

***Las historias de un Blady Woggie:***  
**Stories of South American migration to Australia**

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requirements for the Master of Research degree

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## Abstract

The paradigm shift from the White Australia Policy to multiculturalism in 1973 was a reaction to the failure of assimilation and the arrival of new waves of non-European migration from the mid-1960s. Many Latin American migrants were assisted into the country by the Australian Government through migration schemes and humanitarian programs, nevertheless, they arrived in a country unreceptive to cultural difference. The state policy of multiculturalism simultaneously encouraged and contained ethnic diversity in order to maintain a dominant Anglo-Celtic culture, protected and maintained since federation. Critical multiculturalism and the postcolonial themes of exile, ambivalence and hybridity are employed in a close reading of a collection of stories written by Chilean political refugee, Luis Alfonso Abarca, to understand the ways the texts responded to these functions of multiculturalism. The text entitled, *Las historias de un Blady Woggie* (1992), utilises the *crónica* to reflect upon the shared experiences of the community they were written for, a common feature of the genre. A textual analysis will explore some ways South American migrants interacted with the dominant culture and how, from their marginal positions, they created hybridised cultural understandings, reframing pre-existing notions of collectivism and gender. Research into the migrant experience through Latin American-Australian literature highlights the limitations of multiculturalism, creating new spaces to debate the dominance of national cultural belonging and the imposition of essentialised ethnic cultural characteristics.

### Statement of authorship

I declare that this work has not been submitted for a higher degree to any other university or institution. All work is original, except where it is acknowledged according to conventional referencing guidelines.

Signed:

Date:

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## Introduction

Australia officially embraced state-sponsored multiculturalism in 1973 under the Labor Whitlam government. The implementation of the policy was a reaction to the failure of assimilation, as expecting post-war migrants to adopt Australian culture and cease enacting their own culture, was unrealistic and unachievable. Multiculturalism became the new strategy of controlling the arrival of large numbers of migrants and cultures from new non-European regions of the world. An influx of Latin American migrants fleeing political and economic instability entered Australia, mainly from the region known as the Southern Cone, reaching eighty-six thousand by 1991 (Schneider, 2001). A significant number of these migrants were writers and intellectuals escaping oppressive right-wing dictatorships. Luis Alfonso Abarca, a successful Chilean author and journalist, fled the political persecution of the Pinochet government and arrived in Australia in 1974. Abarca worked as a journalist for the Spanish language radio station 2EA in Sydney, which formed part of SBS's multilingual broadcasting network. In 1978 Abarca began anonymously writing a column which appeared under the title of *Crónicas de un Blady Woggie* in the Spanish language newspaper, *El Español en Australia*. The column appeared in several other newspapers throughout the following years and in 1992 a collection of these *crónicas* were published entitled, *Las historias de un Blady Woggie*, [*Stories of a Blady Woggie*].<sup>1</sup>

The *crónicas* contained in this collection focus on the Latin American migrant experience in Australian society, providing a 'critical perspective of migrant life' (Jacklin, 2010, p. 180). The perspective provided by these stories was a response to the multicultural society under which many migrants were welcomed. Both Ang (2001) and Hage (1998) have

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<sup>1</sup> The Spanish title of the collection and individual *crónicas* will be provided when first mentioned along with the English translation in brackets. For all subsequent references to these titles only the English translation will be provided. English translations of excerpts from the collection will be provided in the text, with the original quote in Spanish provided as a footnote. All translations into English are my own.

demonstrated the way Australian multiculturalism has functioned to simultaneously encourage and contain cultural diversity, representing a continuation of discriminatory policy that had been established and sustained since federation. Chapter one begins with a discussion of critical multicultural theory to establish the socio-political context in which the *crónicas* of Abarca were written.

The dual nature of multiculturalism represents an ambiguous relationship between mainstream Australia and migrant minority groups. This ambiguity has been thoroughly explored in postcolonial theory, providing an apposite framework for the textual analysis of *crónicas* that explore this ambivalent relationship. The framework's preoccupation with the limitations of oppositional binaries, parallels the research concerns of critical multiculturalism. They both, therefore, suggest appropriate approaches to the close reading of texts produced by ethnic minority writers. The postcolonial themes of exile, ambivalence and hybridity, as they apply to the Australian context and the arrival of Latin American migration waves, will then be defined and discussed. This will detail the way they inform the central research questions explored in the critical analysis of Abarca's *crónicas* in chapter two: how does the text respond to the ambivalent nature of Australian multicultural society? What are the effects of exile and ethnicity in framing this response? And, how do the ambiguities of multiculturalism unsettle notions of Australia's national identity?

These texts, among others produced by Latin American writers in Australia, offer fruitful areas of research for using a wide range of approaches. As has been stipulated in the literature, postcolonial theory and critical multiculturalism suggest certain critical frameworks, however, others include more explicit feminist readings, as employed by both Gunew (1994) and Corkhill (1994). Gunew (1994) also outlines the significance of post-structuralist theory to identify ways ethnic minority writers occupy and challenge their positions outside of a mainstream literary tradition. Furthermore, in Australia, a new transnational approach is being explored by Jacklin (2009) and others as part of a major research project into the transnational

dimensions of migrant literary production. The fact that Abarca's 1992 collection was published both in Australia and in Chile is testament to the text's transnational dimensions. While these approaches offer interesting avenues for further research, the focus of this thesis is the way Abarca's *crónicas* mediate the experience of being an accepted outsider within Australia, lending itself fittingly to both a postcolonial and critical multicultural reading. It must be acknowledged, however, that the concentration on the marginalising pressures of society will not permit detailed discussion of other significant themes of the text and its potential universal appeal.

The Latin American community has been extremely productive in its literary endeavours since first establishing itself in Australia, building upon the foundations of earlier migrants from Spain (García, 1997). Although critical analysis of this literature has been limited, research within the field has grown. Jacklin's project, mentioned above, builds upon this growth in research within the 'Australian Multicultural Writers' subset of AustLit (Jacklin 2009; 2010; 2012). The project at hand forms part of this recent growth in research of Spanish language literary production in Australia, and adds much needed critical attention to the literature of Latin American migrants. This thesis shapes new understandings of the Latin American migrant experience in Australia through the narratives produced by one key writer from this community. Such narratives are reflective of wider community experiences, a prominent feature of the *crónica* genre that will be explored in more depth below.

Abarca's text provides invaluable information concerning the Latin American migrant experience, nevertheless, it also contains narratives that do not deal explicitly with this theme. Therefore, this thesis does not seek to pigeonhole the text as purely representative of migrant experiences, as it undoubtedly contains narratives that are universal to the human condition. The *crónicas* included for analysis were selected on the basis of their explicit engagement with experiences of exile, hybridity and ambivalence. Consequently, the stories within the collection that are set entirely outside of Australia are omitted from the analysis. Interpretations of the



migrant experience through the text will also add additional nuances to the limited body of ethnographic and sociological research conducted within Latin American communities in Australia (Zevallos, 2005a). The prominent themes of gender and collectivism that come through in that research further frame the analysis of the *crónicas*. Although research within Latin American migrant communities and critical responses to the literature they produce is limited in Australia, the opposite is true for the context of the United States. This is due to the fact that the sizes of the minority populations in both societies differ greatly. Therefore, the applicability of U.S. lines of enquiry are limited. Given that significant difference, parallels with other ethnic minority groups in Australia function as more adequate comparisons for Latin American migrants' experiences of marginalisation.

Chapter one outlines the relevant theoretical frameworks and canvasses significant literature within the field relating to the project at hand. It lays the foundation for the textual analysis of the collection of *crónicas* in chapter two, uncovering the way these stories engage with Australian multiculturalism through the marginal positions of both exile and membership in an ethnic minority group. The processes of identity reformation experienced by the characters will also be explored to uncover the way cultural exchanges take place and create hybrid understandings, reflecting the experiences of their readership in some measure. The conclusion summarises the findings of chapter two and outlines future lines of inquiry that would add to the findings of this project.

## Chapter one: Theoretical framework

This chapter outlines the theoretical frameworks drawn upon to critically analyse Abarca's collection of *crónicas* in order to gain further understandings of Latin American migration to Australia. The social context of the initial stages of Australian multiculturalism will first be outlined and examined through the frameworks of critical multicultural and postcolonial theory. The concepts explored reflect the period of multiculturalism which these texts were produced in. The first two decades of official state multiculturalism are, therefore, salient in the way the text will be analysed to uncover the collection's responses to the policy, considered in this initial stage as a managerial process (Papastergiadis, 2013) and a multiculturalism of difference (Mishra, 2012). The attention given to critical multiculturalism, a theoretical framework developed in response to this management phase, will then allow for a discussion of key postcolonial notions that parallel this critique. The genre of the *crónica* will also be discussed, exploring its ability to address community concerns. Concepts of gender and collectivism, which recur in Abarca's writing, and feature prominently in social research conducted within Latin American communities in Australia, will also be examined.

The official government policy of Australian multiculturalism within its historic context can be seen as a continuation of its territorial control of cultural difference. This management of cultural diversity retained a level of discrimination established by the White Australia Policy in 1901, the first legislative act after federation. By legislating a top-down response to diversity, this government policy produced what both Stratton and Ang (1994) describe as the ideological discourse of multiculturalism. Australia's adoption of this ideology, allowed it be perceived as moving beyond its racist past through the development of a new narrative of harmony and tolerance. An important element in achieving this shift was the suppression of the term 'race' from Australian discourse, replaced by the more acceptable and malleable cultural label of 'ethnicity' (Stratton and Ang, 1994). Race accounted for what was considered radically

different and inferior, therefore, ethnic difference became equally as threatening. Although the common use of the term was abolished, the prevailing racism inherent within society remained. This therefore created the binary opposition of centre and periphery along newly defined ethnic grounds: those that were regarded as racially pure and of Anglo-Celtic heritage, contrasted to racially inferior ethnic minorities. Consequently, ‘official multiculturalism suppress[ed] the continued hegemony of Anglo-Celtic Australian culture by making it invisible’ (Stratton & Ang, 1994, p. 154). It is important then to understand that critical multiculturalism theorises Australia as perceiving itself to be multi-racial, whereas in reality its prejudices were simply reframed. Hence, the ‘unabsorbable difference’ (Ang & Stratton, 1998, p. 36) of race becomes defined by new ethnic categories, allowing the centre to maintain a discriminatory and racist stance whilst simultaneously applauding its multicultural make-up.

The fiction of multi-racialism, conceived as ethnic tolerance, provides the foundation for a postcolonial critique, as societies receive migration through necessity yet never grant complete ethnic minority acceptance. The power imbalances characteristic of the colonial relationship mirror the disparity in power produced by multiculturalism, therefore both frameworks provide important ideas for the study of literature produced by ethnic minority groups in Australia (Corkhill, 1994; Gunew, 1998). The postcolonial concepts of exile, ambivalence and hybridity—the latter two popularly theorised by Homi K. Bhabha—provide key understandings of how minority groups are relegated to the margins in multicultural societies, and how they in turn interact with the mainstream (Ang, 2001; Ashcroft, Griffiths, & Tiffin, 1998; Gunew, 1994).

