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"Desde Australia para todo el mundo hispano": Australia’s Spanish-Language Magazines and Latin American/Australian Writing

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Migrants from Latin America have had a literary presence in Australia since the 1970s and their work forms an important part of Australia's multilingual literature. From their participation in literary competitions organized through cultural groups such as the Spanish Club in Sydney or the Uruguayan Club in Melbourne, to anthologies of community writing produced through the 1980s and '90s, to the publication of numerous volumes of poetry and short stories, to their novels, plays, biographies and autobiographies, Latin American writers in Australia have developed and sustained a significant body of literature over more than three decades. The majority of this literature has been written and published in Spanish, and this has meant that its circulation, for the most part, has been limited to Spanish-speaking communities and readerships. Moreover, unlike the literary production of other linguistic and cultural groups within Australia—for example, Greek or Italian—Latin American literary production has received scant critical attention from Australian literary scholars. The 1992 publication A Bibliography of Australian Multicultural Writers included only seventeen authors writing in Spanish, thirteen of whom were from Latin America. Although Ignacio García's Spanish Fiction Writing in Australia (1997) improved this, expanding the number to over one hundred and thirty writers, García's work was itself extremely limited in circulation, with only three copies available throughout all Australian libraries. To date, critical response to works by Australian writers of Latin American heritage remains almost non-existent in English. This essay will address this gap through an examination of the Spanish-language magazines publishing in Sydney from the 1980s to the present and a discussion of the contributions of Latin American writers to these periodicals. Beginning with magazines such as Vistazo and Versión, and continuing with Horizonte (originally a print publication and now online), Latin American writers have contributed fiction, poetry and essays as well as reviews of others' work. These sites of literary production deserve documentation and analysis, both as expressions of how literary communities in languages other than English survive, and in some cases thrive, within an Anglo-centric nation and, increasingly, as manifestations of a transnational literature that circulates amongst globally dispersed reading communities.

The lack of critical attention to literary work in Spanish is indicative of a lag in Australian literary studies with regard to the acknowledgement of both the role and the scope of multilingual literary production. More than a decade ago, American literary studies began a broadening of its critical perspectives with the publication of a number of major anthologies devoted to the recognition and analysis of the linguistic complexity of American writing. Werner Sollors's Multilingual America: Transnationalism, Ethnicity, and the Languages of American Literature (1998) and Marc Shell's American Babel: Literatures of the United States from Abnaki to Zuni (2002) include critical essays on literature written in the United States in languages including Spanish, German, Yiddish, Chinese, Vietnamese, and Arabic, among many others. Extending this approach from American to world literatures, the essays in Doris Sommer's edited anthology Bilingual Games: Some Literary Investigations (2003) range internationally across literary texts, with an emphasis in a number of its contributions on diasporic writing and literatures of migration. Works such as these may not be evidence of mainstream enthusiasm or embrace of multilingual writing in America; nevertheless, they demonstrate a critical engagement with literary works in a diversity of languages far beyond that undertaken in Australian literary studies.

While Australian literary scholars—beginning with the work of Lolo Houbein in the 1970s, Alexandra Karakostas-Seda in the 1980s, and culminating in A Bibliography of Australian Multicultural Writers—drew attention to multicultural literature, including writing in languages other than English, this attention has for the most part remained bibliographic in focus. With the exceptions of writing in Greek and Italian, noted above, and to some extent writing in Chinese, Australian scholars have yet to engage with the literary activities of a range of linguistic communities at least equal to that existing in North America. Writing in Spanish in Australia exists alongside literary production in Arabic, Vietnamese, Latvian, Ukrainian, Polish, Serbian, Lao, and Filipino, to name only a few of the numerous literary communities active in Australia's cities. In relation to the national literary landscape, these communities exist almost as parallel universes, each with its literary competitions, poetry festivals, magazines featuring short stories and literary essays, newspapers carrying book reviews and, in the case of Spanish at least, a publishing
company devoted to literature in that language. That there are so few points of contact between these communities of writers and the majority English-speaking culture suggests that Australia’s literary infrastructure has yet to recognize the significance of the nation’s multilingual literary cultures. And to this extent, the discipline of Australian literary studies has fallen short in its potential engagement with multilingual writers and readers.

This is a point that Ignacio García makes with regard to writing in Spanish, although he limits his criticism to “the learned class within the community,” meaning those critics or professional writers working in Spanish, who he says have “so far failed the authors” (Spanish Fiction Writing 12). García makes this claim based on the results of a survey he conducted with writers in Spanish in Australia. He reports that of the forty authors who answered his questionnaire, only a quarter were able to provide responses to the section headed “About your work.” One writer, who García identifies as “a well published, well awarded author,” reported that there had been no published response to his work and that “This is to show what type of press is around” (12). However, a different story emerges if one browses through back issues of the Spanish-language magazines that have been published in Australia. Certainly, coverage of literary events and material varies considerably between these magazines, but both writing about literature and literary writing were published, and I want to argue that particular Spanish-language periodicals have been important in fostering and supporting creative writing in that language. Also, it is interesting that amongst this Spanish-language writing and reading community, writers who have migrated from Latin America have played a major role.

