiculturalism. After a review of the history and the critical writings associated with this theme, I then examine a selection of El Gato crónicas to explore his perspectives about the experience of belonging – and translation – into a multicultural host country and culture.

Hertz’s arrival in Australia in 1971 coincided with a time of change in the country’s immigration policies. Two years after the cronista’s migration from Chile, the Labor government led by Prime Minister Gough Whitlam introduced an official government policy of multiculturalism, which contrasted with earlier immigration policies that had discriminated on racial grounds. The Immigration Restriction Act (The ‘White Australia’ Policy) was introduced in 1901 with the aim to restrict non-British migration. This policy was upheld until soon after the Second World War, when the immigration minister Arthur Calwell responded to the shortfall in Anglo-Celtic migration by relaxing restrictions to include a regulated number of continental European migrants. This was one of many steps that finally led to the official abolishment of the ‘White Australia’ Policy in 1966, and to
the introduction of the policy of multiculturalism in 1973. The new policy was referred to in a positive light, reflecting “a careful attention to and respect for a diversity of cultural perspectives” (Libretti 1171).

The immigration minister responsible for championing the cause of multiculturalism was Al Grassby. The Melbourne academic and political philosopher Tim Soutphommasane describes Grassby thus: “[B]orn to an Irish mother and a Spanish father, he was a man whose penchant for flamboyant ties and garish outfits seemed to symbolise the loud, unapologetic insertion of colour into a monochrome Australian society” (3). Grassby is a key figure within the present discussion of El Gato’s crónicas, as will be demonstrated shortly.

The crónicas by El Gato discussed in this chapter were written during 1996 and 1997. It is important to note that in the previous decade the policy of multiculturalism had come under significant opposition by some politicians and public figures. As early as 1988, Opposition leader John Howard had expressed his discomfort with the idea of multiculturalism, stating in a radio interview that “to me, multiculturalism suggests that we can’t make our mind up as to who we are, or what we believe in” (qtd. in Markus 87). This comment was followed in parliament the next day by his suggestion that the rate of Asian immigration be curtailed, in the interests of social cohesion. Geoffrey Blainey, the eminent Australian historian, raised this concern in 1984 when he warned about the “Asianisation” of Australia (9); however, it was the election to the House of Representatives in 1996 of the independent candidate, Pauline Hanson, that represented a more serious challenge to multiculturalism. Her maiden speech to Parliament on 10 September of that year attracted immediate attention, both nationally and internationally, when she called for the review of Australia’s immigrations policy and for the abolition of multiculturalism. She added: “I believe we are in danger of being swamped by Asians” (3862). The emergence of ‘Hansonism’, and its impact on multiculturalism, has been the subject of both spirited public debate and critical analysis by academics such as Jon Stratton and Ghassan Hage, and more recently Tim Soutphommasane, among others.

The issues addressed in Stratton’s book Race Daze (1998) are threefold: “the discourse of race in Australia, the policy and practice of multiculturalism, and the concern over national identity” (9). Stratton argues that “the policy of [Australian] multiculturalism is actually very conservative” (10). It was designed in the early 1970s to accommodate Southern and Eastern European migrants for whom assimilation into the host culture was
proving difficult. Their entry into Australia had been facilitated by a relaxation of the definition of what constituted “whiteness”. Its goal was “to manage a variety of white cultures, all of which were presumed to share the same moral assumptions” (10). The challenge, which Stratton claims has never been adequately addressed, was how “to deal with non-white cultures thought by many to have distinctly different moralities” (10). The policy of multiculturalism is described by the author as being based on “metaphorical spatial structure” (10) with a core Anglo Celtic culture, which is surrounded by a plurality of migrant, or ‘ethnic’ cultures. There is some blending at the edges between the periphery and the core, but ultimately the ‘ethnic’ cultures remain separate (35). Stratton labels this ‘official’ multiculturalism, as distinct from ‘everyday’ multiculturalism, the latter being the term used to demonstrate:

[... ] how cultures, produced by individuals in their everyday lives, merge, creolise and transform as people live their lives, adapting to and resisting situations, and (mis)understanding, loving, hating and taking pleasure in other people with whom they have contact. (15)

Like Stratton, Ghassan Hage “unpack[s] multiculturalism and its opposite to reveal the way in which both operate to conserve a mono-cultural core that is white” (Schech and Haggis 144). In his book White Nation (1998), Hage argues that a ‘White Nation’ fantasy exists wherein:

[. . .] both White racists and White multiculturalists share in a conception of themselves as nationalists and of the nation as a space structured around a White culture, where Aboriginal people and non-White ‘ethnics’ are merely national objects to be moved or removed according to a White national will. (18)

Hage illustrates this idea in the introduction to his book, in which he describes a graffiti exchange on a wall at the Nepean campus of the then University of Western Sydney. A comment, ‘Macedonia for the Macedonians’, provoked a dialogue which, over time, progressed from a discussion between the specific ethnic groups involved to one which was overtaken by members of the dominant culture with racist views who argued that the ‘ethnics’ should ‘go home’. In response, the multiculturalists reminded their adversaries: “‘This is their country too! We are a multicultural society in case you have forgotten’” (16). Hage offers this vignette as a foundation from which to put forward a key argument

76 Stratton uses does not capitalise the W in ‘white’ or ‘whiteness’ whereas Hage and others do.
77 Now ‘Western Sydney University’
in his book, which is that both ‘multiculturalists’ and ‘racists’ perceived themselves “as ‘governors’ of the nation”, and “their conception of ethnics as people one can make decisions about: objects to be governed” (17). Hage’s point relating to the ‘governor’ role is one that will be revisited in later sections of this chapter.

I now turn to a discussion of the way that the crónicas penned by El Gato during 1996 and 1997 address the theme of belonging in a multicultural setting. In doing so, I argue that his crónicas demonstrate contradictory positions towards the concept of multiculturalism. El Gato advocates for the vibrancy of migrant culture, while remaining adamant that a high level of Asian immigration is harming Australian culture. In his crónica “¡Sigamos conversando!” [“Let’s Keep Talking!”], published in February 1996, El Gato expresses sympathy for the preservation of migrants’ native language, customs and culture. He laments the “insulto gratuito” [“gratuitous insult”] (2) of a conservative parliamentarian who referred to the Australian citizenship ceremony as an opportunity for “una deswoguisación’ de los nuevos australianos” [“a ‘de-wogisation’ of new Australians”]. El Gato’s playful use of an Australian version of Spanglish serves nonetheless to highlight in a serious manner the politician’s contempt for migrants and his promotion of deculturation, designed to erode the cultural and linguistic identity of “New Australian” migrants. Although El Gato is highly critical of public figures such as the MP who promoted deculturation, an alternate view is expressed in his crónica “La Literatura y el Gato” [“Literature and El Gato”] wherein he reflects on the actions of Hispanic migrant groups. He contemplates the impact of Latin American migration to Australia since the early 1970s and asks “¿Qué es lo que hoy tenemos para mostrar como aporte cultural al crisol de nacionalidades? Como diría un australiano: ‘Bugger all’”. [“What do we have today to demonstrate our cultural contribution to the melting pot of nationalities?” As an Australian would say: ‘Bugger all’”] (2).

