Introducing Hyperworld(s): Language, Culture, and History in the Latin American world(s)

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Many of the articles published in this special edition of *PORTAL* responded to what we hoped would be the provocative, yet conceptually open, theme of the 2006 biennial conference of the Association of Iberian and Latin American Studies of Australasia: 'Hyperworld: language, culture, history.'[1] The conference, and subsequent call for papers, aimed to elicit critical engagement with the processes by which, in the early 21st century—an information age of hypertechnology, post-nationalism, post-Fordism, and dominating transnational media—culture and economy have become fused, and globalizations tend towards the mercantilization, commodification, and privatization of human experience. We recognized that access to the technologies of globalizations is uneven. Although cyberspace and other hypertechnologies have become an integral part of workspaces, and of the domestic space in most households, across Western industrialized societies, and for the middle and upper-classes everywhere, this is not a reality for most people in the world, including the Latin American underclasses, the majority of the continent's population. But we also agreed with pundits who recognize that that limited access has not prevented a 'techno-virtual spillover' into the historical-material world.[2] More and more people—including those not in possession of the technologies—are increasingly touched by the techno-virtual realm and its logics, with a

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[1] Organized by Jeff Browitt, Paul Allatson, Marivic Wyndham, David Cahill, and Blanca Tovías, the VII International Australian and Iberian Studies Association Conference was held at the University of Technology, Sydney, 27-29 September, 2006.

[2] We are indebted to Ilaria Vanni for her inputs into the discussion here, and for the term 'techno-virtual spillover.'

resultant transformation of global imaginaries in response to, for instance, the global spread of privatised entertainment and news via TV, satellites and the internet, and virtualized military operations (wars on terror, drugs, and rogue regimes). Under these hyperworldizing conditions, we asked, how might we talk about language, culture and history in Latin America, especially since language has an obvious, enduring importance as a tool for communication, and as the means to define culture and give narrative shape to our histories and power struggles?

The question is particularly pertinent given that 2005 marked the quincentenary of the publication of perhaps the most influential literary work in the Hispanophone world, volume one of Cervantes's *El ingenioso hidalgo don Quijote de la Mancha*. The novel's early 'American' history—a tale of intrigue, power, and resistance—is salutary here: due to the Inquisition's ban on importing novels into (and publishing them in) Spain's American colonies, the text was smuggled to clandestine readers in wine barrels (Vargas Llosa 1995). In our contemporary hyper-technological world, parallel struggles are legion. Media pirating, the anarchic spread of data over the internet, and 'nonlinear network dynamics' across diverse communication modes—print, satellite, radio, TV, virtual and the quotidian verbal (Terranova 2004)—aim to challenge, and often do defeat, drives to censorship and control over illicit publication and, therefore, reading and the capacity for subversion. But that drive is confronted by state capacities (e.g. China, Burma, Iran, and Cuba, but also governments everywhere) to block communication and www access, thus engendering ever-morphing and proliferating modes and venues for counter-action.

The example of *Don Quijote* is instructive for our theme in another way: the protagonist's struggle to differentiate reality from illusion plays out against the epochal and epistemic shift from the medieval age to the Renaissance. That period witnessed the first recognizable wave of globalization driven by Christian imperialism and the plundering of the non-European other. It was responsible for the colonization of the continent's indigenous peoples and the integration of the region into a nascent world economic circuit. Cervantes himself was no mere bystander to that historical shift: he lost an arm in the so-called greatest naval battle of the Renaissance—the Battle of Lepanto—which pitted the 'Holy League' of Christian nations against Islam in the form of the Ottoman Turks.