Before turning to the Spanish-language magazines that have been published in Australia, two points need to be acknowledged. The first is that this study is written by someone with little contact with Australia’s Spanish-speaking communities. No doubt a very differently structured and nuanced account could be provided by a researcher with personal contacts and knowledge of the agents involved in this community: the poets, novelists and short-story writers, the organizers of the literary competitions, the editors of Spanish-language newspapers and various magazines. This article, however, stems from archival research, relying mostly upon the holdings of the Mitchell Library of the State Library of New South Wales. Having become aware of the activities of a number of writing groups through the anthologies they produced in the 1990s, I was able to trace the work of many of them to the magazines that will be discussed below. Following an earlier article of mine on multilingual literature, published in 2009, the editor of one of these magazines contacted me, and our discussions since then have been helpful in my understanding some of the background to this body of writing. Nevertheless, the majority of what is to follow has emerged from the hours spent browsing and reading through the many issues of magazines such as Vistazo, Versión, and Montanar.

A second point to acknowledge is that writing in Spanish in Australia did not begin with these magazines; a number of antecedents need to be recognized. Perhaps the earliest writing in Spanish in Australia was produced in Western Australia in the 19th century in association with the Benedictine Mission of New Norcia. The Spanish-born Abbot of New Norcia, Rudesindo Salvado, whose memoir Memorie Storiche dell’Australia (1851) was first published in Italian, wrote his diaries in Spanish, beginning in 1844 and continuing until his death in 1900.11 Eleven volumes of Salvado’s diaries are held in the New Norcia archives and Dragana Zivanec has argued that these and other Spanish-language material held at New Norcia represent a significant component of the colonial literature of the 19th and early 20th centuries. As well as Salvado’s writing, Zivanec cites an account of the exploratory voyage and the foundation of the mission, written in Spanish in 1910 by New Norcia’s then Prior Fr. Roberto Bas.

A second locus of writing in Spanish is north Queensland where, from 1907, Spanish migrants settled and began working in the sugar cane industry. Historians Judith Keene and Robert Mason have published, separately, a number of articles on this Hispanic community and, in particular, the writings of Salvador Torrents, a Spanish anarchist who lived in Queensland from 1916 until his death in 1931. Torrents is particularly relevant to my focus on Spanish-language magazines because during the 1940s he was a regular contributor to Cultura Proletaria, a Spanish-language newspaper from New York. In his column, which Keene says was often titled “Desde Australia . . .”, Torrents commented on anarchist philosophy, family life, and both Australian and world politics (“The Word” 326). Torrents also wrote poetry and short stories, although these were unpublished during his lifetime, and remain so.5 Mason speculates, however, that Torrents likely shared his stories with other Spanish speakers in north Queensland, as the form of writing favored by Torrents, the crónica or chronicle, was primarily a genre of community engagement. Crónicas became popular throughout the Hispanic world in the 19th century as short, often humorous, weekly columns, which commented satirically on current affairs or matters of interest to a local community.6 The crónistas—the authors of crónicas—often wrote using pseudonyms and their columns typically “integrated political, moral and ethnic concerns in order to create meaning and reinforce the community’s separate identity” (“No Armas” 171). This form of writing, as we shall see, is one that has resonances with the short fiction and columns appearing in Spanish-language magazines in Sydney in the 1970s and ‘80s.7

While these antecedents are significant sites of Australian writing in Spanish, the first publications in Australia of Spanish-language literary writing occurred in the 1960s, following the Spanish Migration Scheme, which ran from 1958 to 1963.8 Primarily aimed at recruiting workers for labor-intensive sectors of the economy, the scheme also brought journalists who established Australia’s first Spanish-language newspapers, including La Crónica in Melbourne and El Español en Australia in Sydney. Also among these Spanish immigrants were individuals who formed a coterie of writing enthusiasts and who organized, beginning in 1969, literary competitions.
through El Club Español de Sydney. Ignacio García claims that the earliest examples of published creative writing in Spanish in Australia are the short stories and poems that appeared in La Crónica in 1964 and 1965, soon followed by creative writing in El Español en Australia (Spanish Fiction Writing 6; also “La Crónica”).

All of Australia’s early writing in Spanish, then, was produced by migrants from Spain, and the infrastructure supporting literary work such as newspapers and cultural associations were also headed by Spanish-born migrants. By the early 1970s, however, the composition of Australia’s Hispanic population altered substantially with migration from South American countries including, in particular, Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay. These countries were experiencing both economic instability and political conflict and oppression, and it is not surprising that writers and intellectuals formed a substantial proportion of this new wave of Hispanic migrants. Although it has been argued that the majority of migrants from Latin American countries have come to Australia for economic or personal reasons, political events have also been major factors. This is particularly the case with migration from Chile, both following the election of leftist president Salvador Allende in 1970, and again after the violent military coup that ended Allende’s government in 1973 and resulted in thousands of Chileans leaving their country as refugees. In the period from the late 1960s to the early 1970s, Chileans represented roughly one-third of all Latin American migrants to Australia. With some Spanish-language literary infrastructure already in place in Sydney and Melbourne, writers from Latin America soon began contributing in significant ways. In fact, the first book-length publications in Spanish in Australia were the works of writers from Latin America. García cites Rodó Blanco’s 1977 self-published book, Asf es Uruguay, as the first and Bernardo Landó’s Los perros de la noche (1982) as the second; both writers are Uruguayan. To these early publications we can add Ecuadorian-born writer Victor Ramos’s Selecciones poéticas (1980) and Argentine-Chilean writer José Ramírez’s Yo vengo de . . . América del Sur, probably published in 1982, placing them among these first book-length works in Spanish.