Although El Gato acknowledges that Latin American communities have produced football teams, offered tuition in traditional dance forms, and introduced regional cuisines by way of cafes and restaurants, he mourns the paucity of other cultural offerings such as classical music, visual arts and ballet. Aside from recognising that the prominent names of Isabel Allende, Gabriel García Márquez, Julio Iglesias and Gloria Estefan are well known to many Australians, El Gato laments that other home-grown Hispanic literary and cultural talents remain virtually unknown, unrecognised and uncelebrated.

---

78 Hertz was not able to recall this politician’s name.
In the same crónica he relates an experience of seeking out the Spanish language section of a prominent bookstore in Sydney, only to find that it no longer existed, as it was not deemed to be commercially viable. Here El Gato lays the blame squarely at the feet of the Latin American community, for its oblivious indifference and lack of support for the vital distribution of both local and international Spanish language writers. He issues a warning to his readers, on behalf of writers such as himself “que se está[n] aburriendo de esperar que los sordos se decidan a escuchar” [“who are tiring of waiting for the deaf to decide to listen”]. He calls for cultural organisations to collaborate in an effort to cultivate local talent, and calls on his community to “medite que si en pocos años no tenemos idioma, ni libros, ni huellas de los que fuimos y somos…será exclusivamente gracias a esta "sordera”” [“consider that if in few years’ time we have no language, no books and no traces of who we were and who we are…it will be solely thanks to this “deafness””]. El Gato is as critical of the literary infrastructure that impedes the efforts of Spanish-language writers as he is of the reading public who fail to acknowledge and celebrate the contributions of both veteran and fledgling Spanish-language authors.79

El Gato’s observations need to be examined within the context of multicultural Australia in the 1990s. Regardless of the merit of the works contributed by migrant writers, there were many hurdles to overcome, both tangible and intangible, that obstructed their pathways to acceptance and recognition. The tangible barriers included minimal access to funding and grants, the prohibitive costs of publication and the lack of infrastructure and support for writers. The intangible barriers that El Gato refers to in this crónica include nepotism within the funding bodies, as well as the indifferent attitudes towards migrant writers by the Australian community at large.

In her 1994 book Framing Marginality: Multicultural Literary Studies, Sneja Gunew lamented the narrow range of attributes that the host country is prepared to tolerate or embrace when it comes to multiculturalism. Her comment that “multiculturalism in Australia is acceptable as a celebration of costumes, customs and cooking. It is not acceptable as high culture” (22) highlights the barriers facing migrants who aspire to contribute to the receiving country, not only in the literary or cultural domain, but also more widely in other fields such as business, innovation and research.

79 The theme of loss of language and culture in a multicultural setting appears in other crónicas during this period. See “En defensa de la Raza”
In addressing the challenges that face migrant authors in Australia, Merlinda Bobis draws on her own experience as a Filipino-Australian writer in her attempts to participate in a literary marketplace characterised by increasingly impervious gates that are virtually impossible to enter. One of the barriers is a distinct hierarchy that places migrant writers at the bottom rung, where resources are poor and funding for marketing and promotion is limited. Bobis uses the term “literary gates within literary gates” (8) to illustrate the hoops through which fledgling migrant writers are required to jump in an attempt to secure a place in Australian literature.

In a 2005 article, Jessica Raschke examines some key incidents that contributed to a downturn in support for multicultural literature in Australia. Raschke explains that after the formal policy of multiculturalism was introduced in 1973, significant resources were allocated from bodies such as the Australia Council and its Literature Board (21), to support writers and other creative artists. She adds that “as a result of this, there were concerns that writers deemed ‘ethnic’ or ‘multicultural’ were not being published by the mainstream publishers, and that if they were, their work was constructed as peripheral to ‘real’ (predominantly Anglo) Australian literature” (21). Scholars such as Sneja Gunew, Lolo Houbien, Serge Liberman and others mobilised in support of “having ‘ethnic’ or ‘multicultural’ writers both acknowledged and taken seriously by the predominantly ‘Anglo’ status quo of mainstream publishing and literary circles in Australia” (21). However, the early 1990s saw a decline in support for such multicultural literary initiatives.

There were two key incidents that presented a significant challenge to the advancement of multicultural writing in Australia. The first incident was a 1991 essay by the prominent author Robert Dessaix in which he took exception with those he called the “multi-cultural professionals” who claimed that mainstream publishing establishments in Australia excluded the work of ‘ethnic’ writers (Raschke 21). In Dessaix’s view

[T]he reason that so much migrant writing is ‘marginalised’ is that, in this basic sense, it’s often not very good — and for obvious reasons: the author’s English simply doesn’t allow him or her to produce meaning at the same number of levels…as a native speaker’s. (qtd. in Raschke 21)

These comments elicited a furious debate, and those holding opposing viewpoints battled it out through the letters’ pages of The Australian Book Review, the publication in which

---

80 Bobis’ article focuses predominantly on Asian-Australian writing.
Dessaix’s essay had originally appeared. This war of words continued unabated until the mid-1990s, when Gunew, who had become “the public face” (22) of multicultural writing in Australia, relocated to Canada, where she had been offered an academic posting. Raschke claims that ultimately, “Dessaix’s view, that only one cultural conversation is valid” (26) prevailed.81

A second incident, which became known as “The Demidenko Affair”, took place in 1995. It arose when the author of the critically acclaimed novel The Hand that Signed the Paper was revealed not to be Helen Demidenko, the daughter of an illiterate Ukranian taxi driver from Cairns, but rather Helen Darville, whose parents Harry and Grace were British immigrants. According to the academic Susanna Egan, the revelation of the author’s true identity drew attention not only to “the politics of award adjudication” but also to perceptions that “Australia’s multiculturalism policy had in effect, muzzled judgement on the one hand and produced, on the other, a text that stereotyped and effectively silenced some of the communities that the policy aimed to empower” (15–16). Crucially, the Dessaix and Demidenko incidents took place at a time when, as discussed earlier, Australia’s policy of multiculturalism was already coming under sustained attack by Prime Minister Howard and Senator Hanson in particular. El Gato was clearly aware of the downturn of support for multicultural literary endeavours during the mid-1990s: in “La Literatura y el Gato” [“Literature and El Gato”] he cites the Demidenko Affair as having been a barrier to his goal of translating his crónicas into English.