A terminological heir to that epistemic transformation, 'hyperworld(s)' presented—and still does—numerous conceptual and epistemological challenges. Whether unintended or not, it evokes cyberspace, thus gesturing toward either the seamless integration of physical and virtual reality, or its converse, a false opposition between the historical-material and the virtual. The term may also evoke unresolved contradictions between discourses of technophobia and technophilia and, by extension, lead to dichotomized readings of the age in terms of the limits to, and capacities for, political resistance. Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri's descriptions of the current age of Empire—a vast zone of 'peace' somehow outside history (2000: xiv-xv) that reconfigures class struggle (213)—plays with those evocations. Positing that future resistances to 'the places of power' will be engineered by the world's poorest inhabitants (a migratory 'specter') in tandem with 'flows of political refugees and transfers of intellectual labor power' (212-13), Hardt and Negri caution that those movements seem to generate 'a new rootless condition of poverty and misery' (213). They therefore advocate two new modes of desertion: an 'anthropological exodus' composed of resisting bodies 'incapable of submitting to command … of adapting to family life, to factory discipline, to the regulations of a traditional sex life, and so forth' (215-16); and a virtual 'machinic exodus' through which 'the subject is transformed into (and finds the cooperation that constitutes it multiplied in) the machine' (366-67). The revolutionary result, Hardt and Negri posit, will be a struggle between agents of the real and the virtual to seize 'the processes of machinic metamorphosis' (367). That struggle, interestingly enough, appears to be alive and well in popular sci-fi films such as the *Matrix* trilogy (dir. A. & L. Wachowski, 1999, 2003, 2003), a tale of the conflicts unleashed by the dissolving boundaries between embodiment and virtuality. It would thus seem that many contemporary producers and consumers of popular culture regard that dissolution as, if not yet a representation of actual lived experiences, then, at the very least, imaginable, the cinematic fiction predicting the inevitable virtualized (machinic) human future.

In a 1999 interview with *Media Mente* also concerned with that future, Paul Virilio spoke of the risks that new technologies present in terms of losing a sense of what is real, a loss linked to the accelerated velocity of contemporary human life, from information exchange to the virtualization of human relations. Virilio recognizes the positive possibilities that hyper-technology may provide, but he calls for a more balanced and unified 'stereo-reality.' In Europe the Renaissance created a new sense of

reality by a change in perspective. We are now called upon to do the same, he argues, in order to establish an equilibrium between the local, concrete material existence in which we find ourselves, and the virtualized global world with which we interact and communicate 'live' in real time, and that increasingly conditions and dominates our perceptual and conceptual faculties, the 'techno-virtual spillover' again. In the past the economy was in a recognizable relationship to the human body and its productive capacities, but now,

> con l'accelerazione delle tecnologie propria del ventesimo secolo—ripensiamo a Marinetti, ai Futuristi—è evidente che c'è bisogno di un'economia politica della velocità. Il nostro è il mondo dell'accelerazione assoluta; … si è passati dalla velocità locale e relativa dei trasporti, a quella globale e assoluta delle trasmissioni ... (1999)[3]

One recognizable upshot of the instantaneous transfer of data is that financial markets become unstable and seemingly subject to rapid collapse. For Virilio, absolute velocity can lead to absolute inertia, since 'non abbiamo più bisogno di andare incontro alle cose, tutto arriva fino a noi.'[4] He adds: 'temo l'avvento di un senso di claustrofobia globale, e come ho detto questa è una delle grandi questioni ecologiche che riguardano le future generazioni. La terra è troppo piccola per la velocità assoluta.'[5]

However, in this initial foray into the concept, we regard such evocations of the velocities underpinning (future) world virtualization as partial in characterizing the contradictions of (contemporary) hyperworld(s). Perhaps hyperworld(s), then, can be employed to gesture toward—without prescription—all those changes in the contemporary world once registered as effects or exemplars of 'late capitalism,' 'postmodernity,' 'globalization,' 'post-Fordism,' 'global assemblages,' 'neoliberalism,' 'hyperreality,' 'Empire,' 'dromology,' the purported 'end of history,' the triumph of the 'spectacle' or the 'simulacrum,' and the rise of 'cyborg culture.' Such terms—which combined indicate there is no single explicable model of globalization; rather there are myriad possible globalisms, or global imaginaries—come to us from numerous theorists—Virilio (1986 [1977]), Lyotard (1979), Eco (1983), Baudrillard (1983),

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[3] 'with the acceleration of twenty-first century technology—let us recall Marinetti and the Futurists—it's clear that we need a political economy of velocity. Our world is one of absolute velocity; … we have passed from the local and relative velocity of transport to the global and absolute velocity of transmissions …' Our translation.