García’s brief survey of networks, or infrastructure, supporting literary writing in Spanish goes on to include those Spanish-language newspapers that appeared in the 1980s, and a number of monthly or quarterly magazines, beginning in the late 1970s and continuing into the 90s. With these magazines, creative writing in Spanish received an important boost. “More than the newspapers,” García observes, “these magazines filled their pages with the poems and short stories of migrants.” Then he adds: “To trace them, though, is more difficult” (Spanish Fiction Writing 7). García is perhaps referring here to his own experiences in attempting to compile a collection of prize-winning poems, short stories, and essays written in Spanish and entered in competitions run by the Spanish Club of Sydney. García was aware that if nothing were done to preserve copies of these prize-winning entries, submitted over a twenty-seven-year period, they could easily vanish from history. In collecting the material for Concurso literario El Club Español de Sydney 1969–1996 (1997), García encountered numerous gaps in the records and was unable to locate copies of some poems or stories that had been awarded prizes in the competitions. Some winning entries from only a few years previous could be found in neither in the Club’s archives nor in other publications, including the newspapers and magazines he cites above. In his introduction to the compilation, he remarks on this fragility of the archive, especially with regard to migrant writing: “La literatura de la inmigración es frágil, se destruye con facilidad” (n.p.). The vulnerability of this Australian, Spanish-language creative writing to disappearance, its lack of comprehensive documentation, and its dispersal through the archive in newspapers and in numerous, but little-known, periodicals, is a challenge.

Sydney’s Mitchell Library holds some, though not all, of the Spanish-language magazines that García cites in his work, and in my position as researcher for AustLit, with responsibility for the Australian Multicultural Writers subset of the database, I’ve been fortunate in being able to make regular visits to access this material. On the one hand, it has been disappointing that publications such as El Faro, which is cited by Hispanic-Australian writers as having published their work, is not held in the Mitchell or in any other Australian library, although two issues of the magazine are listed in the online catalogue of the Biblioteca Nacional de Chile. On the other hand, the Mitchell Library does hold nearly complete sets of Vistazo, Versión, 30 Dias, Convergencia, Actas, and Hontanares, and in browsing through their pages one gains insight into nearly twenty years of literary production in Spanish in Sydney.

The first of these magazines was Vistazo, edited by Chilean-born Sergio Martin, who had migrated to Australia in 1969 after studying and working as a journalist in Chile. Vistazo, which ran between 1978 and 1981, focused mainly on world news and current affairs, with coverage as well of cultural events in the Hispanic communities in Australia and New Zealand. Its literary pages were entirely devoted to international writers; as indicated previously, at this point in time, there were few book-length publications in Australia in Spanish to review and the magazine did not itself publish poetry or short stories. Although not published in Vistazo, Martin’s short fiction, first collected under the title Historias e Historietas (1983), bears similarities to the crónica form of writing favored by Torrents decades earlier in its portrayal of the experiences of Hispanic migrants to Australia including quandaries of cultural adjustment. Vistazo did publish a crónica by another writer, beginning in 1979, similarly focusing on Hispanic, and especially Latin American, migrant experiences. The anonymously written “Crónicas de un Blady Woggie” or, as it was sometimes titled, “Comentarios de un Blady Woggie,” had made its first appearance in 1978 in the newspaper El Español en Australia. In 1992, the author, Luis Abacarca, or Lucho Abacarca, published a selection of these columns in both Sydney and Santiago under the title Las historias de un Blady Woggie. In his introduction to this collection, Abacarca writes that his stories, in a chaotic way, offer reflections upon aspects of His-
panic migrants’ experiences that cannot be found in the cold figures of the Department of Immigration or the documents or statistics of the Office of Ethnic Affairs ("recogen—de manera caótica—aspectos de nuestra vida diarias [sic] que no están, no podrán estarlo, contenidas en las frías cifras del Departamento de Inmigración, o en los documentos o estadísticas de las oficinas de Asuntos Étnicos" [Las historias 5]).

Abarca’s columns often feature a couple from Chile who have settled in Sydney and face a range of day-to-day challenges such as buying a used car, adjusting to employment as unskilled laborers, and struggling to understand the Australian colloquialisms and accent. The narratives are marked with both humor and criticism, frequently directed towards an Australian society that does not recognize the talents or potentials of its newly arrived citizens, or behaves in ways that are odd to assumed values common to the migrants’ countries of origin. At other points the criticism and humor is self-reflexive or aimed towards aspects of the Hispanic community. For example, one of the columns recounts an immigration raid on an office block in Sydney where the cleaners are all Latin American and who, either because they are illegal migrants or want to avoid paying tax, identify themselves with pseudonyms. Among the names given are “Diego Maradona, José Artigas, Leo Dan, Pablo Neruda, Alfredo Distéfano, Luchu Barrios y Augusto Pinochet. Este último era el que limpiaba los toiletes” [Las historias 9] [“This last one was the one who cleaned the toilets”]. Abarca’s jibe directed at Pinochet is not surprising, given that Abarca left Chile in 1974 after being detained following the 1973 coup and then expelled from university. And although Vistazo was certainly politically left leaning, not all its readers would have shared Abarca’s views. As indicated previously, Australia’s Chilean migrant community is not an entirely homogenous group, with some having left Chile when Allende came to power and therefore more inclined to be supportive of the Pinochet regime.