In spite of his negativity about the contribution of Hispanic writers in Australia, El Gato does identify one group of Spanish speakers who continued to cultivate an ongoing cultural connection with the Hispanic world. He writes: “La única forma en que se demuestra nuestra cultura étnica es gracias al esfuerzo de los latinos que se quedarán en Latinia – donde quiera que este lugar mítico exista” [“The only way that our ethnic culture is on show is thanks to the efforts of those Latinos who are willing to stay in Latinia – wherever this mythical place may be”] (2). Here Hertz is pointing out, somewhat frustratedly, that those Latinos who do persevere in their attempts to make a cultural contribution within the host country do so to an undifferentiating and non-discriminating

81 Raschke also quotes Wenche Ommundsen, who points out that government policy under Prime Minister Howard during the mid 1990s was not supportive of multiculturalism and that “departments and officials have been encouraged to avoid the term whenever possible” (qtd. in Raschke 26).
audience. Hertz explains in interview that the mythical ‘Latinia’ term was one that he created in annoyance at the fact that in the eyes of many members of the host community, South Americans were viewed as belonging to one homogenous group. The cronista observes that while Australians were able to identify European migrants according to their countries of origin, ignorance and a lack of curiosity prevented them from offering the same recognition to those South Americans from countries such as Chile, Argentina and Uruguay, whose cultural and linguistic backgrounds differed considerably. The purposeful selection of Blady Woggie as a pseudonym by Lucho Abarca acutely reflects the apathy demonstrated by the Anglo community toward Latinos. The Australian derogatory term ‘wog’ to refer to people from Mediterranean, Middle Eastern and Eastern European backgrounds illustrates the gross generalisation of a richly diverse number of countries that are clumped together with no regard for individual identity. Understandably, community members from each Latino country frequently cling to their cultural heritage and resent this generalisation. El Gato coined the term ‘Latinia’ in protest at this very concept.

While my discussions thus far have demonstrated El Gato’s support for the concept of a vibrant multiculturalism and particularly his desire that the Spanish language be nurtured and celebrated, his support for multiculturalism is selective, as the following section will demonstrate.

El Gato’s crónicas from the mid 1990s frequently reflect displeasure around Australia’s immigration policy, which the cronista perceives as being tipped too strongly in favour of Asian migration. In “Explicaciones y Elecciones” [“Explanations and Elections”], El Gato contemplates a looming federal election, and some of the policy issues confronting undecided voters such as himself. In addition to the recession, unemployment, the cost of hosting the 2000 Olympics and the question of Australia becoming a republic, the issue of migration appears as a key concern. He writes: “Estoy aburrido de la política indiscriminada de inmigración, especialmente asiática, contra la que no se puede hablar bajo el riesgo de ostentar la etiqueta de ‘racista’”. [“I’m tired of the indiscriminate policy of immigration, in particular Asian [immigration], against which one cannot express one’s self for fear of being labelled a ‘racist’”] (2). The argument that migration provides new sources of employment does not resonate with El Gato. His view is that migrants with an Asian background employ workers from their own ethnic and cultural groups, and thus do not distribute opportunity evenly across the nation’s population at large. His displeasure regarding Asian immigration is such that he writes: “Emigramos a un país occidental y
ahora, para nuestra sorpresa, vivimos en uno casi oriental” [“We emigrated to a Western
country, and now, to our surprise, we live in an almost Eastern one”]. El Gato’s inability
to recognise 1990 Australia as the same host country he migrated to in the early 1970s is
also expressed in the crónica “Cambalache”82, which opens thus:

Uno de estos días las cosas se van a complicar y voy a ser el último en enterarme
de que nos han invadido los indonesios…Lo que no haría ninguna diferencia, ya
que la localidad de Catsville parece más a Hong Kong en un sábado de mañana
que a lo que conocí diez años atrás. (6)

[One of these days things are going to get complicated and I am going to be the
last to realise that the Indonesians have invaded us…Which will make no
difference, since on a Saturday morning, the neighbourhood of Catsville looks
much more like Hong Kong that the one I knew ten years ago.]

El Gato likens the ‘Asianisation’ of Australia to the process that took place when “los
blancos empujaron a los indios americanos a las reservaciones” [“the whites pushed the
American Indians onto reservations’]. So too, the crónista remarks, is the “homo
australianus” pushed into his last refuge, the pub—although he believes that this space, as
well as the local RSL clubs, 83 are also vulnerable to being taken over to cater to Asian-
Australians. El Gato reports taking his Chilean wife to see a typical senior-citizens’
gathering at his local RSL, wherein “los viejitos australianos […] todos arregladitos, las
viejitas de pelo teñido color lila bailando con sus galanes de blazers y pañuelo de seda al
cuello” [“the Australian oldies, […] all dressed up, the blue rinsed ladies dancing with
their beaus, dressed in jackets and silk neck ties”], only to find that the space dedicated to
this gathering no longer served that purpose. Instead, “está tomado por la población
asiática” [“it’s taken over by the Asian population”]. Pokie machines and dance shows
featuring Chinese, Indonesian and Filipino artists entertain a new clientele, forcing the
‘Australian’ patrons elsewhere.

In this, and several other crónicas written during this period, El Gato describes the
discomfort that he feels in relation to the perceived shift in the ethno-cultural landscape
of the country to which he migrated, and the way that this impacts on his sense of
belonging within a multicultural setting. El Gato’s concern at the number and visibility of

82 “Cambalache”: Argentinian tango song, composed in 1934 by Enrique Santos
Discépolo. Meaning: an exchange or swap. In this context, it refers to a disruption of the
order the things, “Todo está revuelto y nadie sabe quién es quién”.
83 RSL: Returned Services League
Asians within his neighbourhood and beyond is illustrative of the concepts of “tolerance” and “intolerance” (Hage 93). Hage offers the following example to demonstrate how an individual’s views are formed around whether or not one racial or cultural group is to be tolerated or not. Hage explores the “thresholds of tolerance” by interviewing a retired railway worker from the Sydney suburb of Lakemba, who had lived in the area for twenty-two years, and had become happily acquainted with many Muslims in his community. One good friend was a man called Ahmed, whose house he had frequented for dinner, and both men had engaged at a grassroots level in ‘everyday multiculturalism’. This “threshold of tolerance” was challenged when the interviewee started to perceive that ‘his’ suburb had been “taken over” (92). Hage determines that his interviewee was comfortable with Muslims “while there were only a few of them” (92), but this practice of tolerance came under threat once they became “too many” (92). In a similar vein, El Gato’s objection to the Asian presence appears to be also driven by the “too many” factor, and by his view that the pendulum had swung too far from the days of the “White Australia” Policy. Hage’s claims that “[t]hose who are not tolerated are precisely those who trespass beyond the spaces allotted to them and develop a will of their own” (92). El Gato’s racism comes to the surface when he acknowledges that the RSL club, which is traditionally considered a white Australian institution, is now ‘invaded’ by Asian people.

While El Gato’s columns addressed the theme of Asian immigration on a number of occasions, it was a crónica called “¡Bravo, Paulina!”, published on 1 October 1996 in The Spanish Herald that was one of his most controversial and provoked the widest public response, earning him the label of “un gato racista” [“a racist cat”] (Lo mejor 120) from some readers. This crónica brings together two political figures mentioned earlier in this chapter, the then Member of Parliament, and current Senator Pauline Hanson and the ex-minister for immigration Al Grassby, who was considered by many as having been a key architect of multiculturalism in the early 1970s.

In this crónica, El Gato declares himself a supporter of Ms Hanson and celebrates what he sees as her courage in speaking out on the issues of so called “Aboriginal privilege” and the increase in the number of Asian migrants to Australia. He acknowledges his own position as both a migrant and a member of a minority; however, he asserts that “hay inmigrantes e inmigrantes” [“there are immigrants, and then there are immigrants”]. While expressing gratitude to and affection for Australia, he adds: “mi nuevo país tiene que agradecerme mi trabajo, mis impuestos y el aporte que he dado a esta nación. “Tit for
Tat”’” [“my new country should thank me for my work, my respect, my taxes and the contribution I have made to this nation. “Tit for Tat’”].