Corkhill’s (1994) literary history of Australian ethnic writing from 1945 to 1991, utilises a postcolonial framework in analysing texts that reflect upon the authors’ position outside of mainstream Australia. Corkhill employs the concept of exile to reveal the cultural dislocation inherent within much of the literature of ethnic minority writers. The exile is regarded as an

individual forced into expulsion from their native land and ostracised for their political beliefs and practices, becoming uprooted while retaining a longing for their homeland (Corkhill, 1994; Said, 2001). This yearning, shared with migrants, is stronger in the mind of an individual expelled from their homeland because returning is not an option, at least for a period of time (McClennen, 2004). In contrast, the migrant is seen to have voluntarily made the decision to become uprooted, in many cases permanently, whereas for the exile it is hoped to only be a temporary situation (Corkhill, 1994; Said, 2001). Exiles are therefore ‘banished victims, deracinated and tortured by the long wait to go home’ (Gurr, 1981, p. 18), they live in hope of return, while forced to create a new life. Accordingly, the exile becomes both refugee and migrant, as the ‘condition of exile is not static, rather, it is a condition that is constantly unstable and in flux’ (McClennen, 2004, p. 34). Once they have fled their countries they must mediate their exiled status through the construction of a new migrant life within often discriminatory multicultural societies. It can be said that the life of an exile is led contrapuntally—both within the new and antagonistic, and the lost and familiar—defined as ‘hav[ing] two or more independent, but harmonically related, melodic parts sounding together’ (McClennen, 2004, p. 33). During the initial stages of multiculturalism, Australia received many political refugees from South America, primarily from Chile. Luis Alfonso Abarca, also known as Lucho Abarca, left Chile in 1974 after he was detained and later expelled from university by the right-wing military Junta that seized power in 1973, toppling the democratically elected party *Unidad Popular* led by Salvador Allende.

Chilean migration to Australia can be categorised in three waves, correlating with destabilising political events in the country (Jacklin, 2010; Schneider, 2001). The first wave of migrants left the country during the last two years of the Christian-Democrat government under President Eduardo Frei Montalva, from 1968 to 1970. The period was marked by high unemployment and economic stagnation. Second wave migrants from Chile arrived between 1970 and 1973. These migrants left Chile during Salvador Allende’s presidency, leaving the

country in opposition to the government's views and the uncertainty of the country's economic future (Jacklin, 2010; Schneider, 2001). Both of these groups primarily came from middle class backgrounds, were well-educated, and many arrived with some capital for entrepreneurial endeavours, in contrast to those arriving in the last flow of Chilean migrants (Márín, 2005). This third wave of migration began with the military coup of 1973. The coup installed the right-wing military dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet with the support of foreign governments. The military brutally persecuted opponents of the regime and supporters of the previous government. Thousands of individuals were incarcerated and the period is marred by devastating repression and extreme economic privation. This shift in the Chilean political sphere led to a flood of refugee and migration applications to Australia. By the mid-1980s almost fifteen thousand Chilean migrants and political refugees had arrived, the majority arriving in this third wave (Schneider, 2001). Many of these individuals arrived through humanitarian programs implemented by the Australian government in 1972, and many arrived directly from concentration camps and prisons (Schneider, 2001).

Abarca fled Chile in 1974. Although Australia had been officially declared diverse, and was accepting of migrants, there remained a climate of apprehension towards ethnic difference. Thus, Abarca's *crónicas* reflect both his position as a political refugee and as a member of an ethnic migrant minority in Australian society. It is also important to note the socio-economic and political diversity of the Chilean population in Australia, as this would have created a plurality of migration experiences influenced by their position in Chilean society prior to migration (Parada, 2013). As mentioned above, the individuals that arrived in the first two waves were mostly affluent and many had knowledge of the English language. This potentially facilitated less challenging cultural transitions. As will become clear in the second chapter, the stories contained in this collection are often indicative of a migrant who struggles economically and linguistically, representative of migrants with little or no financial capital to excel economically in Australia. This could be considered broadly characteristic of the Chilean

community of the time (Schneider, 2001). Abarca's literary characters exemplify these factors, in addition to the discrimination experienced within Australian society, to portray the narrative of the migrant's challenge of cultural integration.

The difficulty of integration for migrants is partly the result of the simultaneous acceptance and containment of their diversity introduced with the discourse of official Australian multiculturalism, discussed earlier. Multicultural ambivalence echoes that which was formed under colonialism between subject and coloniser. Ambivalence describes the complex and ambiguous relationship between dominant and minority groups that experience both a desire and a rejection for one another as a result of turbulent and violent pasts (Ashcroft, Griffiths, & Tiffin, 1998). Ambivalence depends upon an ongoing process of othering where boundaries between differing groups are maintained in a process of simultaneous subjugation and encouragement by those in power, and of collaboration and resistance by those who are marginalised, while neither group entirely rejects the other (Ang, 2001; Ashcroft, Griffiths, & Tiffin, 1998). It is this dual desire by the government to be perceived as a diverse nation and at the same time retain a legitimate cultural centre that requires both the encouragement and suppression of minority cultures. By doing so, the official discourse of multiculturalism sustains oppositional binaries: the racially pure and ethnic minority (Ang & Stratton, 1994), Australian mainstream society and ethnic community (Ang, 2001); assimilated and unassimilable (Hage, 2008), and that of Australian and un-Australian (Pavlidis, 2013).

The binaries produced by multicultural discourse are sustained through the ambivalent practice of 'inclusion by virtue of othering' (Ang, 2001, p. 139). This 'inclusion by virtue of othering' (Ang, 2001, p. 139), highlights the way multicultural Australia accepts minority cultures *because* of their difference—an acceptable difference that is beneficial and non-threatening. Therefore, the acceptance bestowed upon ethnic minority groups is inherently limited by the judgement of the dominant group. This judgement represents the ambivalent encouragement and containment of cultures as those who are deemed favourable will ultimately

be supported and suppressed for their difference. Hence, 'inclusion by virtue of othering' (Ang, 2001, p. 139), creates neat networks of organised ethnic communities, whereby, desirable and manageable cultures are accepted through categorisation, achieved by imposing essentialised cultural traits. In this way, they are contained and considered non-threatening by fashioning an exotic attraction (Ang, 2001; Gunew, 1994). The limited acceptance of these exoticised others is essential to Australia's multicultural ambivalence. Such acceptance is ultimately realised because ethnic minority cultures are considered to be *enriching* for Australia's already *enriched* society (Hage, 1998). Therefore, cultures must be deemed culturally valuable in order to be included (Ang, 2001; Hage, 1998; Gunew, 1994). Toleration creates a power imbalance within multicultural societies as only the dominant group can tolerate. In contrast, minority groups can only be tolerated and are consequently continuously subject to the dominant group calculating their cultural worth. This unequal distribution of tolerance, as earlier developed by Marcuse (1969), emphasises ambivalence towards migrant groups as they are accepted only when their difference is desirable, and the centre is not threatened, maintaining a white Anglo-Celtic 'imagined community' (Anderson, 1991; Ang, 2001; Fopp, 2007; Hage, 1998). This keeps the marginalised manageable, as they are always defined as 'almost the same, but not quite' (Bhabha, 1994, p. 122). It is, in this way, that both postcolonialism and the ideas of critical multiculturalism merge and provide a relevant approach to the study of ethnic minority literature.

In Australia, ambivalent acceptance enforces marginalised spaces from which migrants create new cultural understandings: locally, nationally and transnationally. These spaces can be defined as hybrid, as individuals and groups are able to 'culturally negotiate' (Ang, 2003, p. 189) between the cultures left behind and the new culture that they now live in, which attempts to suppress the enactment of the former. Because it ambivalently suppresses and accepts this enactment, individuals adapt to these binaries, engaging in a cultural conversation that leads to hybridisation. However, hybridity does not remove these oppositional binaries, rather, it

problematises them. In this way individuals who find themselves in-between are able to construct new hybrid understandings, preventing the imposition of homogenous narratives, as 'hybridity always implies an unsettling of identities' (Ang, 2003, p. 148). Hybridity continuously develops cultural exchange and is never complete as it is a constant process of interaction and negotiation (Hall, 2000, p. 266). However, such a process, it has been argued, may perpetuate essentialised cultural completeness, reflecting the violent and racist biological roots of the concept (Hutnyk, 2005; Marotta, 2008; Young, 1995). Conversely, hybridity works within such cultures that are often considered pure, engaging in a constant process of their adaptation and change. By doing so, hybridity highlights the violent and racist methods with which societies have constructed and imagined themselves to be pure, instead of propagating these notions. For this reason, hybridity is consigned to spaces outside national cultural structures, whilst not privileging a need to achieve completeness within it. As this complex process challenges cultural norms that sustain national boundaries and complete cultural identities, it is a 'point of departure from which to break away from fundamentalist tendencies' (García Canclini, 2000, p. 48).

As hybridity negotiates between essentialised cultures, instead of privileging them, it highlights the heterogeneous natures of them. Nevertheless, nations continue to sustain culturally homogeneous 'imagined communities' (Anderson, 1991) to maintain the legitimacy of their cultural boundaries. Migration disrupts the traditional hegemonic idea of an Anglo-Celtic Australian imaginary, producing a 'subtle hybridisation, where new identities emerge from the oscillation between differences' (Papastergiadis, 2010, p. 259), which challenges the 'historical identity of culture as [a] homogenising, unifying force, authenticated by [an] originary past, kept alive [by] national traditions' (Bhabha, 1994, p. 54). This also disrupts migrant cultures that are set apart, as both the dominant and minority cultures are negotiated, revealing the inadequacies characteristic to both, transferring them from fixity to fluidity (Hall, 2000, p. 226). Hybridity occupies the space outside of what imagines itself as non-hybrid, which



in multicultural Australia is a claim to Anglo-Celtic racial purity (Ang & Stratton, 1994; Corkhill, 1994). This claim enforces ambivalent inclusion of ethnic minorities which relegates them to the margins, in an attempt to suppress their ability to interrupt this purity. By essentialising and exoticising difference, the state can limit meaningful exchange, impeding hybrid understandings that potentially undermine its cultural narrative. As Hall states (2000):

a more accurate picture would have to begin with the lived complexity emerging in these ... communities, where so-called 'traditional' ways of life derived from the cultures or origin remain important to community self-definitions, but consistently operate alongside extensive daily interaction at every level, with ... mainstream life (p. 220).

Traditional attributes of cultures of origin are only superficially accepted as a reified 'celebration of costumes, customs and cooking', and are not 'acceptable as high culture' (Gunew, 1994, p. 2). Therefore, literary artistic expression produced by ethnic minority communities is reduced to the status of *enriching* and inferior, and has often remained outside of the dominant mainstream literary culture (Gunew, 1994; Ommundsen, 2007). Literature that is produced within these spaces can create hybrid understandings and articulate the complexity of the lived experience and daily cultural exchange of migrant authors and their communities, with the mainstream. As they express new hybrid forms of cultural contact they are pushed to the margins as they create narratives that contrast the static cultural centre (Corkhill, 1994; Gunew, 1994; Mycak, 2002; Ommundsen, 2007). Therefore, works produced by ethnic minority groups are 'site[s] of struggle', that have the ability to depose 'discriminatory ideologies' (Corkhill, 1994, p. 10) by 'undo[ing] the power of dominant discourses [that] represent themselves as universal' (Gunew, 1994, p. 42). Hence, the works of ethnic minority writers can unsettle these power imbalances and universalist claims to cultural superiority through hybrid cultural responses. Thus, exposing the fantasy of cultural purity and create

alternate histories and narratives constituting the idea of the nation (Pavlidis, 2013). An important element in the maintenance of an imaginary cultural collective is the production and reproduction of literary texts that maintain a sense of belonging within the nation (Anderson, 1991). New texts that generate new ideas of what it means to be Australian, through hybridised understandings of culture, can reframe these parameters (Pavlidis, 2013).

The study of multicultural literature in Australia is a developed field of inquiry, yet critical analysis of South American ethnic minority writers is still limited, however, the academic attention that it is receiving is steadily growing. Michael Jacklin, extending upon Ignacio García's bibliographic work of Spanish writing in Australia, has researched the influential impact that Spanish language newspapers and magazines have had on the production of creative writing in this literary community (García, 1997; Jacklin, 2009; 2010). He and fellow researchers are furthering this development by uncovering the literary heritage of Australia in languages other than English, using the case studies of Arabic, Chinese, Spanish and Vietnamese. Further inquiry into the Spanish language literature of Australia is being advanced through the research of both Michael Jacklin and Catherine Seaton at the University of Wollongong. They are investigating the development of the *crónica* genre and the transnational networks that the *crónica* genre of writing in the Spanish speaking community of Australia has engaged with. Jacklin (2010) has commented on the critical nature of Abarca's *crónicas*, describing their engagement with community struggles of migration and stating the way they reflect upon Australian society at the time they were written.