“Crónicas de un Blady Woggie” was meant to be provocative and some of the columns incorporate a sense of ongoing dialogue between the columnist and his readership. One begins with two readers telling the narrator that his column of the previous issue “salió una buena cochinada!” “Sí,” says the other, “una mugre, no se entendía y no tenía pies ni cabeza…” (Las historias 85) [“Your last column was complete rubbish!” “Yes, I couldn’t make head nor tail of it.”] The narrator/author defends himself saying that in this case it wasn’t his fault; the column had been published with nearly a thousand words left out; no wonder it was incomprehensible. In journalism, he says, this happens regularly, “as se trate del ‘Times’, del ‘Washington Post’, del ‘Newsweek’, o de la revista ‘Vistazo’ de Sydney” (86).

Sydney’s second Spanish-language magazine, Versión, published from 1981 to 1986, offered a range of content similar to that of Vistazo, including essays on contemporary issues, articles on Spanish and Latin American history and culture, coverage of current events in the Spanish-speaking community and, from its second year, a column not dissimilar to Abarca’s “Blady Woggie.” Beginning with issue number 8, this column, each with a unique title and often running to three or four pages, appeared under the name Ernesto Balcells, a pseudonym for the editor, Michael Gamarra. Gamarra had migrated to Australia in 1973 and, having worked in journalism and printing in his home country of Uruguay, sought to establish a printing business that would meet the needs of Sydney’s Hispanic community, including this bi-monthly magazine of arts, culture, and current affairs.

Like Abarca’s “Blady Woggie,” Balcells’s column cast a humorous glance at issues relevant to Hispanic migrants, including English classes, social welfare benefits, parental approval of teenage boyfriends, and questions such as whether to sign the permission agreement for organ donation on one’s New South Wales drivers’ license. This latter moves from speculation as to whether the narrator’s resurrected self will need a penis in the afterlife to his newly gained appreciation of life and love in the here-and-now. While the humor in this piece is light-hearted, others are more cutting, sharing with Abarca’s columns a critical perspective on aspects of migrant life. In the story centering on events in a migrant English class, for example, a friend recounts to Balcells his ongoing conflict with an Australian teacher over perceptions of cultural and geographical ignorance, which culminates in an argument over the pronunciation of la Pinta, la Niña, and la Santa María—the ships of Columbus’s first voyage of discovery—and which eventually leads to the teacher giving in and learning some basic Spanish pronunciation. The story ends with Balcells and the student chuckling over this small victory and his friend’s having contributed to the civilization of these gringos (“No me negarás que aporté mi granito de arena para contribuir a civilizar a estos gringos” [“La clase” 22]).

This story drew a heated response from one reader, whose letter-to-the-editor appeared in the succeeding issue of Versión:

Dear Sir,

I must tell you how very disappointed I am with the article by Ernesto Balcells, “La Clase de Inglés” [ . . . ]. As an immigrant myself, I read it with growing anger and would hope the majority of your readers responded similarly. [ . . . ] I resent the implication that all Australian teachers are like “Miss Benson.” This gross generalisation is totally unfair. [ . . . ] Because I am involved in education, I can assure you that the majority of teachers are intelligent, caring human beings. [ . . . ]

To prove Australians’ general lack of “culture” (whatever that may mean!) Mr. Balcells uses a naïve argument based mainly on the Spanish pronunciation problems of English speaking people. Really, this is hardly worth comment! [ . . . ]

If Mr. Balcells cannot concentrate on real issues, and continues to be concerned about the pronunciation of the Pinta, Niña and Santa Maria, then perhaps he and those who think similarly should go back to their countries where the real founts of civilization can be found! (“Cartas al Editor” 2–3, emphasis in original)
Balcells’s response to this reader’s letter appeared in the same issue:

Si la amable lectora, que es estadounidense, sintió enojo al leer que un personaje ficticio hablaba de los angloamericanos como de “gringos incivilizados,” puede entonces comprender fácilmente cómo se sienten los miles de inmigrantes que a diario son llamados ‘bloody wog’, o ‘lousy’, o ‘stinky wog’, etc., inferiorizándoles (casi siempre por su pobre conocimiento del inglés), como si vinieran de tierras de salvajes, cuando no es así (3).

[If the kind reader, who is American, felt angered upon reading that a fictional character refers to English speakers as “uncivilized gringos,” then she can easily understand how thousands of migrants feel when each day they are called “bloody wog” or “lousy” or “stinky wog,” etc., and made to feel inferior (almost always because of their poor knowledge of English) as if they came from a land of savages, when this is not the case.]