In *White Nation*, Hage argues that ‘White Australians’ who “imagine Australia as a place where White Australians should reign supreme” are not necessarily white or Anglo-Celtic. Rather, Whiteness could be accumulated through the currency of “looks, accents, ‘cosmopolitanism’ or ‘Christianity’” (232). El Gato taps in to the advantage of a 25-year history in Australia, where he was able to practise in his chosen profession; fluency and literacy in English; physical attributes that are compatible with ‘white’ Australia; and a Christian heritage. From this vantage point, he feels entitled to express views that reflect superiority and empowerment, and the right to stipulate what the demographic composition of Australia should be, regardless of his personal experience as a migrant himself.

El Gato objects to Asian migration on several fronts. “Son más racistas que los Nazis. Los no chinos, seamos de cualquier parte, somos “Gai Jin” y nos miran con desprecio” [“They are more racist than the Nazis. We non-Chinese, from wherever, are “Gai Jin”84 and they view us with contempt”]. In addition, El Gato makes the claim that Asians neither assimilate nor wish to assimilate into Australian culture. “Conversan en su propio idioma y no les importa un comimo que no les podamos entender” [“They speak in their own language and they don’t give a damn if we can’t understand them”]. Here El Gato objects to what he sees as a deliberate resistance to translation into the host language and culture. He claims this has a destabilising effect on the development of an integrated and cohesive nation; however, his displeasure that a particular migrant group might converse in “su propio idioma” is ironic, bearing in mind that a great many of the readers of his column, published in a Spanish language newspaper, would fall into this same category. El Gato’s objection to migrants speaking “in their own language” also fails to recognise that using one’s first language in public implies neither a lack of competence in the host language nor is it a negative measure of an individual’s integration and contribution to the target country and culture.

El Gato uses the Sydney inner city precinct of Chinatown to demonstrate his view that: “los asiáticos, especialmente los chinos, son una fuente de trabajo principalmente para sus compatriotas ilegales. Nunca para otras comunidades étnicas o para australianos” [“Asians, especially the Chinese, are a source of employment opportunities primarily for

84 Gai-Jin: Japanese word for foreigner, non-Japanese person.
their fellow countrymen, who are here illegally. Never for other ethnic communities or for Australians]. El Gato provides a personal anecdote, which supposedly exemplifies this negative behaviour. While crossing the road at pedestrian crossing, the cronista is narrowly missed by “un chino arrogante” [“an arrogant Chinese man”] who accelerates before El Gato has had time to reach the footpath, and furthermore fails to stop and apologise. He attributes this encounter solely to the race of the driver, while asserting that this behavioural response was at odds with what one would have experienced in the “melting pots” of Catsville, Gataroy and Australia at large in years gone by.

El Gato is similarly unimpressed by the idea that Angela Chan, an Australian-born member of the Chinese community, and then Chair of the Ethnic Council of NSW, should be acting as a spokesperson on multicultural affairs, representing the cronista and his readership in a non-publicly-elected position and making decisions that do not reflect his world view. These concerns lead El Gato to declare that although he is not calling for a return to the White Australia policy, “enough is enough”. “¡Bravo, Paulina!” concludes with a sentiment expressed in earlier columns which reinforces his relationship with the host country: “lo he dicho antes, no emigré a un país asiático” [“I’ve said it before, I didn’t emigrate to an Asian country”].

Not surprisingly, there was spirited reader response to this crónica. Two weeks after the original column appeared in The Spanish Herald, El Gato commented that although he was expecting “una serie de opiniones anti-Gato” [“a series of anti-Gato views”], to his pleasant surprise, 80% of the correspondence was “pro-Gato”. It had been Hertz’s practice to invite those readers who did not wish their opinions be published in The Spanish Herald to contact him directly through his private mail address, and in response to “¡Bravo, Paulina!” El Gato writes “he recibido muchas cartas” [“I’ve received many letters”]. Despite El Gato’s claims that private reader response was overwhelmingly supportive, this was not evident in the published letters to the editor. In the fortnight following this column’s release, The Spanish Herald published a strongly worded letter by a first-time writer to the paper who expressed his displeasure at the “¡Bravo, Paulina!” crónica. It had caused reader Adolfo Lay to feel “no sólo molestia sino vergüenza ajena al mostrar la ignorancia cometida por mi compatriota” [“not only annoyed but ashamed on behalf of my countryman’s display of ignorance”] (2). Lay took exception to El Gato’s claims that: “[h]oy, en nuestro país, si no se es asiático, aborígen, maricón o lesbiana, no se cuenta con simpatía ni apoyo de parte del gobierno” [“in our country today, if one isn’t Asian,
Aboriginal, queer or a lesbian, one can’t rely on sympathy or support from the government”). Another reader, Mariluz Cisneros also objected to El Gato’s “comentarios racistas” [“racist remarks”], and concluded her letter light-heartedly by stating her love for cats and calling for Hertz’s column to be renamed, stressing that: “[l]os gatos son diferentes razas, condición social, color y costumbres, sin embargo no discriminan a otros felinos por ser diferentes” [“Cats differ in race, in their social situations, the colours and their customs – but still they don’t discriminate against other felines for being different”] (2).

In the weeks following the publication of “¡Bravo, Paulina!”, Chris Puplick, the then President of the Anti-Discrimination Council of NSW, also wrote a letter, in Spanish, to the same newspaper to remind readers that, in spite of the Pauline Hanson phenomenon, racial vilification would not be tolerated and that “el consejo […] está profundamente preocupado por el incremento de incidencias y abusos de australianos no-ingleses” [“The Council […] is deeply concerned about the increase in incidents and abuses of non-Anglo Australians.”] (6). Although there is no direct evidence that Puplick’s letter was written in response to El Gato’s column specifically, the timing of his correspondence nonetheless demonstrates that the government was sufficiently concerned about the level of negativity towards non-European immigration expressed in the Hispanic-Australian press.

Most significantly, “¡Bravo, Paulina!” also came to the attention of the aforementioned ex-Minister of Immigration Al Grassby, who weighed into the discussion through a letter written in Spanish to the same paper in which he expressed his “‘shock’ y horror” at El Gato’s negative views on Asian immigration in Australia. Central to Grassby’s reading of this column was what he interpreted as a call from El Gato for a return to the “White Australia” Policy. Grassby describes this as “uno de los peores brotes de prejuicios raciales y discriminación que he encontrado en este cuarto de siglo” [“one of the worst outbreaks of racial prejudice and discrimination that I’ve encountered in this quarter century”], and concludes that El Gato is able to hold this racist view in large part due to his physical appearance, and the privileges that may be afforded to him as a result of it. He writes: “Tal vez piensa que un rubio de ojos azules como él tiene algún tipo de

---

86 In the original “¡Bravo, Paulina!” column, the comment reads: “No queremos volver al “White Australia Policy” de Menzies. Pero “enough is enough”. Ambos extremos son perjudiciales.” [“We don’t want to return to Menzies’ “White Australia Policy”. But “enough is enough”. Both extremes are harmful”].
superioridad sobre el resto” [“Maybe he thinks that being blond with blue eyes gives him some kind of superiority over the rest”]. Grassby’s letter is similarly critical of other points made in El Gato’s crónica, namely the role of Angela Chan and the Ethnic Council of NSW as well as the issue of Chinatown.