[4] 'we have no need to search for things, everything comes to us.' Our translation.

[5] 'I fear the advent of a sense of global claustrophobia, and flowing from this is one of the great ecological questions confronting future generations. The earth is too small for absolute velocity.' Our translation.

Harvey (1989), Haraway (1991), Jameson (1991), Fukuyama (1992), Debord (1994), Baumann (1998), Hardt and Negri (2000), and Sassen (2006)—to mention some of the most influential figures in this arena of grand-narrative speculation and assertion.[6]

In the view of these and many more critics, human life has entered a new age, one marked by the waning of History (with a capital H) as a hitherto unproblematic court of truth. In this age we encounter the hyper-acceleration and evanescence of global flows of culture, products, money, people, and even crime, diseases, and human-made pollution against a background of market totalitarianism, ethnic cleansing and growing religious militarism (Zionist, Islamic and Christian fundamentalist, Hindu Nationalist), processes that register in numerous, often contradictory, and yet potentially insurrectionary and surprising ways, as the following selected examples attest:

- the techno-intertextualization of the image and the word and the digitalization of communication, as announced by the digitally enhanced and filtered news reporting (from the USA) of armed conflicts (without corpses or carnage) since the first Gulf War;
- the aestheticization of politics, perhaps best exemplified by the post-Cold War triumph of kitsch over totalitarian ideologies in post-Soviet Europe, a process also at work in the still-Communist world (Hoberman 1998; Abreu 2001; Allatson 2007a);
- the post-Fordist restructuring of economies across the planet (Lipietz 1992; Ash 1994). This has not simply caused the immaterialization of labour (precarity) with the shift (in industrial economies) 'from jobs based in industry to jobs based in the service industry, namely producing communication, information and knowledge'; it has also caused the immaterialization of goods, 'such as affect, social relations and desire' (Tarì & Vanni 2005). Another sign of post-Fordism is the 'programming' of both labour and immigration so that working bodies in certain capitalist sectors (Indian call centres, for example) need no longer cross national lines to do their work or to be players in another state's economy (Aneesh 2006);
- the cyborgization of human bodies and genders, at least among those with the means to take corporeal and identificatory advantage of such technology (Haraway 1991);
- the rise of downloadable modes of consumption, from shopping and entertainment to recording (and then relaying) the minutiae of daily experience (witness spectators at sporting, musical or any manner of public or private events paying mediated attention to proceedings as they make video mementoes on their cellular phones);
- the conversion of the www into the main communicative venue of our epoch (despite, or perhaps, because of the hegemony of Cyberenglish) for finding information, assessing an individual's 'impact' or worth, and hosting a multitude

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[6] For more detailed elaborations, see the section on globalization in Milner and Browitt (2002).

of autobiographical (named and re/misnamed) fragments, CVs, wish-lists, desires, opinions, images, and personal me-too-bytes. Moreover, given that the cybertrawler's imprints and tracks elude the best attempts at erasure, the www potentially forever chronicles the evidential data of a logged-on existence;