I cite this exchange at length to demonstrate two points that are significant to my discussion of Australia’s Spanish-language magazines and multilingual literature. The first is that, like Abarca’s columns, Balcells’s were written to provide a migrant’s perspective on the circumstances and experiences of Hispanic migration and adaptation to an Anglophone society, as well as commentary on the values and assumptions of the dominant Anglo-Australian society. Migrant writing is replete with examples of characters finding themselves marginalized and denigrated because of issues of linguistic competence or cultural difference. Balcells’s story is interesting in its suggestion that cultural and linguistic adaptation could be thought of as a two-way process. The letter-to-the-editor is interesting for this same reason. Although presumably the correspondent is Anglophone (as she has written to the magazine in English), she is bilingual and engaged with the Hispanic community at least to the extent that she is a reader of Versión. However, bilingualism is not necessarily biculturalism, and Balcells suggests that the reader’s hostile interpretation of the piece may be due, in part, to a failure to recognize its genre.

If the reader were familiar with the humorous magazines read by millions throughout the Hispanic world, Balcells replies, “quizás hubiera reconocido un estilo mordaz pero no ofensivo” (3) [perhaps she would recognize the style as acerbic but not offensive]. Balcells’s columns, like Abarca’s and to an extent like Martín’s short stories, are best understood as similar to the crónica form of writing cited earlier. 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 humor that is often sarcastic and sometimes quite bitter.

Yet another of these crónica-style works is Inmigrante Feliz en Afortunado País: Impresiones Ficticias de Un Machista-Inconformista (1991) by Belarmino Sarna. Narrated by Don Prudencio, an elder of “la comunidad mestizoamericana,” [the Mestizo-American community], Inmigrante Feliz is a collection of short column-like prose pieces commenting on the life and circumstances of Hispanic-Australian migrants. Sarna is a pseudonym for Chilean-born Uriel Barraza, and as Eric Cohen explains: “The author uses the name ‘Sarna,’ Spanish for scabies, as a metaphor for the itchy reaction readers should have to this sort of cynical humor and critique” (44). Cohen’s remarks here apply equally well to the columns by Balcells, as the letter from the reader illustrates.

The second point is that although Balcells states that his columns are written “sin pretensiones literarias” (3) [without literary pretensions], he also states in this exchange that he would like to see them collected and published one day. In fact, this is what Gamarra’s first book, El manuscrito australiano, claims to do. It opens with a letter in English from Balcells to Gamarra, reminding him of his promise “that if I die one day, you are going to put all my stories together, and publish them as a book” (7). Many of the stories in El manuscrito australiano were written after the columns under the pseudonym Balcells had ceased, but it does include at least one Balcells composition, a story titled “Vanidad” that appeared in Versión in October 1984. I draw attention to this in order to suggest that magazines such as Versión and Vistazo were important not only as sites of reflection and dialogue centering on Hispanic migrant experiences, but also as sites of literary practice and exercise. The Balcells columns provided Gamarra with the opportunity to practice creative writing skills regularly, and although he says now that they were often written in a rush, and sometimes merely to fill a blank page in the magazine, they are the beginnings of a body of creative writing that Gamarra continues to build upon.14

Versión provided literary opportunities for a growing number of Hispanic-Australian writers. As well as the Balcells columns, the magazine ran a regular literary section that focused on writing from overseas but which, in issue 15 in February 1984, began to include “Poetas de la comunidad,” a selection of poetry by Australian-resident writers, edited by Victor Ramos. Ramos, who migrated to Australia from Ecuador in 1972, has been an active participant in Australian literature for more than three decades, having published numerous books of poetry in both Spanish and English, contributed poetry to anthologies and periodicals, edited a bilingual collection of poems by multicultural authors (translating the poems in English into Spanish), and compiled a collection of the winning poems from the Spanish Club’s literary competitions held between 1970 and 1986. In 1984, when he took responsibility for local poetry in Versión, he had already published eight books of his own poetry. Among the first selection of “Poetas de la comunidad” was the title poem of Uruguayan Bernardo Landó’s already published collection, Los perros de la noche. Ramos regularly submitted his own poems in this section; these included poems of solidarity with oppressed peoples of the Americas, as in his poem “Granada” for example, published following the American invasion of that Caribbean island. Later issues of Versión included poems that had received prizes in literary competitions of the Spanish Club. Although the total number of contributing poets over the next two years remained small, their inclusion in Versión...
was an important step in acknowledging that literary work in Spanish was being created in Australia.

A third important literary aspect of Versión was its occasional book reviews. As with its coverage of poetry, these reviews began with an overseas focus but shifted after the magazine's first year to include reviews of Australian works. Among these was a review of the children's book, Aventuras de Chibolo, by Chilean-born author Luis Aguila. The 1985 review by Ben Haneman commented favorably on Aguila's first work, which had originally been published in Lima, Peru, and was, in 1985, just re-published by the author in a second edition in North Richmond, a suburb of Melbourne. Aguila has gone on to write six other Chibolo books and his work has received press coverage in Chile, as well as in the Spanish-language media in Australia.15 Like its coverage of poetry, Versión's reviews of creative writing in Spanish by Australian-resident authors were more of a first step than a comprehensive commitment to reviewing Australian works. Vistazo before it had not reviewed Australian works—there were few to review—but as the 1980s continued, and certainly through the 1990s, this changed dramatically, with many works in Spanish being published by Australian-resident writers. Versión's initial reviews, such as the one just cited, represent a significant site of contact and exchange between Spanish-speaking writers in Australia and their potential readership.