The research published and currently being conducted into Spanish language literature in Australia has determined the importance of the *crónica* genre in the literature of the South American community. The *crónica*, or chronicle, is a hybrid text that combines both literary and journalistic elements as it reports upon relevant and current events with the addition of authorial reflection (Blanco, Leñero, & Villoro, 2002). The genre blends the factual reporting

of journalism and the creativity of fiction. The outcome is short regular columns that use humour, irony, and sombre sentiments to comment satirically on events that are important to local communities for whom they are written. A popular genre in Latin America, it was favoured by the Spanish modernists of the twentieth century, and is usually published weekly or fortnightly (Gonzales, 1993). The development of the *crónica* through journalism and its ubiquity throughout this time, highlighted the need for a consumer-oriented approach. As a result, the focus of these literary works became less concerned with elaborate imaginative narratives and more focussed on inventive constructions of the truth and topical events (Corona, 2002; Gonzales, 1993).

The innovative nature of the *crónica* has allowed it to be a reflection of community sentiment and is, therefore, said to be ‘primarily a genre of community engagement’ (Jacklin, 2010, p. 178). The earliest form of *crónicas* written in Australia were by Salvador Torrents, a Spanish anarchist living in Queensland throughout the first half of the twentieth century. Torrents’ *crónicas* ‘integrated political, moral and ethnic concerns in order to create meaning and reinforce the community’s separate identity’ (Mason, 2010, p. 171). This community engagement and reflection of a separate identity is also sustained through the dialogue the genre creates. It was common for readers of *crónica* columns in Australia to write letters to the editor in response to their content (Jacklin, 2010). As the Spanish modernists depended upon these journalistic endeavours to sustain them economically, they did so with pseudonyms to separate their journalistic and creative selves, a feature replicated in the writers of the *crónica* in Australia (Gonzales, 1993; Jacklin, 2010). Abarca’s use of the pseudonym ‘Blady Woggie’ along with pseudonyms employed by many other writers of the time exhibit this. The *crónicas* published by Abarca in his 1992 collection originally appeared in Spanish language newspapers beginning in 1978, highlighting the extended community engagement and reflection of Abarca’s *crónicas* with his Spanish speaking readership in Australia.

Literature is used to label and define national borders through creating narratives of cultural ‘(non)belonging’ (Hussain, 2004, p. 104). This is significant in the study of official Australian multiculturalism as ethnic minority literature can challenge these labels by creating new hybrid labels. As literature forges belonging and expounds culture, it subsequently becomes an ethnographic exercise. Ethnography, being the practice of observing cultural systems as a participant within the system, leads to holistic representations of it through writing. Accordingly, as argued by Pavlides (2013) ‘all literature is ethnography’ (p. 24). Literature can therefore contribute to insights of communities and cultures from within the community in which it is produced, as it ‘gives us a second handle on reality’ (Achebe, 1990, p. 170). Importantly, the production of the *crónica* is also considered an ethnographic practice, as Corona (2002) asserts, the chronicler uses their literary ability to represent cultural systems through their literature. By doing so, ‘the chronicle serves as a form of cultural performance for those readers who can self-identify with its discourse’ (Corona, 2002, p. 143). Hence, the *crónica* becomes a literary reproduction of culture that documents and develops community identity and the power struggles that they are subject to. The hybrid *crónica* genre sits within a variety of disciplines concerned with cultural structures (Corona, 2002), allowing them to be closely read within the frameworks outlined above. By understanding the way Abarca’s literary characters relate to and question the boundaries of Australian multiculturalism, they may in turn signify broader community sentiments.

Just as the *crónica* has been a focal point in the research of South American-Australian literature, gender features prominently in sociological and ethnographic research within this community. Cultural identity and its relationship to gender is an important aspect of migrant communities, as men who are excluded from the majority ‘work out a gender identity by negotiating the meanings and practices of their own original culture and that of the dominant majority’ (Gilbert & Gilbert, 1998, p. 146). As migration creates inequalities between the centre and the margins, the limited access to resources and economic advancement this creates can

affect gender roles within migrant families (Pease, 2009). The traditional gender roles of Latin American communities often focus on the familiar stereotypes of *machismo* and *marianismo* (Crossley & Pease, 2009; Gutmann, 2005; Moraes-Gorecki, 1988). Crossley and Pease (2005; 2009) demonstrate how masculinities within the Latin American community in Australia are imported, negotiated and then hybridised through interaction with the dominant culture. The stereotype of *machismo* can be used to discriminate against Latin American minorities as an essentialising trait that is imposed by the ambivalent mainstream, so it is therefore precarious to generalise about Latin American masculinities (Crossley & Pease, 2009; Gutmann, 2005). Nevertheless, there are similarities amongst the way migrant Latin American men perceive their role in the family, although these are not radically different to the way other cultures construct ideas of masculinity (Abalos, 2002; Fuller, 2001; Pease, 2009). The attributes of caretaker and provider are common characteristics employed by Latin American men in constructing their masculinities and migration has been shown to disrupt these ideas (Crossley & Pease, 2005; Pease, 2009). The experience of migration demonstrates how new locations create spaces that allow for the negotiation of ideas about gender, that may ultimately create hybrid gender identities and by extension, cultural understandings (Hibbins & Pease, 2009; Lawson, 1998; Willis & Yeoh, 2002).

Masculinities that are constructed in relation to cultural changes are also impacted upon by changes in migrant female gender roles. These changes can lead to internal discrimination within migrant families divided along traditional gendered lines. Consequently, the discrimination that impacts upon men's self-conceptions of gender roles is countered with exaggerated forms of masculinity within the family unit, which may cause internalised community suppression of women (Hibbins & Pease, 2009; Marotta, 2008; Pease, 2009). In the Latin American context, this coincides with the maintenance of the gender construct *marianismo*, a traditional stereotype that portrays women as submissive and humble, tolerant and spiritually superior to men. Attributes considered necessary for women to uphold their

traditional role as ‘super-mother’ (Moraes-Gorecki, 1988). Latin American community research in Australia also found that although migration has exposed families to new cultural locations, this has not always positively impacted upon the traditional family structure, coinciding with research in migrant communities from other countries. In some cases, it has amplified inequality, beginning with a lack of participation in the decision-making process as to the location of the couple’s destination, a stagnation in female career progression and an overall patriarchal structure of migration (Aizpurúa, Féres-Carneiro & Jablonski, 2011; Aizpurúa & Fisher, 2008; Halfacree, 1995; Lawson, 1998; Moraes-Gorecki, 1988; Shihadeh, 1991). Alternative research has found that female migration from Latin American countries has augmented traditional gender roles and women have been able to experience more equality within the family unit, reflecting global trends in migration research (Dawson & Gifford, 2001; 2004; Zlotnik, 1995). An increased sense of gender equality is also demonstrated in studies of second generation Latin American women in Australia, whose hybrid identities highlight the way they negotiate their gender roles, reflecting research in other migrant communities (Baldassar, 1999; Zevallos, 2003; 2005b; 2005c; 2008). Experiences of migration are diverse and may allow women to reposition their gender roles within the family. However, this may be the catalyst for further attempted confinement of women to the household, as this female empowerment can create anxiety within men. As their roles as providers for their families invert, they could seek to limit the transformation of the female role within the family (Crossley & Pease, 2005; 2009; Hibbins & Pease, 2009).

Artistic expression is also a significant element with which Latin American communities in Australia explore and negotiate their identities. Research demonstrates how music and dance, although regional and national, have the effect of culturally marking individuals and in turn are used as a way for Latin American migrants, and the second generation, to group together in spite of cultural differences (Cohen, 2005; Torezani, 2005; Zevallos, 2008). This unity could also reflect influential empirical research that demonstrates

the collectivism of Latin American cultures in comparison with Western countries (Hofstede, 1980; Triandis et. al, 1986). The over-generalisation of such conclusions has been criticised, even within the Australian context (Coronado 2014; Jones, 2007), nevertheless, it remains a trope used by members of the Latin American community in constructing localities and negotiating their cultures in Australia (Cohen, 2004; Lopez, 2005; Zevallos, 2008). Negotiation between ‘host’ and ‘home’ cultures has been found to occur in Chilean migrants, Latin American parents of bilingual children and the children themselves, who occupy liminal cultural spaces (Amigó, 2012; Collin, 2006; Díaz, 2002). Hybridity also has an extensive history in Latin American countries and cultures (García Canclini, 1995) and is, therefore, a compelling notion to be explored within Abarca’s collection of *crónicas*.

Artistic literary output from the Latin American community in Australia also reveals similar themes explored in the writing of other ethnic minority groups. Corkhill (1995) describes the migrant experience as a crucial aspect of literature from ethnic minority writers, including ‘encounters with the adopted land, their experiences of alienation, cultural loss, dislocation, settlement, language difficulties, biculturalism, poverty, inequality and host society prejudice’ (p. 13). These common elements are sometimes used to further marginalise ethnic minority writing as merely reflective of the migrant experience and lacking any universal appeal (Gunew, 1994). However, these themes can be reclaimed in more positive terms and used metaphorically to reflect broader concerns of all individuals (Mycak, 2002). Abarca’s *crónicas* reflect the issues of the community for whom he was writing and will, in the present investigation, be examined in order to gain a better understanding of the South American migrant experience, although this does not negate their universal appeal. Intrinsic to ethnic minority writing is the search and negotiation of cultural identity, an exploration that transcends the migration experience (Mycak, 2001; 2002). This search for and negotiation of culture has been shown in the works of Australian-Greek writers, Italo-Australian writers, Ukrainian-

Australian writers and many other migrant literary groups (Corkhill, 1994; Mycak, 2002; Mycak & Sarwal, 2010; Rando, 2010; Zengos, 2010).

Recent studies of ethnic minority literature in Australia have emphasised the importance of reading such texts with a critical multiculturalist framework. Dudek (2010) states:

in order to challenge and to critique a hegemonic multiculturalism that seeks to homogenise peoples residing within Australian borders ... critics must put to work critical multiculturalism as a reading and writing strategy in order to examine and contest how race anchors culture in multicultural discourses in their current manifestations (p. 116).

In this context, as discussed at the outset of this chapter, race signified ethnicity as the new framework of discrimination in the official discourse of multiculturalism. As Gunew (2004) argues ‘the mechanisms relating to both race and ethnicity are used interchangeably in this new rhetoric of constituting and managing the nation’ (p. 26), which is ‘concerned with identifying insiders and outsiders’ (p. 27). Pavlides’ (2013) study of un-Australian fictions also utilises critical multiculturalism to ‘consider the way that various identities map onto “relations of social power, cultural identities ... and national structures”’ (p. 27). Here, David Carter’s (2006) definition of critical multiculturalism is quoted by Pavlides to signify the framework’s appropriateness in researching ethnic minority literature, and the way it interacts with official policies. This framework of analysis supports deeper understandings of the Latin American migrant’s search for cultural identity within the boundaries of state multiculturalism. As Gunew (2004) has advised, in analysing cultural texts that contest national cultural hegemony, the ‘constellation of terms—multiculturalism, ethnicity, race, postcolonialism — all have their shifting and shifty roles to play’ (p. 29).