El Gato responded swiftly to Grassby’s letter, directing his next column to the ex-Minister. In “El Evangelio del Gato…según el traductor del Sr. Grassby” [“The Gospel of El Gato…according to Mr Grassby’s translator”] the cronista is at once humorous and serious as he highlights what he saw as the many and varied misrepresentations of his original “¡Bravo, Paulina!” crónica. One of El Gato’s main objections related to Grassby’s mistaken claim that the cronista had called for a return to the ‘White Australia’ Policy, as well as that he was “rubio de ojos azules” [“blond and blue eyed”]. Indeed, El Gato claimed that “lo de los ojos azules era la única veracidad contenida en la misiva” [“the bit about my blue eyes was the only piece of truth contained in the missive”]. A photograph of a dark-haired Hertz accompanied this column. El Gato deduced that the ex-minister, whose knowledge of Spanish was reputed to be limited, had been poorly served by a translator whose translational abilities were “aún menos competente” [“even less competent”], and “peor aún, parcial a un color político” [“even worse, politically motivated”]. A deliberate mistranslation, undertaken for political motives, was the only explanation that El Gato found possible.

The exchange between Grassby and El Gato highlights a key instance in which, by the cronista’s reckoning, a third party – the translator – has entered into the melee and delivered to Grassby an unfaithful version of the original “¡Bravo, Paulina!” crónica. El Gato’s displeasure at what he sees to be a failure in translation brings to mind the Italian expression “Traduttore, traditore” [“Translator, traitor”], a term that generally applies to a myriad of ways that that the translation process can be accidentally or intentionally obstructed, leading to an inaccurate expression of the original. El Gato makes another reference to a problematic translation of his work by a third party in his crónica “Plagiarismo y el Emperador de Chile” [“Plagiarism and the Chilean Emperor”]. The cronista comments on reports from a reader of his column that a “word for word” translation of “¡Bravo, Paulina!” had appeared in the letters’ page of a Sydney newspaper, published under a different name and with no reference to the original. On this occasion, El Gato does not object to this translation. “No me opongo en lo más mínimo a que alguien quiera traducirme, publicarme, hasta imitarme. Muy por el contrario, una situación así
sería halagadora” [“I don’t mind in the slightest if someone wants to translate me, publish me, even imitate me. On the contrary, that situation would be flattering”]. This unexpected translation provided him with an opportunity for his crónicas to have a life outside the Spanish language press and a presence in a literary marketplace comprising an English language audience that had until then been out of reach. In spite of this, he expressed great displeasure at the absence of any acknowledgement of his authorship.

My analysis of El Gato’s reactions to the two translated texts suggests that he likely experienced both irritation and pleasure in response to these incidents. On the negative side, he was clearly indignant about inaccuracies within the assumed translation of his “¡Bravo, Paulina!” crónica and by the absence of authorial acknowledgement in the English language publication. Furthermore, the correspondence from Grassby, a recognised authority on multiculturalism, may have struck a chord vis-a-vis his anti-Asian sentiments representing a desire for a ‘Whiter’ Australia. On the positive side, El Gato’s response to Grassby’s letter reflects a certain delight in the exchange of opposing views with an injection of playful humour. In addition, that his translated crónicas may be represented in the English-language media he found flattering; however, the absence of acknowledgement of authorship and the resultant loss of opportunity for recognition or exposure ultimately soured this experience. This mixed and unpredictable result points to the complexities involved in translation, and demonstrates both the highlights and the pitfalls of this process. On the one hand, the translation of Spanish-language crónicas into English exposes this work to a mainstream audience, and allows for recognition outside the initial intended audience. On the other hand, it emphasises the dilemma experienced by authors whose work is translated, without their knowledge or endorsement. Intentionally or otherwise, the desired meaning of the authors’ work is hence ‘lost in translation’.

In conclusion to this chapter, it is clear that El Gato’s crónicas demonstrate many of the factors that contribute to a migrant’s sense of belonging in a multicultural setting. As I described earlier, his crónicas were produced in the 1990s, nearly 25 years after Hertz’s arrival in Australia. His perspectives on both migrant life and his relationship to the host country had been developed over an extended period of time, in contrast to those of Clara Espinosa and Lucho Abarca, who both began crónica writing within five years of arrival in Australia, describing their early attempts to come to terms with the challenges of life in a new country. In addition, while Espinosa made relatively frequent visits back to her
homeland, Hertz delayed his return to Chile for over twenty years, and thus may have ameliorated possible identity conflicts precipitated by the return to the country of his birth.\(^{87}\) The circumstances of his migration to Australia are also significant, as I highlighted early in this chapter. Hertz actively chose Australia and was encouraged by a financial subsidy that assisted in the costs of settling into his new home. His English language skills were advanced prior to his arrival in Australia and continued to improve rapidly. Thus, host language proficiency, the length of his residency in Australia and his status as a sponsored, skilled migrant positively shaped the musings and reflections that made their way into the El Gato crónicas.

El Gato’s sense of belonging to the host country was helped by a buoyant experience of camaraderie within the Latin-American migrant community in the early weeks and months after arrival in Australia. As described at the start of this chapter, the author painted a nostalgic picture of settlement and support through his crónicas. El Gato and his cohort of fellow Latin Americans benefited from a strong sense of community engagement, as those migrants who had come before paved the way for new arrivals. The systems in place allowed new migrants to find their feet and commence the process of translation into the host country and culture.

In some instances, El Gato’s crónicas support multiculturalism. He laments the paucity of cultural product emanating from Latin American communities in Australia, and encourages vibrant contributions from a range of artistic domains. He advocates for a Latino-centred multiculturalism that is familiar to him; however, his support for multiculturalism is not consistent and he demonstrates a complex and contradictory position on this topic. Nevertheless, what is underscored in his crónicas is a migrant experience wherein the process of translation has been enabled by a positive experience of belonging to both the Latin American community and later to the host country, leading El Gato to feel empowered to voice his preferences for the shape, look, colour and sound of the Australia that he has connected with.

El Gato’s crónicas paint the picture of a migrant experience wherein integration into the host country over a period of 25 years has been so complete, and his sense of belonging so secure, that the cronista writes from the perspective of an individual who feels empowered and entitled to voice his displeasure at the ethno-racial composition of a

\(^{87}\) Abarca and his family returned to live in Chile from 1994-1998.
multicultural Australia. El Gato is motivated by the “too many” factor in relation to Asian immigration, and feels that his outlook is best represented by Pauline Hanson, a political leader who promotes a Euro-centric world view and a disdain for multiculturalism. Columns such as “¡Bravo, Paulina!” are written from the perspective of a cronista who has translated himself so effectively into “whiteness” that, in spite of his status as a migrant, he prosecutes a case for, and sympathises with, a position on Asian immigration that discriminates on racial grounds.