With the folding of Versión in 1986, however, a gap was left for some time in the engagement between Spanish-language magazines and Australia's Spanish-language literary production. From 1985 to 1991, a number of short-lived Spanish-language magazines were launched, some lasting for a period of a few years, others barely a year. And for a time, at least, the literary content in these magazines was minimal. Vistas, which published four issues in 1985, limited its coverage to Spanish issues and culture, and confined its literary content to reproductions of passages of Don Quijote.16 30 Días, which ran from 1985 to 1994, provided a mix of current affairs, politics, travel, and entertainment but, apart from a column by a writer identified only as Isabel C, and another by Madre Perla, carried very little literature related content. In 1989, Convergencia, a magazine published by the New South Wales Spanish and Latin American Association for Social Assistance, began again to provide space for Australian Spanish-language creative writing, publishing eight short stories and a half-dozen poems over its twelve issues. Another short-lived magazine, Actas, which ran just three issues in 1991, was subtitled “Revista de las artes y la cultura de la comunidad de habla hispana en Australia” [Magazine of arts and culture of the Australian Spanish-speaking community], and in its first issue published five short stories, all of which had been prize-winning entries in Australian Spanish-language literary contests from the previous year. Nostotas, a magazine of women's issues, current affairs, and entertainment, publishing from 1992 to 1997 and carrying the subtitle “La revista para la mujer que tambien lee el hombre” [The women's magazine which men also read], did not feature creative writing but did run occasional reviews of books by Australian Spanish-lang-

gage authors. Through these several magazines, then, the various aspects of Hispanic literary writing that Versión had provided—crítica-style column writing, creative writing, and book reviews—received irregular and scattered coverage over the years of the late 1980s and early 90s.

In October 1991, however, Michael Gamarra, who had edited Versión, began a weekly Sunday afternoon Spanish-language program on Radio 2-RRR, Rye Regional Radio, in Sydney's North Shore, and simultaneously launched an accompanying monthly newsletter titled Hontanar. Initially running to ten or twelve pages, and later to more than twenty, the newsletter carried news and opinion pieces on current events, reviews of music, theatre, and books, as well as creative writing, which appeared in a section titled “Rincón Literario” [Literary Corner] and, like Versión before it, included both overseas writing by well-known Hispanic authors and poetry and short stories by Australian-resident writers. In many ways, Hontanar was continuing from and building upon the type of literary coverage provided by Versión five years previous.

In terms of new authors and new Hispanic-Australian writing, Hontanar's Rincón Literario, edited by Celeste Buendía (a pseudonym for Clara Maldonado, a young writer recently migrated from Bolivia), carried poems and stories by an increasing range of authors, a number of whom have gone on to publish books, or to have their work included in the numerous anthologies of Spanish-language writing that began appearing in the 1990s. Writers such as Jairo Vanegas from Colombia, whose stories and poems appeared in Hontanar, have self-published a substantial body of work. Vanegas has more than a dozen books, including collections of columns published in El Español en Australia, and books of poems, stories, autobiography, and travel narratives. Self-publication is, in fact, the reality for most Australian Spanish-language writers and, recognizing this, in 1981 Gamarra had established Cervantes Publishing. Since then, Cervantes Publishing has issued more than forty titles—most, but not all, in Spanish. These include poetry by Victor Ramos, a collection of stories by Uruguayan-born Ruben Fernández, short stories and poetry by Clara Maldonado, a volume of poetry by Chilean-born Rene Olave, another by Mexican-born Mario Licón Cabrera, and Gamarra's own work in short stories, plays and, in 2010, his first novel, Dos lunas en el cielo. All of these authors have been published in Hontanar, either in its print issues between 1991 and 1996, or more recently in Hontanar Digital, the online version that began in 2003 and maintains a digital archive of back issues on its website.

The above might suggest a somewhat closed-circuit relationship between the magazine and the publishing company, with authors appearing in Hontanar and eventually producing enough material to fill one or more books, which they then pay to have published. The reality, however, is more complex, and the relationship between writers, periodicals, and publishers is multifaceted. As well as submitting their work to Hontanar, these writers were also being published in Spanish-language newspapers such as El Español en Australia,
mentioned above, Noticias y Deportes: The Hispanicamerican Newspaper, The Spanish Herald, and Tabaré, the newsletter of the Melbourne-based Uruguyan Club. Writers also organized themselves into literary groups and associations, including “Voces y Ecos,” established in the 1980s by Victor Ramos and others; “Palabras,” established in the 1990s by Spanish-born Marisa Cano, and the Brisbane-based group “Ecos del Alma Latina.” In 2005, Chilean-born, Canberra-based poet Sergio Mouat coordinated a summit of Latin American and Spanish poetry and then edited the resulting anthology. During his period of residence in Australia, Peruvian poet Samuel Cavero Galimidi, who studied at the University of Sydney, organized a number of anthologies including Circulo de poetas de Sydney (2004), which included writers whose work also appeared regularly in Hontanar. The point emerging from this is that Hispanic-Australian writing has been generated over the past three decades through an interaction of dynamic phenomena. I am not claiming that Spanish-language magazines in Australia are the most important contributors to the circulation or production of literary writing in that language; nor are they the single key to understanding the whole. Rather, they are one significant element in a rich field of literary exchange. Their advantage is that through the hardcopy of AustLit, researchers can follow the contributions of writers and readers as manifest in reviews of new works and letters to the editor.