## Chapter two: Stories of South American migration to Australia

This chapter applies the theoretical frameworks of critical multicultural theory and postcolonialism, outlined in chapter one, in a close reading of the collection of *crónicas* published by Luis Alfonso Abarca as *Stories of a Blady Woggie*. The preface of the collection will first be analysed to reveal the way Abarca positions his texts as a literature of migration that is reflective of broader community sentiments. This positioning introduces the ideas pertinent to the themes that have been examined so far, namely that of exile, ambivalence and hybridity. This will frame chapter two as it analyses the *crónicas* individually that explicitly deal with these themes, to investigate whether they question the ambivalent nature of Australian multicultural society, through the characters' marginal positions of exile and ethnic minority group members. The analysis will also investigate whether this position creates hybrid understandings of culture that straddle between the boundaries created by society, and whether this creates alternate narratives of belonging. The characters' minority positioning will first be established by uncovering the theme of exile in the *crónica* entitled "*Continuidad en los Parques*" ["Continuity in the Parks"] and ambivalence in the *crónicas* entitled: "*La Plegaria del Emigrante Figurón*" ["Prayer of the Show-off Migrant"] and "*Espikin Inglich*" ["Speaking English"]. Hybridity and the idea of collectivism in the Latin American community will be reprised in the *crónicas* entitled "*Cleaners con seudónimo*" ["Cleaners with pseudonyms"] and "*Incidente en un bus*" ["Incident on a bus"]. The two-part *crónica* of "*La abuelita viene a vernos!*" ["Granny is coming to visit!"] and "*Las suegras turistas*" ["Tourist mother-in-laws"] will raise both the themes of ambivalence and hybridity. Chapter two concludes by focusing on the way gender identities are negotiated through the process of migration by analysing the *crónicas* entitled: "*¡Pero si nunca tuvieron brújula!*" ["But they've never had compasses!"], "*Desventuras del 'Latin Lover'*" ["Misadventures of the 'Latin Lover'"], and "*¡Oye mijito ... porque no me enseñas a manejar el auto?*" [sic] ["Hey darling, why don't you teach me how

to drive?’’]. The conclusion discusses the implications and limitations of the findings of this critical analysis.

In the preface to his collection, Abarca introduces the *crónicas* as stories of Latin American migration that reflect his personal experience as well as those of the community:

these *crónicas* have testimonial value. And in some general way collect—in a chaotic manner—aspects of our daily lives that are not, and couldn’t possibly be, contained in the cold figures of the Department of Immigration, or in the documents or statistics of the offices of Ethnic Affairs (p. 5).<sup>2</sup>

As both personal reflections and reflections on the migration experience of others, he situates his work within the genre of the *crónica*, as discussed in chapter one. Here, the ability of the *crónica* to act as ethnography is expressed by the author as they become witness to the everyday life of the community via expressions in literature, commenting on what is commonly perceived as culture (Corona, 2002). As *crónicas* that reflect community sentiment and community members’ separate sense of identity, the collection is valuable in establishing the narratives of migration of the South American community in Australia, not reflected in the official record. Statistics only account for homogenising aspects of multiculturalism, such as the number of events or cultural festivities and money spent on these reifying spectacles. For that reason these stories offer ‘un-Australian’ (Pavrides, 2013) counter-narratives to those that shape the nation as pure and Australian.

Abarca’s stories appeared in various Spanish language newspapers and magazines in Australia from 1978 to 1992. Their appearance in these publications on a regular basis, and their frequent consumption by a Spanish-reading audience, created spaces with which to

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<sup>2</sup> ‘estas *crónicas* tienen un valor testimonial. Que, de cierta manera difusa, recogen – de manera caótica – aspectos de nuestra vida diarias que no están, no podrían estarlo, contenidos en las frías cifras del Departamento de inmigración, o en los documentos o estadísticas de las oficinas de Asuntos Étnicos’ (p. 5).

articulate and reflect upon the migration experience. Both for the writer and the readers, as they become ‘co-authors’ along the dialogic ethnographic journey (Pavlidis, 2013). Many of the *crónicas* are introduced by the author as events he witnessed, events that a good friend had relayed to him, or even some that he personally experienced. These settings of the *crónicas* further add to the notion that these stories reflect upon identity and belonging within the community. This point is further expressed in the preface:

this first selection of works from the “*Blady Woggie*” is nourished by emotions and reflections. It is not intended to be a selection of the best *crónicas* in over a decade, but rather representative of the search for an identity, for all those hopeful souls whom life has displaced from their environment and centre (p. 5).<sup>3</sup>

Within the *crónicas* that have been chosen for the collection, Abarca emphasises here that the exploration of identity is a central concern of the texts, and their reflections upon the migration experience are more important than the way that they fit into a broader literary tradition. As he mentions, this is vital to individuals that have been uprooted and for those who ‘sit in-between many cultures’ (p. 5),<sup>4</sup> forging deeply emotional journeys. The search becomes a negotiation of cultures, creating hybridised understandings and identities for individuals displaced and exiled, longing for a return to their homeland.

In his opening Abarca also explains the use of his pseudonym, ‘*Blady Woggie*’:

“*Blady Woggie*” is an expression that can be used in a thousand ways, from its most aggressive connotations, to its most friendly and fraternal. With this pseudonym, the author finds an ironic approach, loving and laughing at the

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<sup>3</sup> ‘esta primera selección de escritos del “*Blady Woggie*” se nutre de emociones y reflexiones. Y pretende ser no una selección de las mejores *crónicas* en más de una década, sino representativa de la búsqueda de una identidad, de todos esos seres esperanzados, a quienes la vida los desplazó de su medio y de su eje’ (p. 5).

<sup>4</sup> ‘sentado a medio filo entre varias culturas ...’ (p. 5).

problem. Because humour and irony are the basic ingredients of these works (p. 5).<sup>5</sup>

Abarca's pseudonym represents the ambivalence of Australian multicultural society that is both accepting and hostile towards ethnic minority groups. The label of 'wog' acts as a tolerating force—limited and exercised only by the dominant group upon individuals and groups considered ethnically inferior. Abarca also describes the label as a 'contemptuous and generic name' (p. 5),<sup>6</sup> demonstrating the imposition by the dominant centre of essentialising and demeaning characteristics upon minority groups as wholly inferior. By utilising the words 'bloody' and 'wog', Abarca is appropriating language from the centre to challenge its authority by delegitimising the phrase, in the kind of strategy that has been described by Corkhill (1994) and Gunew (1994) in other migrant literature. From this marginal position, as exile and member of an ethnic minority group, Abarca is able to challenge essentialist views of culture imposed by the official discourse of multiculturalism negotiating between different cultures through the narratives expressed in his *crónicas*.

The theme of exile has a strong presence within the *crónica* entitled "Continuity in the parks", as it describes a Latin American migrant's fascination with Sydney's parks. He discovers them by endlessly walking through the city. He elucidates his attraction:

through this prowling and contemplative activity, the thing that causes me most pleasure, is staying for long periods of time, solitary, silent and absorbed, enjoying the charm that flows from the parks of this city. Especially in the evening, when they are

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<sup>5</sup> "“Blady Woggie” es una expresión que podría ser utilizada de mil formas, desde sus connotaciones más agresivas hasta las más amistosas y fraternales. El autor buscó con tal seudónimo, una aproximación irónica, amable y sonriente al problema. Porque el humor y la ironía son ingredientes básicos de sus escritos' (p.5).

<sup>6</sup> 'denominación despectiva y genérica' (p. 5).

empty and in semi-darkness, they express something indefinable, that displaces for a few moments my usual hard, rational and practical self (p. 60).<sup>7</sup>

Although he enjoys the grandeur of Sydney's prized parks, he is more preoccupied with many of the smaller community parks that he discovers. Importantly, he is drawn to the abundance of children's playgrounds. The narrator is quick to reflect upon the absence of such play equipment around the world and especially in his home country of Chile. Although there are a few, they are reserved only for the exclusive affluent neighbourhoods of the city. The rest of the city's children pass the time playing *fútbol* in the street, hanging off shuttle buses, riding old bicycles or making small sailing boats. They would make these boats so they could race them down the channel of water that circles the city of Santiago, *La Zanjón de la Aguada*. They would sometimes discover corpses floating in these muddy waters. Such nostalgic reflections, poignantly suggest the economic and political state of his country and the class disparity that has taken hold. The finding of rotten corpses symbolises the decay of the state, and the political ruin that has marked Latin American countries, signified by gross inequality and the destruction of democracy, solidified with the rising of right-wing dictatorships across the region.

Reflecting upon the state of affairs in his home country reveals the reason why he develops this passion for the city's parks, developing it into an artistic hobby, sketching all those he has visited. He has familiarised himself with the ease with which they were constructed and discovers that only a few logs of timber are needed to create a play structure. This information is important for him to acquire so that when the time comes and he is able to return back to his country, they can be built there:

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<sup>7</sup> 'en esa actividad, merodeadora y contemplativa, una de las cosas que más agrado me causa, es quedarme largos momentos, solitario, silencioso y absorto, disfrutando los encantos que fluyen de los parques de esta ciudad. Especialmente al atardecer, cuando ya vacíos y en semipenumbras, expresan algo indefinible, que desplaza por unos momentos, a ese ser práctico, racional y duro que suelo ser' (p. 60).

in those fields without barbed wired fences, without stupid signs and prohibitions like there are today, we are going to need to build these parks for children ... And we're going to build parks where children play and train their bodies and souls, preparing their spirits for the difficulties of adulthood (p. 62).<sup>8</sup>

His desire to replicate these children's playgrounds and create a continuity of these parks in his homeland is a constant thought in his mind, representing a general shift he feels is needed in the country. A need to build the state from the ground up to construct a solid, democratic foundation. The narrator believes that 'the day will come, that after a simple agronomical study, the firmest grass that will adapt the best to the quality of our soil will be determined' (p. 62).<sup>9</sup> The metaphor demonstrates his belief in the need for a solid foundation for a stable society, which fosters the freedom and curiosity within its future generations. And, that each country has specific needs and individuality that will determine their transition to the re-establishment of democracy. The longevity of democratic societies depends upon this.

The narrator throughout the story has a fixation on his native lands, including the problems that have caused its decay and their possible solutions, which is indicative of the state of exile. As the story progresses his discussion of parks in Australia represents his thoughts of Chile and the two become indistinguishable, demonstrating how:

for an exile, habits of life, expression, or activity in the new environment inevitably occur against the memory of these things in another environment.

Thus both the new and the old environment are vivid, actual, occurring together contrapuntally (Said, 2001, p. 178).

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<sup>8</sup> *'en esos prados ya sin alambres de púas, sin cartelitos y prohibiciones estúpidas como hoy, vamos a necesitar ideas para construir esos parques infantiles ... Y vamos a construir parques donde ellos juegan, adiestran el cuerpo y el alma, y preparan su espíritu para su duro mañana como adultos'* (p. 62).

<sup>9</sup> *'va a llegar el día, en que tras un sencillo estudio agronómico, se podrá determinar que [sic] tipo de pasto firme se adopta mejor a la calidad de nuestro suelo'* (p. 62).

The passion that he has for these two countries is symptomatic of the state of exile, as outlined in chapter one (McClennen, 2004; Said, 2001). Abarca expresses early in the *crónica* that an individual who spends their time wandering the city late at night, is usually depicted as a suspicious character, and a cause of concern for state authorities in science fiction novels. The narrator makes the allusion to the character of Clarisse in Ray Bradbury's dystopian novel *Fahrenheit 451*. She is a lonely wanderer who does not conform to the status quo of driving everywhere, labelled a '*rasca*' or 'inferior', and dangerous to society. This allusion to outsider status at the onset of the *crónica* frames it as an exilic tale, and his preoccupation with the political and economic turmoil of his country throughout the story is further suggestive of this exiled state of mind. This position and a detailed critique of the dictatorship he fled are expounded further in the *crónica* entitled "*En Chile hay tantos Septiembres!*" ("In Chile there are many Septembers!"). Within this *crónica*, Abarca outlines the importance of the month of September in Chilean political history, up until the momentous execution of Salvador Allende on September the 11<sup>th</sup>, 1973.