*Guillermo Hertz* 88

88 Photo supplied by Hertz. Photographer and date unknown.
Conclusion

The migrated self became, inevitably, heterogeneous instead of homogeneous, belonging to more than one place, multiple rather than singular, responding to more than one way of being, more than averagely mixed up. Was it possible to be—to become good at being—not rootless, but multiply rooted? Not to suffer from a loss of roots but to benefit from an excess of them?

Salman Rushdie (2013 54)

When I embarked on this research journey I was certainly unprepared for the plentiful body of previously unexamined writing that my investigations revealed. Each week spent scouring the Newspaper and Magazine stacks in the basement of the State Library of New South Wales unearthed “new” crónistas to add to the ever-expanding pool. As my research progressed, the challenge that I faced was applying a limit to my area of focus, selecting authors and defining a set period to represent this unexpected abundance of material generated in local Spanish-language newspapers since the 1970s.

The crónicas that I uncovered offer a window into late 20th century Hispanic life in Australia. They comment vividly on a range of migration-related themes, among them language and identity, gender relations and belonging. Frequently written in haste to meet production deadlines and designed for rapid consumption, these creative works have the potential to reach readers far beyond their original intended audience and continue to offer the contemporary reader the opportunity to witness a rich diversity of Hispanic migrant voices. Varying in tone from light-hearted and playful to reflective and sombre, the crónicas feature an array of memorable characters and scenarios and reflect the musings, world views and individual experiences of their authors, Clara Espinosa (Woggy Girl), Lucho Abarca (Blady Woggie) and Guillermo Hertz (El Gato), who wrote and published crónicas in Spanish language newspapers and collated them in book form in the early to mid-1990s.

Through close readings of a representative sample of their texts, combined with interviews with these writers, I have traced these cronistas’ journeys of linguistic and cultural translation, from source country to the language and culture of the host. As a background
to discussing the crónicas of these writers, I have discussed the contributions made by Australia’s first Spanish language cronista, Salvador Torrents, whose newspaper columns were published in both Spain and North America in the early to mid 1900s. Although Torrents’ work has generated some scholarly interest, the three cronistas in my study have thus far attracted little critical attention.

This study brings new knowledge to the discussion of the newspaper crónica. Although the last 30 years have seen a surge of interest in the crónica in the international arena, the Australian contribution to this discussion remains in its embryonic stage. By focusing on the production and dissemination of the newspaper crónica in a specific migrant context that has not previously been considered, my project heralds a new research direction as it charts the richness and variety of this genre of creative non-fiction.

To date, much of the critical writing on crónicas has focused on the literary output that has emerged from Latin America in urban centres such as México DF, Buenos Aires, Santiago and Sao Paolo, where consumers of the same newspaper are drawn together into reading communities by narratives penned by the cronistas of the respective cities. Studies by Julio Ramos (2001) and Susana Rotker (2000), who each wrote about the work of Cuban journalist José Martí, are some relevant examples. Other research by scholars such as Linda Egan and Esperança Bielsa offers a more contemporary focus, and examines the output of crónicas from México City and Guayaquil, Ecuador. In the North American context, Nicolás Kanellos and others have examined the crónicas produced by Mexican migrants who crossed the border into the US in the aftermath of the 1910 Revolution. In this environment, crónicas were used as vehicles to disseminate the México de afuera ideology which sought to preserve and nurture Spanish language, Mexican culture and Catholic faith, in expectation of a return ‘home’ once it was safe to do so. In doing so, crónicas became effective devices through which to promote conservative family values and traditional gender roles, targeting those readers who were vulnerable to the perceived threats associated with acculturation.

---

89 Ramos’ book Divergent Modernities: Culture and Politics in Nineteenth–Century Latin America traces the Latin American experience of modernity, and focuses in large part on Martí’s crónicas.

90 Martí settled in New York in 1882, and continued to produce crónicas during his time as a foreign correspondent for the Buenos Aires newspaper La Nación (1882–1991).

91 Egan’s focus has been on the contemporary crónicas of Mexico, and Bielsa’s book The Latin American Urban Crónica: Between Literature and Mass Culture (2006) examines the contemporary crónicas of Mexico City and Guayaquil, Ecuador.
The crónicas in my study emerge from another, very specific migrant context. Espinosa, Abarca and Hertz migrated from South America to Australia during the 1970s and 1980s in a trans-Pacific crossing to relocate to a geographically, linguistically and culturally remote English-speaking destination. The logistics of this move meant that the prospects of a return ‘home’ were negligible, and their relocation to Australia was a “one way ticket”. In this unique context, rather than obstructing the process of acculturation, crónicas serve as a device to assist migrant writers and their readers to make sense of their new surroundings and facilitate the slow, painful, confusing and sometimes unpredictable process associated with adaptation to life in their host country and culture.

I return to the original aims of my study to contextualise these perspectives. I set out to examine Australian crónicas through the lens of a concept articulated by Anne Malena, who describes the migrant as a “translated being” (Malena “Presentation” 9). In doing so I asked two questions: firstly, what role do crónicas play in the migrant’s journey of translation into the host country and culture? Secondly, what do the crónicas reflect about Anne Malena’s concept of the migrant as translated being, and what does this literary material indicate about the factors that enable or hinder this process of translation?

I conclude that both the composition and the consumption of crónicas played a significant role in the lives of both migrant writers and readers alike during their personal journeys of translation. I propose that this activity did indeed provide a lifeline for each of the three authors, at various stages of their resettlement in Australia. The El Gato crónicas emerged during a time of personal crisis for Hertz, who found himself unforeseeably unemployed during the mid 1990s, some 25 years after migrating to Australia. For Woggy Girl (Espinosa) and Blady Woggie (Abarca), the act of crónica writing served a more pressing purpose. By adopting pseudonyms embodying the Anglo-Australian colloquial pejorative, they purposely reinforced their outsider identity and consequently magnified their observer status within their Australian host community. From that vantage point both authors appear to have written with the purpose of reconciling their dislocation and loss by illuminating their daily encounters, while carving out their new Australian identities.

For Clara Espinosa, penning crónicas served a dual purpose. Crónicas provided a useful form of reflective therapy as the author struggled with the turmoil of her early migration, in the aftermath of her decision to move her family and herself to a faraway land. The
crónicas simultaneously helped her to initiate the painful process of reconciling the loss of her primary identity, in particular her professional status as a respected doctor in Bolivia at a time when both the passive and active losses (Besemer 10) associated with migrating into a second language were most deeply felt. Her first published crónica “¡Mamá!”, originates from that mind space of loss and abandonment: it vividly evokes an almost visceral yearning for her “madre tierra” [“motherland”]. Others, such as “Gritos en silencio” [“Cries in the Silence’] and “Jardín de rosas” [‘A Rose Garden’] also emerge from Espinosa’s passage through the early stages of a self-identified grieving process, which persisted throughout her later crónicas. At the midpoint of this journey, columns such as “Vivir en limbo” [“Living in Limbo”], “Atrapados” [“Trapped”] and “Diferencias” [“Differences”] chronicled her perceptions of feeling “stuck” between two languages and cultures. The final stages of grieving are unveiled in “Visita” [“The Visit”], wherein she describes the confronting reality of a return visit to her homeland only to find that she no longer belongs to the community “allá” [“over there”]. Espinosa’s decision to “kill” Woggy Girl and in doing so, discard the pseudonym following her 1991 visit to Bolivia represents her realisation that she had finally rendered her alter-ego redundant. Her emergence from the anguish of being “lost” in translation had finally released her from the need to identify as the “Woggy” outsider. Her subsequent re-invention as the cronista known as “Mujer” [“Woman”], a pseudonym free from immigrant stigma thus heralded a new era in this cronista’s personal journey through the long process of linguistic and cultural translation.