- the simultaneous conversion of the www and other technologies into technologies of resistance, as typified by activist communities that use texting to facilitate rapid, impromptu mobilizations, and by the indigenous Zapatista movement in Chiapas, Mexico, which for a decade and a half has transmitted its communiqués and manifestoes via the www, accessed innovatively and clandestinely from power grids and telephone lines in forays from the movement's jungle bases (Coronado & Hodge 2001);
- the hosting by immigrant receiver states of transnational or satellite communities, which are connected by the telephone and the internet, routines of circular travel, creative neocultural adaptation to life in two (or more) states, and the sending of remittances. One example is the indigenous Mexican Mixtecs who have made California another home, in the process becoming Oaxacalifornios/ians (Kearney 2000; Cohen 2001);
- the amorphous reproduction of 'terrorist' cells with no identifiable centralized order or command and, in direct response, the sequestering of purported enemy combatants in legal black holes outside the reach of national or international jurisdictions;
- the technologization of national border security, from iris-recognition software at immigration-control desks to satellite and infrared surveillance along permeable frontiers. One example is the US-Mexico border, the busiest land frontier in the world, a key line in the region's economic reorderings announced by NAFTA, and one along whose US side roam vigilantes opposed to ongoing undocumented immigration by workers from the south, and anti-vigilantes concerned to assist such workers and safeguard their welfare, hence one pundit's description of it as a 'hyperborder' (Romero 2007).
- the rush for genomic patenting and copyrighting, the genetic modification of crops, and the inexorable reduction of access to diverse seed varieties faced by farmers across the globe, and not only in the so-called Third World, and a pro-active glocal chain of market spaces in which such diversity is being preserved and re-circulated;
- the accelerating rates of global warming and the reduction of biodiversity, and increasing deployment of new or refigured power-generating technologies to address those processes;
- and so on …

These tendencies—diverse, proliferating, intersecting, contradictory—seem to have advanced us further into a dizzying swirl of human activity—veritable hyperactivity—that is disorienting even for the most reliable of pundits and futurists keen to reveal and explain the future to us. Yet despite the confidence of the speculations made by numerous critics, we would suggest that economic and technological change may be running ahead of our ability to socially and culturally critique, let alone comprehend, their long-term effects.

How do these changes affect language, culture and history, which were once taken to reliably represent nations and their imagined communities? One need look no further than the managerial economic speak of 'futures markets,' 'hedge funds' and 'sub-prime mortgages,' of discourses of war that seek to depersonalize life ('collateral damage') or project it into a pop cultural, Disney-fied, quasi-religious realm predetermined by Manichean logics ('evil empires'; 'axis of evil'), or reduce it to absurdity ('false intelligence'). It is not so much that language is being debased here (as if it carried an inherent set of values beyond what we arbitrarily assign it), as it is reflecting the hierarchized power relations—and their selective, unpredictable logics of exclusion/inclusion—that underpin the contemporary world. As George Orwell once pointed out, the integrity of language depends on the integrity of those who use it: 'Political language ... is designed to make lies sound truthful and murder respectable, and to give the appearance of solidity to pure wind' (1946).

It is important to note that even those communities or individuals seemingly outside, or left behind by, globalizing processes or *mundializaciones* (remote farming communities, indigenous peoples resisting state strictures of the singular nation-state community, developing nations, anyone or thing discarded by capitalist advancement) nevertheless suffer from, and yet are often enticed by, its economic, cultural and environmental effects and promises. There is no autarkic outside of contemporary hyperworld(s) (or whatever term may be used to describe current globalisms). It is also necessary to stress that technology and virtualization are not negative in, and of, themselves. They are merely ciphers for concrete political, economic and cultural changes under globalizations. Being against technology and globalisms or change itself is like being against oxygen. It makes no sense, and it is life-defeating. Indeed, one of the ironies of anti-globalization movements is their dependence on, and productive use of, global technologies, from mobile phones to the internet, as exemplified by the Zapatistas mentioned earlier.