The title, "Continuity in the parks", plays on the title of Julio Cortázar's well-known short story "*Continuidad de los parques*", ["Continuity of the parks"]. In this story a male protagonist sits in his green velvet chair reading the tale of a marital affair that turns bloody, as the wife and her extramarital partner plot her husband's death. The husband within the story becomes the same man who is sitting in his green velvet chair as both stories merge into one. This allusion to Cortázar's writing further demonstrates the double nature of Abarca's *crónica*, and its contrapuntal nature, as he blends both the Chilean and the Australian environments into one. The tale ends as it began, in a similar manner to that of Cortázar's story:

so there, maybe, a man now much older, arrives at them, walking as dogs do, on foot as usual. And again he stays for long periods of time, solitary, silent and absorbed, enjoying the charm that flows from them, especially in the evening, when they are empty and in semi-darkness, as they express that indefinable and

mysterious something. And maybe that man will again feel a little more reconciled with his existence (p. 62).<sup>10</sup>

The man is wandering through Santiago and enjoying the solitude of the new parks of a new city, free from political turmoil and social inequality. This time though, the man is no longer displaced from his rational self, he is now reconciled with his existence. The longing of return is finally achieved but only in his imagination and demonstrates how for the exiled writer the ‘only home, truly available ... though fragile and vulnerable, is in his writing’ (Said, 2001, p. 177). The narrator shares this dual nature with those migrants whom have also been displaced, albeit voluntarily (Corkhill, 1994; McClennen, 2004), and both their individuality and complexity become homogenously marginalised within the binaries of Australian multicultural society.

Abarca critiques this ambivalence of Australian society in the *crónica*, “The prayer of the show-off migrant”. The text is a short satirical piece that draws attention to the shortcomings of community leadership. It is written as an earnest prayer from a migrant seeking recognition within their ethnic community, the petition begins:

Holy Lord who art in heaven. To you I give my body and soul. I ask of you to please make me distinguished throughout our community. Please let them speak of me. That they may criticise me, that they be jealous of me, that they hate me, whatever it is, as long as they speak of me. Whatever it is, I will withstand it, except being unknown or ignored by them (p. 63).<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> ‘*entonces allí, quizás, un hombre ya mucho más viejo, llegue a ellos, caminando como los perros, a pata como siempre. Y se quede nuevamente largos momentos, solitario, silencioso y absorto, disfrutando de ese encanto que fluye de ellos, especialmente al atardecer, cuando vacíos y en semipenumbras, expresen ese algo indefinible y misterioso. Y ese hombre, tal vez, de nuevo, se sienta un poco más reconciliado con la existencia*’ (p. 62).

<sup>11</sup> ‘*Santo Señor que estás en los Cielos. A ti me encomiendo en cuerpo y alma. Por favor te lo pido, hazme conocido en toda nuestra comunidad. Que se hable de mí, por favorcito te lo pido. Que me critiquen, que me envidien, que me odien, lo que sea, pero que hablen. Cualquier cosa, todo lo resistiré, menos que me desconozcan o me ignoren*’ (p. 63).



This sarcastic plea articulates the narrator's supposed desires of becoming a prominent community leader, someone selfishly visible in the community who is able to unite it. They dream of being a distinguished figure in the Spanish-speaking community so that they may be influential within it. This influence, they believe, will gain them access to Australian political society, allowing them to be introduced to respected Australian leaders as a representative of the South American community through official multicultural boards.

The migrant's aspiration to represent the community can be seen as a product of the imposition of essentialist characteristics. In this way, Australian multicultural ambivalence only accepts diverse ethnicities that have been reduced to celebrations of dance and costume (Gunew, 1994; Hage, 1998). The need to exaggerate the enriching nature of the ethnic community, on these terms, is presented in Abarca's text, becoming a vital component in the way the individual envisages their role in involving the Latin American community within Australian society. Ponchos, flamenco, tango and castanets, are only some of the components he lists, become reifying tools in this process of becoming an ethnic community leader. This produces a colourful ethnic minority group that can be simultaneously encouraged and contained, by maintaining it as ethnically exotic and inferior (Ang, 2001; Ang & Stratton, 1998).

The *crónica's* cynical nature, consequently, becomes a criticism of community leadership within the multicultural Australian context. A well-respected journalist within the Latin American community, having worked as a journalist for SBS and for various Spanish language newspapers, Abarca would have experienced some judgement regarding his highly visible position in the community. The irreverence of the text could have been a reaction to such negativity, or, written in response to questionable motives of other community leaders, whom sought only to distinguish themselves at the expense of the true needs of the community. This can be contextualised within the work of Antonio Gramsci, as traditional intellectuals do not undermine cultural hegemony, because they form part of it. Whereas, the organic

intellectual struggles against it, speaking from their position outside of such traditions without seeking notoriety (Petras, 1990). Gramscian thought has been profoundly influential across Latin America (Burgos & Pérez, 2002), and during the time of Abarca's writing, organic intellectuals were repressed throughout the region, as right-wing dictatorships enforced their expulsions (Petras, 1990), signified in the third wave of Chilean migration to Australia. The self-interested motives of community leaders, critiqued by the narrator, reveals how such leaders align with the cultural centre—the traditional intellectual—and do not struggle against the cultural boundaries imposed upon ethnic minority groups through multicultural discourse. This undermines the richness and complexity of the community, which is often reflected in literature, highlighting ways Australian society actively sought to repress both organic ethnic leadership and authorship. The narrator facetiously suggests that the ability of creative writing to develop broader understandings of community experiences, has been undermined by those who only use it as a vehicle to espouse essentialist characteristics for self-recognition.

The *crónica* concludes with the narrator pleading for what could be considered the pinnacle of ambivalent multicultural recognition:

allow me to organise the Great Reunion of Hispanic Culture. So that I can invite Al Grassby. So that he can admire my capacity to convene. Let the teachers and the artists come. The newsreaders and the actresses. The journalists and the dancers ... On the Day of Our Glorious National Celebrations (p. 65).<sup>12</sup>

Here, the migrant wishes to garner the attention of the then Federal minister for Immigration, Albert Jaime Grassby (Al Grassby)—considered the father of Australian multiculturalism (MacCullum, 2005)—by hosting reified cultural events that draw together the visible and

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<sup>12</sup> 'permíteme organizar el Gran Reencuentro de la Cultura Hispánica. Para poder invitar a Al Grassby. Para que admire mi capacidad convocatoria. Y que vengan las maestras y los artistas. Los locutores y las actrices. Los periodistas y los danzadores [sic] ... En el Día de Nuestras Gloriosas Fiestas Patrias' (p. 65).

enriching aspects of Latin American culture. Al Grassby was the most visible and vocal supporter of multiculturalism of the time, and his rhetoric ‘suggested that Australians could make use of the rich diversity of their many cultures without losing the country’s overall unity’ (Burke, 2002, p. 63). The colourful celebrations that Abarca writes about, which further marginalise the community for personal exposure, highlight community concerns of such leadership, which may have been mirrored in the leadership of Al Grassby. The narrator emphasises how the community was accepted for its *usefulness*, by encouraging its exoticism and ethnic inferiority. In doing so, the ethnic community is kept from challenging the cultural hegemony espoused by Australian multiculturalism, by limiting the recognition of their complex and challenging literary and artistic endeavours.

Another *crónica* in the collection that explores this ambivalence is entitled “*Espikin Inglich*”, a play on the phrase “Speaking English”, as that is how it would sound if it were said in stereotypical Latin American accented English. The title introduces the theme of miscommunication that is often a feature of the everyday lives of migrants who have limited language skills. The text adopts a conversational style to express the numerous occurrences of miscommunication that the narrator has heard from fellow community members. The general expectation created within the *crónica* is that the stories will conclude happily, and the one that does not, demonstrates the discriminatory nature of miscommunication. The anecdote is of an old Latin American migrant lady, catching a bus and trying to purchase a ticket:

Where do you go? – asked the driver

Yes – she answered timidly

Where do you go? – this time angrily raising his voice

Yes – she answered again, smiling confusedly.

Where do you go!! – this time violently screaming with hatred in his voice (p. 99).<sup>13</sup>

He then forcefully grabs her money and almost throws her change back at her, charging her for the most expensive ticket possible. The woman is visibly upset as she has been humiliated in front of a bus full of passengers for her lack of English. The narrator suggests that the brutality displayed by the bus driver is due to a lack of education within Australian society about its diverse population.

The discussion of miscommunication and education in the *crónica* has arisen from the narrator's viewing of the British television programme, *Mind Your Language*. The narrator expresses his approval of the programme because of its ability to educate audiences to the everyday hardship of migrants who lack the relevant language skills. This is important as the narrator believes that discrimination and racism are products of a lack of such an education. The occurrences of miscommunication told before this sombre tale, create a better understanding of cultural difference for the migrant. These stories show how miscommunication has allowed migrants to learn more about Australian society and about themselves. Yet, the individuals from whom they learn exhibit a colder approach, portraying a lack of interest and indifference. These individuals, represent the ambivalence of Australian multicultural society as they show no desire to understand the complexity of the migrant experience, as they are only interested in their displays of enriching and exotic cultural traits, as described in the previous *crónica* (Ang, 2001; Hage, 1998). It demonstrates how, for the exile, because they have been persecuted for their use of language, as have the migrants in the

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<sup>13</sup> 'Where do you go? – *le preguntó el chofer*

Yes – *contestó ella con timidez*

Where do you go? – *esta vez enojado, levantando la voz*

Yes – *contestó ella nuevamente, sonriendo confundida*

Where do you go!! – *esta vez con odio, gritando violentamente*' (p. 99).

story, see language as ‘both a source of power and pain’ (McClennen, 2004, p. 3). Through the story, the narrator identifies the power of language in education and the pain it can cause in situations of miscommunication. Developing honest cultural exchanges would lead to less ethnic discrimination and truly inclusive practices, however, such processes can only be achieved when those considered to be culturally inferior are engaged through language.

The *crónica* “Cleaners with pseudonyms” further engages with the concept of ambivalence. It is a humorous account of a group of Latin American migrants who work second jobs as cleaners in a York Street office building in the CBD to pay off debts, finance trips back to South America and pay for family reunions. As the jobs were short term, the men would provide false names to save on paying the full taxation rate. Since all the men worked under false identities they would creatively select pseudonyms, providing an outlet for their imaginations. The narrator explains that all the workers at this site had provided their boss with names of famous Latin American icons. Famous *fútbol* players’ names were most popular, and, reflecting Abarca’s opposition to the Chilean dictatorship, the man who cleaned the toilets was cheekily named Augusto Pinochet. These names gave these men a little extra motivation:

it was a name that inspired him. As he was being towed along by his mop, withered, unhappy and sleepy, dragging his feet, he would nevertheless race to complete a task his boss would call out at him when he heard “Hey Leonel” because of the pleasure it gave him (p. 10).<sup>14</sup>

In this particular case Leonel was the name of this gentleman's favourite soccer player, Leonel Sánchez, a crucial player in the successful campaign of the Chilean soccer team in the 1962

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<sup>14</sup> ‘era un nombre que lo inspiraba. Allí andaba mi amigo, lacio y decaído, adormilado con el ‘mopo’ a remolque, arrastrando los pies por el suelo. Sin embargo, bastaba que el ‘boss’ lo llamara, - ¡Ey, Leonel, come here! - para que llegara a volar a hacer el mandado, de puro gusto que le daba’ (p.10).

World Cup, hosted in Chile. Using this pseudonym would conjure up nostalgic emotions and affection for his homeland, as well as allowing him and others to imagine different possibilities:

by calling themselves Julio Iglesias one week; Diego Maradona the next, and the following, Marcial Lafuente Estefanía, they were able to cover all their interests: artistic, sporting and intellectual (p. 12).<sup>15</sup>

This arrangement of false names not only benefited the migrants as they paid less tax, but it also benefited the contractors for whom they worked, so it was alleged by their union officials, who were always after them for not paying their union fees. Unpaid union fees, coupled with a growing interest from taxation officials to correct the fraud, led to constant harassment of the cleaners. Raids became common place in the building, coordinated by taxation officials and used by union officials to force the cleaners to pay their annual union fees in full. In what appeared like ‘a war-on-drugs ambush in Medellin, shoot first and ask later’ (p. 11),<sup>16</sup> the taxation officials antagonistically cross-examined the migrants. Therefore, every two to three weeks these migrant cleaners would change jobs using new pseudonyms. Even though this caused them great anxiety, they had no other choice as financial pressures dictated they did so. On one night, the tax inspectors and union officials, with perfected ambush skills, cornered several cleaners and began to chase them throughout the building. One cleaner named ‘Julio Iglesias’ ran up to the terrace of the building, leading the inspectors astray. To their dismay, his name was indeed ‘Julio Iglesias’, as proved by his documentation. The only reason that he fled the scene was so that his colleagues could escape.