The digital version of Hontanar continues to provide a forum for Spanish-language writing from Australia, as well as writing from across the Spanish-speaking world, including other diasporic Hispanic communities, for example, Uruguayan-born writers now living in Sweden. Although transnational in reach, the magazine’s features on its front page each month a photograph of Sydney’s Harbour Bridge and its subtitle reads “Desde Australia para todo el mundo hispano.” A few examples from its pages will illustrate, and reiterate, some of the points I have been making with regard to Latin American/Australian writing and Spanish-language periodicals.

The October 2003 issue of Hontanar, the first in digital format, carried a number of articles that linked the new publication to its print predecessor and demonstrated the new magazine’s emphasis on literature. “Victor Ramos en China” provided readers with an update of the whereabouts of the Peruvian-born poet and regular contributor to Hontanar, with a reminder that Ramos had edited the literary pages of Versión in the 1980s. It also carried a short story by Ruben Fernández titled “Lo que no fuimos,” which evokes a migrant’s return to the city of his youth, only there to realize and finally accept that one can never return. Since the publication of his book by Cervantes Publishing in 1993, Fernández has been awarded a grant by the Literature Board of the Australia Council, is now Executive Producer of Australia’s SBS Spanish Language Programming, and has continued to contribute periodically to Hontanar. Most recently, Fernández had a collection of his stories published in Uruguay. Titled El contestador australiano y otros cuentos (2008), the book received coverage in the newspaper El País in Montevideo, which quoted Fernández explaining that, although “soy más uruguayo que uruguayo” (I’m more Uruguayan than Uruguayan), he has been able to live for thirty years as a Spanish-speaking migrant in Australia and both maintain a career and continue to write in the language of his birth (“Emigración entre hispasos”).

My point here is that publications like Hontanar play an important role in acknowledging and promoting this ongoing production of literary work in Spanish, literary work which is both Australian and transnational.

As raised earlier, however, Australia’s multilingual writing, including writing in Spanish, is susceptible to neglect and loss. It may not be surprising that, although El contestador australiano y otros cuentos is held in the National Library of Uruguay, it is not yet held by any Australian library. As with several of the works cited previously, this book too risks slipping through the cracks of Australia’s literary infrastructure and, consequently, its literary history. The May 2007 issue of Hontanar demonstrates this vulnerability to loss with regard to two more Latin American/Australian authors. José Ramírez, author of Yo vengo de . . . America del Sur, one of the earliest Spanish-language publications in Australia, published a second collection of poetry in 2007, Un largo grito de desearrojo. Hontanar covered the book launch, held in Sydney in April and attended by the Consuls-General of Argentina and Uruguay, both of whom spoke at the event, as did Spanish-born Australian poet Mari Paz Ovidi. The book, however, is not held in any Australian library. In the same issue of Hontanar, a poem appears by Uruguayan-born Alberto Cáceres: “Angelus,” from his book Horas de ayer, published that same year. Cáceres had lived in Australia for almost twenty years and had been a contributor to Versión in the 1980s. After his return to South America in 1988, Cáceres continued to visit Australia regularly and published this book of short stories and poems in Sydney just before his death in 2008. Five of the stories are set in rural Uruguay, where Cáceres had been a priest in the 1960s; the opening four stories in the book are set in Australia. In one, a migrant couple listen to compositions by Uruguayan composer Eduardo Fabini in their flat in the Sydney suburb of Marrickville while looking out over the Pacific and remembering the past. It is a poignant piece expressing something of the pain of displaced lives, but one that, like several other Latin American/Australian works cited, remains outside the Australian archive.

Does it matter? Is this fragility of Australia’s multilingual literature an issue that should concern Australian literary studies? I believe, along with Ignacio García, that this literature of cultural and linguistic identity is a significant component of Australian writing, as it is also a part of Latin American literature. While no archive can be complete, it is important that the history of Latin American and Spanish writing in Australia remain accessible. It is a concern, for example,
that the digital version of Hontanar is not archived on PANDORA, the National Library of Australia's digital archiving service, as the online publication of Hontanar uses an offshore server and its URL does not end in "au." The implication of this is that in decades to come, although the bound volumes of Versión and Hontanar 1991–1996 will remain in the stacks of the Mitchell Library, there is no guarantee that the digital version, which now runs to more than 60 issues, will be preserved. As the examples above illustrate, Hontanar is a rich source of cultural, literary, and historical data significant to both Australia and the wider Spanish-speaking world. The loss to Australian literary studies, should it not be preserved, would be substantial.19

The future of writing in Spanish in Australia, or the contribution to Australian literature by writers of Latin American heritage, is of course unforeseeable. Clara Maldonado, whose poems and short stories appear across nearly twenty years of Hontanar, now writes in English as Bel Vidal, with her work published in mainstream Australian magazines such as Quadrant. On the other hand, as examples above have shown, it is not uncommon for Latin American/Australian writers to publish their work in Spanish in their countries of origin. Like Vidal, Peruvian Rafael Moreno Casarrubios has published short stories in English in Australian periodicals including Southerly, while publishing his novels in Spanish in South America. His crime novel, El diario de Sary Scott (2004), for example, is set in Sydney and published in Bogotá. Such transnational literary activity is a feature not only of Hispanic-Australian writing but is common amongst Australia's many linguistically diverse writing communities.