In character as Blady Woggie, Lucho Abarca utilised crónica writing as an outlet for his thoughts at time when his English language skills were minimal. His need to connect with others who shared similar experiences drew him to the Spanish language press, where he attracted a readership that clearly identified with the challenges that he described. There he raised the multitude of issues associated with the process of self-translation into the host language and culture. Indeed, the exchanges between Blady Woggie and his readers set him on the path towards “finding the answers” (Abarca 15 June 2015) to many of the dilemmas related to migration that he faced in his early years in Australia.

In addition to fulfilling Abarca’s personal need to communicate the challenges associated with migration, Blady Woggie’s crónicas played a significant additional role. Through his

---

92 Espinosa wrote two more crónicas on her return from Bolivia before discarding her Woggy Girl pseudonym.
columns on gender issues and other contemporary Australian themes, Abarca positioned Blady Woggie as a community commentator (Kanellos 46); his reflections and observations allowed his readers to see themselves “in a sort of mirror” (Abarca 13 June 2015). In crónicas such as “¿Oye mijito...por qué no me enseñas a manejar el auto?” [“Hey honey, why don’t you teach me to drive the car?”], Abarca unpacked, examined and dissected the inter-marital conflicts that resulted from the clashes that took place when first generation, female migrants began determining their own modes of translation into Australian culture, only for this process to be resented and opposed by their resistant spouses. By tracking his own frustrating attempts at engaging socially with Anglo-Australian women, crónicas such as “Desventuras del ‘Latin Lover’” [“The Misfortunes of the ‘Latin Lover’”] prompted his male readers to rethink strongly held gender assumptions, guiding them towards what he considered to be the most culturally appropriate ways of engaging with Australian females. Thus, the Blady Woggie crónicas became a means through which to address a range of cross-cultural and gender dilemmas, for the benefit of both Abarca and his readers.

The lifeline that crónica writing provided for Guillermo Hertz was similarly double-stranded. The El Gato crónicas found a life in El Español en Australia and later in The Spanish Herald as Hertz battled personal and employment issues. Early on he recognised the therapeutic effect of writing in a humorous style. After more than 20 years in Australia, Hertz immersed himself in reflections composed in his native tongue about “the incongruences of our life in what seemed to be a strange land” (Hertz). This process assisted Hertz as he negotiated his need to communicate with fellow Latinos on a range of migration related topics and themes that he felt the community was not voicing. Hertz posits that this was the result of the demands placed on individuals who struggled to support young families while simultaneously dealing with their own personal challenges associated with “loneliness and missing the home country” (Hertz) – topics that were not frequently discussed openly. Thus, for Hertz, Abarca and Espinosa, crónica writing was more than a mere creative outlet; the crónica was a means through which to express and explore many of the short and long-term challenges associated with self-translation.

Crónica writing served an additional purpose. My findings lead me to conclude that by creating a safe, “discursive space” (Jacklin “Desde Australia” 181) where both cronistas and readers could vent frustrations and “agree to disagree” in their common language, crónicas represented a form of scaffolding that supported migrants as they sought to build
new lives for themselves and their families, all the while constructing new Australian identities. By incorporating humour, crónicas offered lighthearted relief while addressing a variety of complex issues involving dilemmas around identity, language, gender relations and questions of belonging. By providing a safe forum where both cronistas and their readers could gather, to air grievances and puzzle over the various peculiarities of their migrant experiences, the crónica may have offered a protective context in which individuals could begin to develop their identities to incorporate new, Australian features.

These stepping stones towards understanding Australian culture serve to position migrants more comfortably in interactions with mainstream Australian life, extending beyond Gunew’s predictable “costumes, customs and cooking” (Framing 220). This is demonstrated by both Espinosa and Abarca. The Woggy Girl crónicas were the catalyst for Espinosa’s contribution to a national dialogue on migration and grief, and the therapeutic model that she developed was presented at a multi-disciplinary seminar in Sydney in 2008. Blady Woggie columns addressed the cross-cultural dilemmas experienced by Hispanic migrants as they attempted to engage romantically with “gringas”. As a result, the cronista’s insights helped to guide his readers with culturally appropriate strategies for engagement with mainstream Australians.

My second research question asked what the crónicas in my study demonstrate about Anne Malena’s concept of the migrant as a translated being. My conclusion is that translation as it has been expressed by the cronistas in my study is one of a constantly evolving and unfolding process. A gradual, all-encompassing metamorphosis takes place throughout their lives that affects their feelings for language and identity, their perceptions of complex cultural topics such as gender relations, and ultimately their sense of belonging. This thesis reinforces the idea posited by Rina Benmayor and Andor Skotnes, challenging the “dominant tendency” to view migration as “a single movement in space and a single movement in time” and instead offering a more dynamic model, a “long term, if not life-long process of negotiating identity, difference and the right to fully exist and flourish in the new context” (8). Benmayor’s and Skotnes’ proposal that migration be viewed as an extended and progressive process also finds support in my study.

---

93 The conference mentioned above was: Migration and Grief: Acknowledging Loss, Promoting Resilience, which took place on 15 May, 2008. It was organised by the National Association for Loss and Grief (NSW).

94 See Chapter 4.
The development of an individual’s cultural translation is fluid and fleeting in nature, and vulnerable to setbacks at unexpected times and in unplanned circumstances. Clara Espinosa’s Woggy Girl’s crónicas best demonstrate the continuously evolving nature of self-translation; her columns show the tortuous tracks she travelled before arriving at a readiness to embrace her new Australian identity. Espinosa’s personal observation that her final Woggy Girl crónicas signalled the appropriate time to “kill off” her alter-ego is a subject that she has since reflected upon more deeply, acknowledging the complex and protracted struggle of a linguistic and cultural translation that was drawn out over many years. In interview, she comments that “blasts from the past” (Espinosa) would act as a trigger, causing the cronista to question, once again, the degree to which she had overcome the loss of her pre-migration identity. Contrary to her stated desire to conclusively “kill off” Woggy Girl, this comment reveals a more shifting pattern of translation, with no tidy beginning, middle or end.

Hertz’s El Gato crónicas also highlight the fleeting and intermittent nature of the experience of belonging. The cronista remarks on the sense of surprise that confronts him unpredictably and without warning, when Australian sights or sounds prompt the question “en qué estoy haciendo por estos lados” [“what I am doing in these parts”] (“Animales y otras cosas”) [“Animals and Other Things”]. The fact that he should respond to such triggers after residing in Australia for 25 years highlights that belonging is not reached in a defined or prescribed term; rather it is a life-long process characterised by undercurrents of puzzlement, alienation and self-doubt around questions of one’s place in the host country.