The names these migrants gave to themselves could represent the dreams that they would have had as part of their migration experience, and their aspirations of achieving a better

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<sup>15</sup> ‘así llamándose una semana Julio Iglesias; a la semana siguiente, Diego Maradona, y la subsiguiente, Marcial Lafuente Estefanía, satisfacían todas sus inquietudes: las artísticas, las deportivas y las intelectuales’ (p. 15).

<sup>16</sup> ‘los policías de Medellín, en una operación de anti-drogas, [d]isparen primero, y hagan preguntas después’ (p. 11).

quality of life. Dreams that had not been realised due to ambivalent attitudes within the community as demonstrated in their work as menial labourers. Although many of these workers would have been skilled and been qualified professionals in their home countries, they experienced discrimination, as reflected in their job opportunities. They were included in the labour force, nevertheless, excluded from any advantageous job prospects, reflecting society's ambivalence, as their acceptance only served to further marginalise them. As Corkhill (1994) states:

those immigrants who worked as factory labourers became themselves, in a sense the pawns of capitalism ... they were compelled to sacrifice the sanctity of culture, language and territory to the greed of the imperial powers (p. 9).

Papastergiadis (2009) encapsulates the discrimination these migrants experienced in this initial managerial phase of multiculturalism with the term 'wog/cogs', exemplifying their exploited position as part of the capitalist machine of society. These forces of domination are demonstrated in the way that their bosses and their cleaning contractors unashamedly exploited them and used their situation to their advantage, whilst seemingly assisting them in paying less tax. This is also true for the union officials who appeared to help expose this arrangement whilst forming part of it themselves. The unionists opportunistically helped themselves to the constant stream of new union members, yet flagged the fraud in order to obtain payments. The hostility with which the migrants are pursued is indicative of their experience in the wider community, epitomised in the unnecessarily forceful approach of the taxation officials. The government representatives throughout the *crónica* are ill-equipped to communicate with the migrants, exacerbated by their discriminatory and antagonistic behaviour. All three levels of administration are in collusion to ensure that the cleaners remain marginalised. This story exemplifies the ambivalent toleration of the official discourse of multicultural Australia given to those at the periphery (Ang, 2001; Ang & Stratton, 1998; Hage, 1998). Nevertheless, the strategy implemented by the cleaners to evade being caught is representative of the way these

*crónicas*, and ethnic minority literature more broadly, can serve to undermine the authority of the cultural centre by producing alternate histories of belonging, as discussed in chapter one.

The following *crónica*, entitled “Incident on a bus”, continues to explore the theme of ambivalence and also engages with those of exile and hybridity. It is the story of a man who has an epileptic episode on a crowded bus during peak hour traffic. The narrator and another female passenger are the only two people to help the man and both are South American migrants. They do all they can until the bus driver is alerted and an ambulance is called. The man is then taken into the care of paramedics. The South American man returns to the bus which is now filled with an awkward sensation, a mix of ‘shame, indifference and confusion’ (p. 27).<sup>17</sup> This incident forces the narrator to reflect upon his new society as he imagines how a similar incident would have unfolded in his native country of Chile:

my uneasiness must have had its roots in the fact that I have never had a vision as clear and as pathetic of the loneliness that we human beings live in, in such a rich country. The lack of warmth confirms how compassion and solidarity don’t grow spontaneously and collectively, the way they do in poorer regions of the world (p. 28).<sup>18</sup>

The narrator then outlines how this same situation would have unfolded in Chile. His imaginary story would have been resolved with the bus full of passengers taking the sick man to the hospital themselves after they had done all they could to help him, as though he were a family member:

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<sup>17</sup> ‘vergüenza, la indiferencia y la confusión’ (p. 27).

<sup>18</sup> ‘mi desasosiego debe haber tenido su origen en que nunca tuve una visión más clara y más patética de la soledad en que vivimos los seres humanos en este rico país. En la falta de calor. En comprobar como la compasión y la solidaridad no brotan, espontánea y colectivamente, como sucede en otras partes, en el mundo de los países más pobres’ (p. 28).



and there they would leave him, but they would stay and wait, now that the sick man was theirs and nobody else's. They would feel the need to wait for him, take care of him, attend to him, raise his spirits and know how he was getting along (p. 28).<sup>19</sup>

In contrast, what the narrator witnesses on the bus, is very different:

and there the sick man stayed. There was something grotesque, almost surreal in the figure of that sick man sitting alone in the chair, in the middle of the sidewalk, vacantly staring, lost in the distance (p. 27).<sup>20</sup>

The sick man is characteristic of the isolation that the narrator feels as a migrant in Australia. He is disconnected from the wider Australian community as he is not fully granted access to it. The ambivalence of Australian multiculturalism accepts him yet, maintains him as marginal. The despair of the patient causes the narrator to reflect upon his own isolation as a migrant in Australia, which he also believes is shared by all individuals in advanced economies, and is symptomatic of capitalist prosperity. He feels that Australia is an individualistic society, lacking in compassion and strong community sentiment, whereas he considers his home country to be collectivist. This emphasis on collectivism is revealed in the way he imagines the unfolding of events where the group of passengers place the needs of the patient above their own. These principles of collectivism are also evident in the story, “Cleaners with pseudonyms”, whereupon the individual places the needs of the group above his own, putting himself at risk of being reprimanded for his actions in order to spare others in the group from punishment. As presented in the first chapter, this privileging of the collective over the individual is reflected in research conducted within Latin American communities in Australia,

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<sup>19</sup> ‘y ahí lo dejan, pero no se van. Se quedan a esperar, ya que el enfermo es de ellos y de nadie más. Hay que esperarlo, cuidarlo, atenderlo, darle ánimos, saber cómo sigue’ (p. 28).

<sup>20</sup> ‘y allí abajo quedó el enfermo. Había algo grotesco, casi surrealista, en la figura de ese hombre enfermo sentado en la silla ésa, solo en medio de la acera, la mirada perdida en la distancia o en el vacío’ (p. 27).

which is indicative in research of Latin American countries and cultures more broadly (Hofstede, 1980; López, 2005; Torezani, 2005; Triandis et. al, 1986; Zevallos, 2008).

Emphasis on individualism in Australian society is understood by the narrator as a ‘culture and an appreciation for things, that is different. Not better or worse. Just, different. Devastatingly different’ (p. 29).<sup>21</sup> He is cautious not to judge the individualist nature of Australian society by emphasising that it is merely different, as he sees it as both positive and negative. By stressing that it is neither better nor worse, he reveals his ambivalence towards Australian society and a new understanding of his new environment, as he states that all those involved ‘adhered strictly to the rules. That I don’t doubt’ (p. 27).<sup>22</sup> This suggests that he acknowledges the new cultural codes to which he is now subject to and apart of, indicating some level of adaptation and a hybrid understanding of his new environment.

An illustration of the dual nature of the exile is also depicted in the story, similar to its portrayal in the story, “Continuity in the parks”. His contrapuntal thought process is evident as the situation unfolds, he imagines it taking place in his homeland, experiencing it both in his new and old environments (Corkhill, 1994; Said, 2001). Exiles often have an ‘exaggerated sense of group solidarity’ (Said, 2001, p. 181), which can be an undesirable characteristic, as it may create similar exclusions and generalisations to those that are imposed on the exiled ethnic minority. The imagined story in the *crónica* evinces this exaggerated communal sentiment of the exile, and is addressed when the narrator asks: ‘have I exaggerated? Have I looked at my people with excessive nostalgia? Am I idealising them? I don’t think so’ (p. 29).<sup>23</sup> His reflection concludes that he has not engaged in such exaggeration, yet, it is clear that he has. By exaggerating, he has been able to subtly challenge the centre from his marginal position, by

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<sup>21</sup> ‘cultura y una apreciación de las cosas, diferente. No digo mejor ni peor. Tan solo, diferente. Desoladoramente diferente’ (p. 29).

<sup>22</sup> ‘ciñeron estrictamente al reglamento. De eso no tengo duda’ (p. 27).

<sup>23</sup> ‘¿He exagerado? ¿He mirado mis gentes y mi tierra con una excesiva nostalgia? ¿Los estoy idealizando? Creo que no’ (p. 29).

exposing the flaws and amplifying what he perceives are the faults of the dominant culture, through hyperbolising the advantages of his own.

“Granny is coming to visit!”, the first *crónica* of a two-part story, advances the critique of multiculturalism. The story of a family reunion, Crispín and Anita bring Anita’s mother to Australia from Chile. The *crónica* explores the decision-making process in facilitating her journey, the long wait for her to arrive, the anxiety of distance and her eventual arrival at the airport. The grandmother arrives in Australia with predetermined ideas of what life would be like, most importantly, the prosperous economic conditions that it provides its residents. Once she touches down and makes it through Customs, after they confiscate a pantry’s worth of groceries from her, they make their way to the family car and Anita’s mother states:

“is this the family car?” – Crispín overheard his old mother-in-law ask a little dryly with a patronising tone that hurt him deeply. Without lifting his head, and whilst packing suitcase after suitcase, bag after bag in the boot of the car, he heard his wife explain how reliable the old Holden had been for the three years since they had bought it (p.40).<sup>24</sup>

The grandmother then reveals the reason for her dismay:

back home in Chile people said that everyone had two or even up to three cars, the latest luxury model cars ... And that old cars were discarded ... (p. 40).<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> “¿y este es el auto de ustedes?” – escuchó [Crispín] que la suegra preguntaba [a Anita], un tanto secamente. Había un tonito despectivo en la voz de la anciana que hirió profundamente a Crispín. Sin levantar la cabeza, y mientras metía maleta tras maleta y bolsa tras bolsa en la maletera del auto, escuchó que su mujer le explicaba lo bueno y noble que les había salido el viejo Holden comprado hace tres años’ (p. 40).

<sup>25</sup> ‘allá en Chile decían que en todas las casas, la gente tenía dos y hasta tres autos, de lujo y último modelo ... Y que los autos viejos, los botaban ...’ (p. 40).

The *crónica* concludes with a description of Crispín's reaction to these unrealistic thoughts that have unsettled him: 'the talk about new cars, had hurt him to the core' (p. 40),<sup>26</sup> Crispín ultimately labels her thoughts as crazy.

Anita's mother arrives in Australia expecting that her daughter's family would have been living an affluent existence because of the information she was given. Her expectations would have paralleled those that Anita and Crispín initially had when they migrated to Australia. As migrants, they would have anticipated that their economic situation would improve, however, the opposite may have been true as they faced discrimination in the labour market, as explored in previous stories. This displays the ambivalent nature of Australian society which kept ethnic minority groups 'generally powerless, impoverished and excluded from the centre, the site of authority, wealth and decision-making' (Corkhill, 1994, p. 9). The dreams and marginalisation of these characters parallel those expressed by the "Cleaners with pseudonyms". Although the Australia that Anita and Crispín migrated to was a prosperous nation, their limited inclusion within its economic structures kept them at the periphery of society. Anita's mother serves as a reminder of their exclusion from mainstream Australian society and Crispín's self-perceived failure as the provider of the family. Crispín's self-doubt and inner criticisms are articulated in the thoughts of his mother-in-law. Crispín's mother-in-law remains nameless throughout the entire story, further strengthening the idea that her views are in fact the views that both Anita and Crispín have of themselves due to the marginalising pressures of Australian society.

The second *crónica* in this two-part story, "Tourist mother-in-laws", portrays Anita's mother as adapting in-between cultures, typifying cultural hybridity. The *crónica* continues from where the other left off, and once they are all in the car they spend the rest of the day sight-seeing around Sydney. Whilst touring Sydney's major attractions, Anita's mother compares the

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<sup>26</sup> 'esto de los autos nuevos, le había dolido hasta el alma' (p. 40).

sites to similar sites in Chile, finding them inferior, setting the scene for extended negative feelings. After a couple of days she begins to miss her garden, animals, family and friends that she had left behind in Chile. Because of this, she begins to phone home regularly, which becomes expensive and is cause for tension between her, Anita and Crispín. She continuously fights with her grandchildren as they only speak English at home and she feels as though they purposely speak English in the house in order to exclude her. Her grandchildren dismiss her repeated requests for translations, just as they dismiss her traditional Chilean cooking and regularly call her an 'old bag', characterising the tensions between migrant groups and mainstream Australian society.