What matters is what is said and done, and for whom, in the name of technology and globalization, to choose two words that for many people trigger visceral reactions, both positive and negative. As Jerry Everard argues, the question of uneven access to the technologies of hyperworldization—the 'hypermedia' identified by Deibert (1997)—is perhaps better treated as a divergence between those who have, in a Foucauldian

knowledge-equals-power sense, the means of knowing, and those who do not:

> The distinction between haves and have nots in the information economy will be only in part a distinction of access to specific items of information. Rather the distinction will be one of access to a way of looking at the world. People without access to such technologies will find themselves increasingly less able to comprehend and to deal with the emerging changes in global economy. (Everard 2000: 161)

Similar arguments have been made by Gabriela Coronado and Bob Hodge who, analyzing current claims that we have experienced a 'virtual revolution,' re-read Marx's understandings of surplus value and ideology through an optical (virtual) lens:

> Capitalism has developed a new array of devices to fulfill its old aim, to extract surplus value wherever it can. All these devices to some degree draw on resources of virtuality: "virtual surplus value" makes it easier to appropriate other kinds of surplus value .… Yet these are only the dreams of one class, shadows projected onto the screen of virtuality, which has space for many other projections. Outside the *camera obscura* of capitalist ideology the struggle continues, precarious or strong labour against strong or precarious capital, in a field of struggle unpredictably affected by new technologies of production and information. Virtuality has conditioned all forms of labour to some degree, creating different classes of worker, set against each other, not conscious of the web of virtuality that links them all into a single multitude. That unity is virtual in one sense—a potential that could be activated by virtuality in another sense, the resources of the net. The connections are not being made at the moment, by the real users who are the only ones who could make this grand alliance virtual, and thence real. But will they? (Coronado & Hodge 2005)

The continuities that Coronado and Hodge identify between the virtualization of labour and surplus value today and the history of capitalist labour exploitation remind us to be wary of making 'the virtual' into yet another grand narrative, the governing technology or metaphor of our epoch and its ills and possibilities. And as Nick Dyer Whiteford (1999) and Tiziana Terranova (2004) demonstrate, if there has been a 'virtual-technological revolution' in the current information age, then that revolution also opens up numerous options and spaces for new political struggles, resistances and insurgencies.

In our conception, then, hyperworld(s) cannot be contained by the term virtuality; it encompasses, exceeds, challenges, and devours it. The production of hyperworld(s), or hyperworldization, connotes acceleration and hyperactivity on social, economic and financial levels, the intensified commodification of most aspects of human life, the time-space compression of communication and much cultural production, the re-ordering of social relations themselves over-determined by technology wedded to capitalist market values, and, as a result, the re-ordering of daily life, cultural expression, and political activism for individuals and communities across the planet. Even human desire is inflected by the promises evoked by a virtual world. These processes and intensities mean that new modes of reading the interactive and contradictory discursive

fragmentations of the current age are required. Thus, rather than regarding cyberspace as the age's technological hallmark or dominant trope, we might make deeper sense of hyperworld(s)—the bracketed plural implying myriad intersecting worlds within 'the' world—by identifying how the interactive logics of virtuality suggest narratorial entry points into contemporary lived historical-material and imagined complexities and potentials. As Mackenzie Wark wryly puts it, 'the virtual is that world of the potential ways of life of which the way things are is just an instance' (1999: 11).

Useful here is Marie-Laure Ryan's nuanced detailing of virtuality as narrative links, webs of interactive story-telling modes and discursive fragments that are continually renarrativized, reformatted, 'upgraded,' and even lost by cyberproducers and cyberconsumers alike (2001: 19). Ryan's innovative reading of the virtual implies that 'the real' consists of multiple narratives or 'branching texts' across distinct, yet always potentially interlinked and cross-referenced, historical, geopolitical, socioeconomic, linguistic, and cultural times and spaces. Also useful for our purposes is Everard's argument that 'States are above all cultural artifacts,' just as the internet is:

> Another way of looking at this is to see states as information produced by and through practices of signification—from the writing of foundational documents (constitutions) to the discourses of smart bombs and the global spread of Coca-Cola. Sovereign identity, then, is comprised of bits, rather than atoms. (2000: 7)