Similarly, Blady Woggie’s crónicas paint a picture of the uneven, unpredictable and labile course that Hispanic migrants experience as they negotiate the changed expectations around gender roles and relationships in the host country. The process of self-translation for Latino men is depicted as being particularly prone to obstruction. A frequent theme in his crónicas centres around the Hispanic male’s adherence to the belief in his inherent appeal to Anglo-Australian women, despite the lack of evidence to support this. Thus, Blady Woggie’s first person crónicas chart the author’s sometimes painful awareness that his native country’s conventions of courtship do not translate into those of his new home.

My findings around the convoluted processes involved in self-translation align with those expressed by Malena, who identified the key factors that enable or impede a migrant’s
journey of translation from source to host culture. Malena drew a distinction between 
migrants whom she described as being fully translated at one end of the spectrum, and 
those who were untranslated at the other end, with a broad range of partially translated 
individuals located in between. Malena cites certain untranslatable features, such as 
physical appearance, accent, social customs and beliefs; all those features considered 
obstacles to a migrant’s attainment of an identity characterised by the invisible and 
inconspicuous nature of a translated being. My discussions in Chapter 5 focused on the 
interrelated themes of language and identity, and on the crucial role that target language 
acquisition plays in a migrant’s ability to adapt to life in the host country. In crónicas such 
as “Atrapados” [“Trapped”] and “Encarcelamiento” [“Imprisonment”], Woggy Girl 
demonstrates the barriers to translation that result from an incomplete proficiency in 
English, and the metaphorical prison in which many migrants find themselves trapped, 
excluded from participating in wider public discourse. Impediments to translation are also 
evident in Blady Woggie’s gender related crónicas which were covered in Chapter 6, 
although these are manifested in non-physical ways – rather, by pre-existing cultural 
mores and expectations. While Blady Woggie’s humorous depiction of characters such as 
Lolo and Bartolo highlights the pitfalls that arise when Latino men refuse to detach 
themselves from their source culture’s way of engaging with women, the cronista 
contrasts this with his own positive experience of developing culturally appropriate 
approaches to relating to Anglo-Australian women. In doing so, he demonstrates to the 
reader that discarding “los manidos trucos de nuestro profuso inventario machista” [“the 
old, hackneyed tricks from our ample machista inventory”] (54) assists in developing new 
friendships with ‘gringas’: a conscious exercise in self-translating.

I feel it is important to restate here that Hertz’s El Gato musings are the product of a more 
mature personal experience as an immigrant; the El Gato crónicas first appeared in 
publication over two decades after Hertz’s arrival in Australia, at a time when his journey 
of translation was advanced and evolved. That stands in contrast to Espinosa and Abarca, 
each of whom started writing relatively soon after relocation to Australia. Tellingly, 
Hertz’s status as a sponsored migrant with professional qualifications recognised in 
Australia and his possession of advanced English language skills prior to arrival also 
helped to accelerate the process of self-translation. By the time that El Gato’s crónicas 
appeared in the Spanish language press, the cronista’s perspective was one of a migrant 
whose identification with mainstream Australia was so robust, that despite his own status
as a migrant, he felt both empowered and entitled to express his outspoken views on the racial make-up of multicultural Australia.

This examination of Australian crónicas has opened the door to further research into the columns that appeared before, during and after this study’s chosen time frame. Espinosa, Abarca and Hertz are just three of the many cronistas whose work has been published since the late 1970s when crónicas first appeared in the Hispanic migrant press in Australia. Ignacio García, Luis Porto and Uriel Barrera95 are among those who wrote contemporaneously in the crónica style. Bountiful and extensive in both scope and style, this remains a body of work that is ephemeral, vulnerable to loss and damage. Its preservation and appreciation is clearly in the interest of local and international Spanish language scholarship, but is valuable also for the wider Australian community for its insights, observations and reflections of Hispanic migrants on Australian soil. Further investigation will determine whether my study’s findings are representative of the content produced by other cronistas who have contributed to this genre of creative writing in Spanish language newspapers in Australia.

More broadly, this manifestation of multicultural literature in Australia presents abundant opportunities for further investigation into the crónica-style writing of other linguistic and cultural groups. Australia has a rich migrant heritage, with over 300 different languages spoken in homes across the country. The 2016 census reveals that 49% of the population are either first or second-generation Australians (Australian Bureau of Statistics). Thus, migration is a lived experience for a substantial percentage of the Australian community. The scenarios, dilemmas and cross-cultural misunderstandings featured in these Australian crónicas are common ones that can be ‘translated’ to migrants from a diversity of linguistic and cultural backgrounds. The themes of language and identity, gender relations and belonging transcend linguistic and cultural boundaries. My study thus paves the way for further investigations into the implications and adaptations of crónica-style writing across a range of language groups. This expanded focus would be a welcome journey of exploration into the diversity of migrant experiences in Australia, and the study of multicultural literatures would be enriched by this contribution.

95 Barrera used the pseudonym Belarmino Sarna.
Works cited


Australian Citizenship Support. “New Australian Citizenship Requirements 2018”.


Blady Woggie. “¿Oye mijito...porque no me enseñas a manejar el auto?” *Las Historias de un Blady Woggie*. Santiago, Chile, Ediciones del Blady Woggie y LOM Ediciones, 1992, pp. 15–23.

---. “¿Oye mijito...porque no me enseñas a manejar el auto?” *Vistazo*, 15 Feb. 1979, pp. 40–41.


---. “¿Oye mijito...por qué no me enseñas a manejar el auto?” *El Expreso*, 13 Nov. 1979, p. 19.

---. “Oye mijita...¿Por qué no me ayudas con el Gregory’s?” *El Español en Australia*, 20 Aug. 1991, p. 17.


doi:10.3362/9781909013209.


---. “Re: Your request.” Received by Catherine Seaton, 12 Mar. 2017.

---. Personal Interview. 17 Sep. 2015.

---. Date in November is unknown.


---. “Modernist Prose.” *The Cambridge History of Latin American Literature: The Twentieth Century*, edited by Roberto Gonzalez Echevarria and Enrique Pupo-
doi:10.1017/CHOL9780521340700.004.


Hertz, Guillermo. Skype interview. 4 Dec. 2015.


“Modernismo.” *The Literature of Spain and Latin America*. 2011, p. 201.
Montseny, Federica. *La Victoria: Novela en la que se narran los problemas de orden moral que se le presentan a una mujer de ideas modernas*. N.p., La Revista Blanca, 1925.


*North Queensland Register*. 13 July 1907.

*North Queensland Register*. 20 July 1907.


Onaindia, Galan. Personal interview. 14 Nov. 2014.
Onaindia, Tracy. Personal Interview. 14 Nov. 2014.


Torrents, Salvador. “¡Los guardias!” *ST 5/18, JCU*, 29 Nov. 1929.


---. “Impresiones de mi viaje a Australia.” *ST 5/18, JCU*.


---. “Que paren el Tren.” *El Español en Australia*, 29 May 1990, p. 34.