Within two months Anita's mother returns to Chile, yet finds herself missing Australia. Back in her village, she describes her trip as the best thing that ever happened to her. This is the beginning of her short return as she begins to aggrieve her relatives when she compares her Australian grandchildren with her Chilean grandchildren. She states that her grandchildren in Australia knew how to behave themselves whereas those in Chile were 'dirty, skinny urchins' (p. 57).<sup>27</sup> Realising she was too old to take care of her animals and tend to her garden, she sold her house and moved to Australia, arriving as a permanent resident and in receipt of a government pension, organised by Crispín, which she saved religiously. She would enjoy her time for a while until tensions arose again, and she would withdraw some of her savings and return to Chile. Later arriving back in Australia content, filled with stories from Chile. In twelve years she made the journey six or seven times which was made easy by her dual citizenship. By the time she returned to Australia her last time, she was no longer that bitter old lady she was the first time she arrived:

she is a total character. She has turned herself into a perfect example of a grandmother-in-law, professional-tourist. Out of all the family her learning curve and transformation

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<sup>27</sup> '*huachos flacuchentos y mugrientos*' (p.57).

have been the most successful. Because from that timid frightened old lady who travelled on her first trip dying of nerves with a basket hanging from her arm, to the elegant sophisticated woman that now travels every year, there is a world of difference (p. 58).<sup>28</sup>

Anita's grandmother exemplifies the migrant experience. At first she is a newcomer and unaware of her surroundings and feels antagonised by a society that does not understand her, and that she equally does not understand. From these uncertain beginnings she cultivates a positive position from which she is able to move about and live her life with confidence in her new country. She learns the language and establishes social networks. Nevertheless, she consistently travels to Chile and back again as family tensions that are representative of societal tensions, never fully erode. When they become overwhelming she leaves. The character's constant travel between her native and adopted countries is representative of the in-betweenness that migration creates. Migrants can feel as though they do not belong completely to the country that they have settled in, as society continuously and ambivalently accepts yet distances them from the centre. They may also feel like an outsider in their home countries once they have returned, as they have become accustomed to new and different lifestyles, cultures and practices. This unease in both societies was displayed through the grandmother's critique of her grandchildren, in Chile they lacked discipline and order and in Australia they lacked tradition. These criticisms are aimed more appropriately at the country in which they were being raised. Although her criticisms and the antagonism she felt remained, she nevertheless adapted to her new environment and created hybrid cultural understandings. This demonstrates how cultural hybridity does not remove these boundaries, but renegotiates them, creating counter belongings within these 'fuzzy' binaries (Papastergiadis, 2010, p. 252). Her in-betweenness and continuous

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<sup>28</sup> *'es todo un personaje. Y se ha convertido en ejemplo perfecto de la abuela-suegra, turista-profesional. De toda la familia es quien hizo mejor su aprendizaje y transformación. Porque de esa viejita tímida y asustadiza que hizo su primer viaje muerta de nervios y con su canasto colgado del brazo, a la dama elegante y sofisticada que ahora viaja todos los años, hay un mundo de diferencia. Sus nietos la llaman la "jet-set Old-bag"'* (p. 58).

cultural exchange is representative of the constant process of hybridity. This may also create an impossible return home as what she desires to return to is no longer accessible, as migrants in some measure, ‘can never return to the place they have left. All attempts to recreate the original home will expose some new gaps and tensions’ (Papastergiadis, 2010, p. 259). Although hybridity can counter homogenous narratives of belonging, it does not produce a balance between the binaries, as the tensions they create remain. Consequently, hybrid spaces are ‘frontier zones’ (Papastergiadis, 2010, p. 259), constantly exchanging and struggling against pure ideals of belonging.

As migration is a catalyst for cultural hybridity it also allows for a negotiation of gender roles as the traditional family unit is impacted upon and influenced by the new society. As outlined in chapter one, discrimination and ambivalence of minority groups by the dominant culture can influence the way both masculinities and femininities are expressed. The *crónica* entitled, “Hey darling, why don’t you teach me how to drive?” deals explicitly with the shifting nature of gender roles within Latin American migrant families. The story centres on the Chilean couple, Bartolo and Rosita. After saving enough money they fulfil Bartolo’s dream of owning a car, despite Rosita’s opposition to the purchase. Nonetheless, the benefits of owning the car only flow on to Bartolo and Rosita is left wanting. Therefore, she decides to learn how to drive, and the couple go and obtain Rosita a learners’ permit:

she returned beaming with joy. She stared and stared, without tiring, at the little squares with large L’s printed on them in bold black type. She repeated to herself endlessly, “Oh my God, I’m going to learn how to drive!” (p. 19).<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> ‘venía radiante. Miraba y miraba, sin cansarse, los cartoncitos amarillos con la enorme letra L impresa en gruesos caracteres negros. Se repetía una y otra vez, casi sin creerlo: “¡Dios mío, voy a aprender a manejar!”’ (p. 19).

It is obvious here that Rosita understands how this could change many things in her life. Most importantly, she will have the freedom to attend to the family and to her own needs as she pleases, without having to wait countless hours for public transport or for her husband to drive her. Enjoying similar freedoms to those Bartolo receives from driving and being the head of the house, as a result, she may advance her social life as it will afford her more spare time. Bartolo also understands these implications and becomes afraid of what it might mean for their relationship and how it could change Rosita's role. Bartolo's fear of these possibilities leads him to prevent Rosita from learning how to drive. After many weeks of obstructive tactics, Rosita is finally given a lesson by Bartolo. The lesson is a terrible experience for Rosita, as she is rendered incapable of concentrating after receiving a barrage of insults from Bartolo. Emotionally distraught, Rosita finally gives up.

Rosita arrives at the realisation that her husband will never teach her how to drive and in turn will attempt to keep her housebound. During the driving lesson, her husband realises that he could be losing control over her, and that their gender roles within the family were shifting when:

without stopping his abuse, and finally discharging what he had been waiting a long time to release, Bartolo turned, and slapped the little boy on the face, with all the rage in the world (p. 23).<sup>30</sup>

The anger which has been gathering in Bartolo erupts, due to Rosita's desire to drive. The outburst is exacerbated because arguably, Rosita had been the force behind their successful settlement in Australia. She was first to be employed, and due to this, they were able to purchase the car and move out of their hostel, into an apartment. Her employment made her the sole breadwinner, whereas Bartolo was unable to keep a steady job, leaving Rosita to pay for the car

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<sup>30</sup> *'sin dejar de maldecir y como haciendo algo que hubiera estado esperando hacer por largo rato, Bartolo giró, y le acertó al pequeñito un manazo en el rostro, que llevaba toda la ira contenida en el mundo'* (p. 23).



loan and the countless costs of the family. Bartolo, in his own mind, has been reduced to the passive partner, dependant on his wife's success for a living. Bartolo's troubled start in Australia is partially due to his limited English skills, a point that is made obvious when the children become enthusiastic when Bartolo is able to hold a conversation with the car salesman. Bartolo's limitations make him feel trapped, on the other hand, Rosita has more space and freedom. He therefore makes Rosita experience his same feelings, in what could be seen as an internalising of the marginalisation that he has felt from society replicated within the family. As discussed in chapter one, this can cause intra-household discrimination along gendered divisions and a patriarchal dominance within the migration experience (Halfacree, 1995; Marotta, 2008; Pease, 2009).

The *crónica* represents the situations where migrant men are unable to find employment immediately after migrating, whereas the opposite can be true for their spouses, leading to frustration within the family unit. Although migrant women of the time were often in employment, they experienced a higher degree of discrimination within the workforce, in comparison to their spouses, due to both their migrant status and gender (Alcorso, 1989). Inequality in the household could therefore intensify this discrimination. Nonetheless, as men felt they were being 'kept' at home by their wives, this could also catalyse them and 'challenge them to adapt and change, and often, reassess what they had learned during their upbringing about the role of men' (Crossley & Pease, 2009, p. 123). The essentialised ideas of *machismo* and *marianismo* are, therefore, not fixed but negotiated, creating new hybrid understandings of gender and culture, poignantly demonstrated in the story's ending. The coda reads:

now, everything has passed and they have gone back to being the same family, together and happy. Life continues to be comfortable, tranquil and joyful as always. They have finished paying the car loan for the Holden, and they are thinking about buying themselves a newer car. Of course, they didn't go to family court, because they love

each other very much and they are both very mature, very adult. Besides, they have decided that Rosita is unable to learn how to drive: she is too anxious (p. 23).<sup>31</sup>

This satirical ending to the story reveals the absurdity of maintaining traditional and fixed gender roles. Migration destinations can create new possibilities for hybrid understandings of the family, which can interrupt the acceptance of discriminatory situations such as these. The cynical rapprochement can be seen as indicative of new ways of understanding gender, and an attempt to portray fixed stereotypes as negative, unsettling and creating new gender identities.

The *crónica*, “But they’ve never had compasses!” continues to explore gender negotiation through the migration process. It collates a series of anecdotes that play on familiar stereotypes of a woman’s lack of a sense of direction. Firstly, it recounts the time a group of friends watched the Olympic Games calling out Latin American countries that were not participating. One woman shouts ‘Caracas’, the capital of Venezuela, and all the men could not contain their laughter, making it clear to the woman how stupid they thought she was. The story then describes an instance when the narrator needs directions to ‘Kingsford’, a Sydney suburb, and a woman offers to help him with a map that she has at her house. However, the map was a map of Australia and the woman did not realise that she would not be able to find the suburb using it. The narrator explains why he believes women lack knowledge of geography:

let’s look at the problem from a different angle: what reflects better on the world of a woman than the contents of her bag? Mirrors, brushes, lipstick, make-up, perfumes, chocolates, tweezers, nail clippers, nail files, aspirin ... Thousands of things, even some

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<sup>31</sup> ‘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. Ya terminaron de pagar las cuotas del Holden, y están pensando comprarse un auto más nuevo. Por supuesto, no fueron 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: es muy nerviosa’ (p. 23).

of the most unexpected items. But, what you will never find, is a compass. Never a compass (p. 81).<sup>32</sup>

More evidence is provided for this lack of intelligence of geography through the anecdote of a woman who is unable to provide correct directions for her husband. The *crónica* plays on commonplace and recognisable negative stereotypical images of female empty-headedness. These stereotypes are utilised by the narrator to demonstrate the folly of such ideas as he shows that men suffer from the same inadequacies, as he advises:

but, remember, don't go giving him suggestions about routes to get out of where he is. At most, look at him smugly and as though you are superior. And choose a tone of voice that is filled with contempt, and ask him: "Are you lost again, Captain Cook?" (p. 83).<sup>33</sup>

Here, the narrator shows that both men and women can be equally unfamiliar with their city and incapable of orientation, and that this incapacity is not intrinsic to women. The emphasis on a lack of knowledge of geography points towards the limited capacity that women have to move freely and be in control of their mode of transport, as shown in the previous story. This is a smaller-scale enactment of the large-scale disempowerment of women implicit in the fact that many had little input in deciding the destination for their family's migration, and indicative of broader husband-centred migration experiences (Aizpurúa & Fischer, 2008; Shihadeh, 1991). However, it also represents the foolishness in disregarding the role of the woman throughout the migration process, and their importance in establishing foundations in their new societies. Women equally contribute to the migration experience, as demonstrated by Rosita in

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<sup>32</sup> 'miremos el problema desde otro ángulo: ¿qué cosa refleja mejor el universo femenino que el contenido de una cartera? Espejos, polvera, rouge, cosméticos, perfumes, chocolates con gusto a perfume, pinzas, cortaúñas, limas, aspirinas ... Miles de cosas, hasta las más impensadas. Pero, lo que nunca jamás vamos a encontrar, es una brújula. Jamás una brújula' (p. 81).