Australian literature is not limited to writing in English. Although this has been recognized for some decades now, little critical attention or research has been directed towards the wealth of multilingual literary material that comprises Australian writing. The creative work of writers who have migrated to Australia from Latin America is a vital aspect of the nation's literary history and the magazines they have established and supported and contributed to over so many years are an important primary source, a wellspring, from which many narratives may yet flow. Hontanar, itself an unusual word in Spanish, means just this, a place of many springs, and "Desde Australia . . ." is a fitting catchphrase for Australian writing that circulates amongst Hispanic readers, wherever they reside. □

NOTES

1 See Arright, also Rando, for critical work on Australian writing in Italian; Castan, also Kanaris, for critical analysis of Australian writing in Greek.
2 For critical scholarship on Chinese writing from Australia, see Qian, also Shen.
3 I am grateful to Michael Gamarra for the time he has generously given to our conversations.
4 Salvado is known in Spanish as Rosendo Salvado.
5 James Cook University Archives lists amongst its Salvador Tor­rents Collection a series of notebooks containing poems, short stories, and crónicas. See http://www.jcu.edu.au/old_library/Specials/ Archives/torrents.shtml
6 I thank the anonymous reviewer of this paper for pointing out the work of Corona and Jørgensen, who provide an excellent overview of the genre as it has developed in Mexico.
7 Mason uses the term cronista to refer to the form of writing rather than the author of such writing. The article Mason cites, "Recovering and Reconstructing Early Twentieth-Century Hispanic Immigrant Print Culture in the US" by Nicolás Kanellos, provides a concise explanation of the genre; see pp 446–7. I am grateful to the anonymous reviewer of this present article who pointed out the incorrect usage.
8 See García (2002).
9 See Jupp.
10 For details of migration patterns from Latin American countries in the 1960s and 1970s, see Jupp. For migration from Chile to Aus­tralia, see Bajo un cielo austral.
11 See García's Spanish Fiction Writing in Australia. Landó's book is held by several Australian libraries; Ramírez's Yo vengo de . . . is held only at the University of Western Sydney while Ramo's Selec­ciones Poéticas is only available at Deakin University. I have been unable to trace Blanco's Así es Uruguay. The difficulty of locating such publications demonstrates García's point about the fragility of migrant writing.
12 The only other trace I've found of El Faro in Australian archives is an article in Spanish by El Faro's Chilean-born editor A. J. Laskar, titled "Bibliografía de una Autobiografía," and in which Laskar writes of the challenges of running a literary journal in Spanish in Australia. This was published in Ambitious Friends, a periodical that identified itself as Australia's magazine of multicultural and multiling­ual literature. Laskar's article appeared here at more or less the same time as issue one of El Faro.
13 All translations into English from texts originally in Spanish are my own.
14 Personal communication with the author, 13 June 2010. Gamarra is at pains to distinguish this early writing from his later, more care­fully crafted work, including his second collection of stories, Viaje al Re­nacimiento (2006) and his recently published novel Dos lunas en el cielo (2010).
15 For examples of Chilean coverage, see Israel; also Matamala Gal­lardo.
16 Interestingly, in its initial issue, Vivas announced: "Esta publi­cación española es el resultado de las inquietudes de un grupo de
españoles de Sydney. [...] Ni 'Monarchistas' ni 'Marxistas'; no nos gusta las dictaduras ni de extrema derecha ni de izquierda [...]. [This Spanish publication is the result of concerns of a group of Spanish people in Sydney. Neither Monarchists nor Marxists, we support neither the dictatorships of the extreme right nor the left.] Perhaps the magazine was launched as a backlash to perceived politicizing of content from Latin American writers publishing in Vistazo and Versión.

17 Cañeros is Spanish for kangaroos but is also an idiomatic term used amongst Hispanic migrants to refer to Australians. It appears frequently in the crónica-style prose works cited previously in this essay.

18 See Jeavons.

19 AustLit colleague Joan Keating has pointed out that a few issues of Hontanar have been preserved at the San Francisco-based Internet Archive http://www.archive.org/web/web.php. I should stress that all Hontanar issues remain available on its website. I should also point out that Gamarra has recently been informed by Sandra Agudín, the webmaster for the Cervantes Publishing website, that a parallel Australian webpage can be established, which would allow the magazine to be archived on PANDORA. My point regarding the vulnerability to loss remains valid, however, because without this present research this digital archiving could have been overlooked.

WORKS CITED


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