If states emerge as bits, bytes, networks, and flows, all of us, Everard claims, 'are already living in virtual states,' the state being 'a legal fiction—an important one, but a fiction nonetheless,' which hinges on its capacity to narrativize acceptable national identities—yet more bits, bytes, networks, and flows—in a bounded, finite space (2000: 152). For Everard, it is no coincidence that the word cyber 'comes from the Greek "κυβερ," which means to steer, to discipline or to govern. So there is a sense of governance embodied within the term "cyberspace"' (152). But it is a tenuous sense of governance for states and the internet alike. In their very boundary-marking procedures states—paralleling the operations of cyberspace—conceal and reveal the ways by which they are ever-morphing narrative constructs. The state's attempt to generate nationalized identities falters because it and its identities occupy a virtual (in the imaginary sense) nowhere. The fate of states is to defer narrative crisis by maintaining the fiction that national ideals and identities can be retrieved intact and ready for deployment. The virtual trouble of nationality lies in the state's inability to repress rival narratives of

national or anti- and non-national potential, a point to which we will return with regard to the post-revolutionary struggles over the idea and fact of 'Cuba.'[7]

How do Latin American critics conceptualize the recent transformations wrought by technological change, capitalist globalisms, and the transformation of state functionality? As opposed to the cheerleaders of neoliberalism and the notorious Washington Consensus, many social and cultural theorists view these changes with dismay. Néstor García Canclini, writing in 1999, finds it 'curioso que esta disputa de todos contra todos, en la que van quebrando fábricas, se destrozan empleos y aumentan las migraciones masivas y los enfrentamientos y regionales, sea llamada globalización' (1999: 10).[8] In this scenario, the traditional public sphere of national politics and its regulatory capabilities no longer seem to function with 'national' promise:

> Al mismo tiempo que se la concibe como expansión de los mercados y, por tanto, de la potencialidad económica de las sociedades, la globalización estrecha la capacidad de acción de los Estados nacionales, los partidos, los sindicatos y en general los actores políticos clásicos. Produce mayor intercambio transnacional y deja tambaleando las certezas que daba el pertenecer a una nación. (1999: 21).[9]

As in much of the world, the effects of globalisms and technological change are most evident in Latin American cities, especially with the hyper-mobility of capital, information and the production of symbolic goods for the cultural industries. Latin American cities oscillate between what one collection of essays calls *cruelty* and *utopia* (Bednarek 2003). That is, the utopian projections of successive urban planners co-exist with the residues of failed modernization processes; the orderly layout of cities on a utopian model of the *civitas dei* collapses into the anarchic sprawl of the *favelas*, *villas miserias*, *colonías* and *tugurios* of the 21st century (Lejeune 2003). Mass internal migration from rural areas to the mushrooming chaos of Latin American cities has further entrenched urban class segregation and violence. At one end of a hyperworldized spectrum, elegant and exclusive, wealthy neighbourhoods are protected by private security guards, walled communities and closed roads. At the other extreme

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[7] This discussion reworks points made in Allatson (2004).
[8] 'curious that this struggle of all against all, in which factories go bankrupt, employment is destroyed, and mass migration and inter-ethnic and regional conflicts increase, should be called globalization.' Our translation.
[9] 'At the same time as we conceptualize [globalization] as market expansion, and by extension the economic potential for societies, globalization limits the capacity for action by national states, political parties, trade unions, in general the classical political actors. It produces greater transnational exchange, but leaves wobbling the certainties that national belonging once offered.' Our translation.

this process is perversely mimicked by the no-go slums ruled by armed gangs protecting their drug distribution networks and their trade in stolen goods. That trend is also visible in what Mary Pat Brady calls the 'narcoglocal' respatialization of daily life in the USA-Mexico borderlands, a zone that is also witnessing rapid urbanization (2002: 186-201). These trends speak of a kind of neo-feudalism and are further mirrored in the class divide in immigration: the wealthy move to the exclusive suburbs of cities like Los Angeles and Miami,[10] the poor to its most abject slums or to the NAFTA-led promise of the *maquiladora* (assembly plant) zones in Central America and along the US-Mexico border.