<sup>33</sup> 'pero, recuerde, nada de darle ideas ni sugerirle caminos para salir de allí. A lo mucho, mírelo con suficiencia y altanería. Y seleccione el tono de voz más displicente, mientras le pregunta, toda canchera: "¿Ya te perdiste de nuevo, Capitán Cook?"' (p. 83).

the previous story, and are just as active throughout the course of migration (Zlotnik, 1995). However, as the *crónica* portrays, often the contribution of women to the process is overlooked, due to traditional roles of *machismo* and *marianismo*. This comparison consigns the involvement of women as inferior to the husband (Moraes-Gorecki, 1988). This may occur even though both genders, as the narrator expresses, are never capable of being totally in control. Accordingly, the *crónica* attempts to create and portray new understandings of gender identities.

The story, “Misadventures of the ‘Latin Lover’” explores the negotiation of gender through stories of interaction between Latin American migrant men and Anglo-Australian women. The story is a combination of two *crónicas*, that when first published were printed together with half of each story missing. Although appearing to have more structure than it would have in the original publication, as Abarca states elsewhere, it is still slightly disjointed. The first half focuses on a young woman who is seated at the front of the same bus as the narrator. Deciding to eat her dinner:

the beautiful creature began to eat her chips. Eat is probably not the most appropriate term. More like gobble, or shovel down, devour. With the voraciousness of a wolf (p. 46).<sup>34</sup>

He describes her ‘attacking’ the chicken that accompanies her chips and once she has finished her meal, she licks her fingers clean, a trait that the narrator believes is unique to Australian women and one that he cannot understand. The woman eats her dinner without a care in the world and is uninterested in those that are around her, including the narrator who is infatuated with her. He embellishes the story of this woman eating her meal on the bus, and in doing so, describes her as losing all self-respect through a lack of modesty. A conclusion reached by the

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<sup>34</sup> ‘la hermosa criatura comenzó a comer las papas. Comer, tal vez no sería la expresión exacta. Ms [sic] acertado sería emplear los términos engullir, zampar, devorar. Con voracidad de lobo’ (p. 46).

narrator through this encounter, is that this manner is common to Australian women, however, his position changes by the end of the *crónica*.

The second half of the *crónica* teases out a further conclusion reached in the story that Australian women do not flirt with just anybody sitting on the same bus as them, they only do so with acquaintances. In this half of the *crónica*, the narrator and his friend Lolo are waiting in a government employment agency staffed mainly by young attractive women. They are interviewed by one of the staff members who they think is the prettiest, they nickname her the ‘skinny angel’ (p. 48).<sup>35</sup> Lolo thinks he and her have become close, and believing so, he barges into his second interview with her. She becomes enraged and throws him out of her office. Lolo becomes extremely emotional and ashamed. After this encounter, the narrator is interviewed by who they thought was the second most attractive employee, whom they have nicknamed ‘the panther’ (p. 48).<sup>36</sup> The narrator learns from the mistake of his friend and does not attempt to pursue her romantically, but after the interview they become good friends, as she helps him beyond what is expected of her. At the end of the story, the narrator reveals the woman’s name as he explains:

after Barbara, I had many other Australian female friends. Friendships that reaffirmed what I always had intuited: that people, men, women, are the same in all ways (p. 54).<sup>37</sup>

In both storylines the narrator arrives at the conclusion that the difference, which at first he finds so confronting and hard to overcome, is actually insignificant and ultimately based upon unrealistic gender stereotypes, characterised by the way Australian women eat their food. In these stories the women do not behave as the narrator expects them to, by rejecting him and

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<sup>35</sup> ‘*angelito flaco*’ (p. 48).

<sup>36</sup> ‘*la pantera*’ (p. 48).

<sup>37</sup> ‘*despues de Barbara, tuve muchas otras amigas gringas. Amistades que me reafirmaron lo que siempre intuí: que las personas, los hombres, las mujeres, son iguales en todas partes*’ (p. 54).

being in control. What the narrator comes to realise is that Australian women are not desperate for ‘Latin Lovers’ and that the stories that are told and retold amongst Latin American men are not reflective of the truth. These stories propagate a myth that Australian women are always sexually available and that Latin American masculinity is irresistible. By challenging these ideas, the narrator demonstrates their ability to marginalise Latin American men, both from within and from outside the community. This is because these notions of Latino male superiority and sexuality depend upon the gender stereotypes of *machismo* and *marianismo*, which can promulgate the myth that gender inequality is inherent only to ethnic minorities (Crossley & Pease, 2009; Pease, 2009). The *crónica* plays upon the fantasy of the ‘Latin lover’ and exposes it as untrue, demonstrating the way that Latin American men negotiate their identities. The narrator states it is necessary to ‘act delicately, and with caution, leaving aside the old and used-up tricks of our exhaustive *machista* inventory’ (p. 54).<sup>38</sup> At this point the narrator advises men to reflect upon their narratives of masculinity and negotiate new gender codes, in the way that he has in the story. This reflection is illustrative of a negotiation of masculinity, as ‘men themselves develop a sense of how they are perceived by Australian women and how they are differentiated from Australian men. As such, they have to learn new ways of being a man’ (Crossley & Pease, 2009, p. 126).

An unsettling of masculinity and femininity is constructed in this story, most importantly the female characters behave in contrast to pre-existing ideas of gender, clearly expressed through the motif of Australian women licking their fingers after eating. The woman on the bus is judged based upon this trait and Barbara is applauded for not doing so. It is presented as symbolic of a stereotyped Australian woman, one that finds Latin American men irresistible. However, it more adequately portrays a woman’s ability to take control of her sexuality and life. As the narrator declares, Australian women do not wait to be allowed to do

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<sup>38</sup> ‘act[uar] con cierto cuidado, con cierta delicadeza, dejando de lado los viejos y manidos trucos de nuestro profuso inventario machista’ (p. 54).

something and are not subordinate to men, characteristics he believes should be and are also available to all women. These expressions of freedom are portrayed as pertaining to Australian culture, however, by questioning stereotypes, the narrator implies that this is not the case. This empowerment of women is a common theme in research within Australian Latin American communities, through a negotiation of cultural and gender identities (Zevallos, 2003; 2005; 2008).

In ending the story, the narrator facetiously states that one day he will apply for a grant from the Australia Council to fund a study, investigating the origins of the trait of finger-licking, stating that they are so crazy they may even provide the funding. This suggests the ridiculousness of reducing Australian women to such a basic act of eating, it implies a level of reflection upon the role of women in society, creating new understandings of gender roles through the migration process. The changing visibility of the women within the story is also indicative of this reflection, because up until we discover Barbara's name, the women in the story are reduced to their behaviours and physical appearance, and are solely the object of the male gaze. Therefore, this hybridised understanding of gender roles is the product of cultural exchange and meaningful dialogue with individuals from different cultures, shifting the idea that women are purely visible objects. The male gaze in isolation will only further stereotype women, as illustrated in the observations of the way women eat. By engaging in this cultural dialogue and exchange, hybrid understandings of culture and gender may be reached, challenging ethnic stereotypes of masculinity that can be imposed by the marginalising ambivalent centre.

## Conclusion

The close reading of *Stories of a Blady Woggie*, demonstrates the ways in which the text reflects upon Abarca's minority position as both an exile and a member of an ethnic minority group. The author's forced cultural dislocation as a political refugee has undoubtedly marked many of these stories. His literary characters reveal the inner disruption and the contrapuntal effects of exile, and by extension, migration. From this marginal space, the characters interrogate the managerial aspects of the official discourse of Australian multiculturalism. Although the nation concealed its racism, it maintained its discriminatory effects, reframing race as ethnic difference. Many of the *crónicas* also uncover the limiting tolerance of the imagined Anglo-Celtic centre. The stories detail the way partial acceptance is offered to groups who reify and display enriching everyday culture, that of costume, cuisine and concert. Essentialising Latin American migrant groups in this way, through an 'inclusion by virtue of othering' (Ang, 2001, p. 139), maintains their ethnic inferiority as they must exhibit an exoticism for multicultural recognition. By identifying the manipulative methods of multicultural discourse, the *crónicas* subtly question and challenge national modes of belonging by unveiling their inherent and historic discrimination, highlighting the strength of language and literature in such endeavours. Furthermore, they produce narratives of belonging by building different attitudes towards Australian membership. These are constructed through hybrid understandings and negotiations within the characters that enacted daily cultural exchange, creating new ideas of collectivism and gender. As a result, the close reading in chapter two has revealed the way Abarca's *crónicas* responded to the ambivalence of Australian society, framed within notions outlined by critical multiculturalism and postcolonial theory.

The *crónica* genre witnesses and transmits culture through literature, therefore, it can be considered an ethnographic text. As it reflects community sentiments and the community's sense of separate identity, the *crónicas* analysed, may be cautiously considered as more broadly representative of the experiences of its readers, as they were 'co-authors' of the text. The



narratives expressed through the genre may be indicative of wider social involvement and association with the ideas that have been expressed in Abarca's *crónicas*. Members of the Latin American community in Sydney, during the time of Abarca's writing, and possibly within wider Australia, may identify with the events and stories of the collection. Nevertheless, they cannot be considered to wholly represent the nuanced experiences within this community or be solely indicative of them. Thus, the *crónicas* which have been analysed in chapter two can be said to represent the narratives of the migrant experience within the Latin American community, in some measure. Created through a dialogue that had occurred within the community, with the text.

The findings of the analysis can be considered to be just one part of a multiplicity of stories of migration and experiences of this community. There are many hundreds of other works produced in an array of genres in the community that are yet to be analysed, that would provide further awareness of its migration history. This initial research is a limited foray into one key writer of Latin American-Australian migrant literature, and does not attempt to be completely indicative of the community's migration experience. Nor does it fully represent Abarca's own personal experience or that of his characters, as other readings would yield different interpretations. As mentioned, a reading of these texts with a postcolonial and critical multicultural theoretical framework, focuses on subject positioning within the power imbalance of a society unwilling to accept migrant differences. Moreover, such a reading can exclude other aspects and nuances of the texts analysed, and could possibly reduce them as purely indicative of migrant experiences. However, whilst the analysis focussed on the marginality of its narrators, it is apparent that such themes are recurrent in the text and are portrayed throughout the collection, although they are not the only ones present within them. While they are indicative of the migrant experience, the stories that are contained in the collection are, nevertheless, still relevant to a wider audience as the themes of dislocation, marginality and cultural negotiation do not solely represent the lives of migrants, and can be related to by others.

The close reading of Abarca's collection of *crónicas* explored the experience of the Latin American migrant in Australia, adding nuances to existing research that has been conducted within this community, and of their literary works. This thesis forms part of the growth in the attention these works are receiving. The need to document and collect these works through anthologies, literary histories and bibliographies is crucial in the study of Latin American Australian literature. This will ensure their preservation for future research, contributing to community histories along with intra-community and inter-community dialogues. Such compilations would align with research projects undertaken within this field of enquiry and is a possible future direction for further research. Additional textual analysis of this collection, in particular, with different frameworks would yield further insight into significant aspects of the migrant experience. Such readings could further supplement possible comparative studies of Latin American migrant works of the *crónica* genre in Australia more broadly. Additionally, Abarca's work and the many texts that he produced in both Australia and in Chile would merit an in-depth author study, revealing thematic concerns that transcend his marginal position as a migrant in multicultural Australia. The need for the translation of migrant texts has also been signalled as a significant area in need of expansion within the study of migrant literature in Australia. This is another potential avenue whereby this research project could be expanded, attracting greater critical attention of the text, by increasing readership of these important narratives.

This research highlights the importance of such works to Australian literature as they enrich present narratives of national belonging. It supplements debates about the management phase of Australian multiculturalism in its initial stages, providing community responses to these policies. As Australian political life moves towards a more traditional and overt protection of national belonging, with calls that echo that of assimilationist policies of the past, such responses can make present, past concerns.

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