George Yúdice (2003) tracks the cultural implications of contemporary globalisms through cultural change, or what he terms the 'expediency of culture':

> Culture is increasingly being invoked not only as an engine of capital development, as evidenced by the ad nauseum repetition that the audiovisual industry is second only to the aerospace industry in the United States. Some have even argued that culture has transformed into the very logic of contemporary capitalism .… This culturalization of the economy has not occurred naturally, of course; it has been carefully coordinated via agreements on trade and intellectual property, such as GATT and WTO, laws controlling the movement of mental and intellectual labor (i.e. immigration laws), and so on. In other words, the new phase of economic growth, the cultural economy, is also political economy. (2003: 17)

And for Yúdice, intellectual property rights (whether in the culture industries, technology itself, or pharmaceuticals) go to the heart of much contemporary capital accumulation ('a new control regime'), since the invention of a product or process suitably patented guarantees *virtual* capital accumulation in perpetuity, since the labor expended to produce the surplus value ('the expropriation of cultural and mental labor') is dissociated from the corporate, share-holding class that ultimately benefits from patent use: 'with the aid of new communications and informatics technology, [such expropriation] becomes the basis of a new division of labor' (2003: 19). And as a consequence of this culturalization of the global economy, we perceive and experience the world—and our labour and capacities to resist the multiple sites of power—in hyper-accelerated and contradictory ways.

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The essays and cultural works comprising this special issue of *PORTAL* gesture in

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[10] In Miami's case, interestingly, the trend often distracts observers from noting the city's routine appearance in annual rankings of the five poorest US metropolises.

direct and oblique ways to many of the themes touched upon above as they pertain in Mexico, Cuba, Colombia, Argentina, the USA, and elsewhere. These contributions offer a snapshot of processes occurring all over Latin America as the region engages nervously and energetically with the juggernaut of Euro-North American, and increasingly East Asian, economic and technological change.

In 'Discourses of Anti-corruption in Mexico. Culture of Corruption or Corruption of Culture?,' Gabriela Coronado takes issue with the way Mexico and Mexicans have been unfairly branded as inherently 'corrupt' (a national 'cultural' characteristic). Coronado links that process to ongoing Euro-North American colonialist ideologies that equate a country's level of civilization with its purported level of corruption. Coronado examines the way corruption is culturally represented and how such representations conform to what she terms dominant 'globalized managerial discourses' and their attendant raft of conditions that must be met for global trade purposes, which themselves actively produce 'corrupt representations of national cultures and peoples behaviours, instead of targeting local and global sectors that gain from institutionalized corruption.' Coronado thus highlights how, in our contemporary era, mass-mediated representations of culture becoming enormously powerful, not only for constructing (or deconstructing) national identities, but also for city and country 'branding' in a hierarchy of economic-cultural 'ratings' to further serve neocolonial economic penetration.[11] Coincidently, that framework also undergirds what Coronado and Hodge have dubbed the 'hypertextual multiculturalism' of contemporary Mexico (2004).

In an even more perverse misrepresentation of Mexican hyperreality, Vek Lewis demonstrates the way tragedy and crime are literally commodified and mass-mediated as histrionic entertainment in a Mexican television soap opera. In 'Of Lady-killers and "Men Dressed As Women,"' Lewis returns to the notorious serial murder of elderly women in Mexico City between 2003 and 2005. According to hearsay in which the potential murderer was described as 'a man dressed as a woman,' the Mexico City police department set about raiding transgender prostitutes working the city's streets. What intrigues Lewis is how the case was co-opted for television entertainment by

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[11] See Donald and Gammack for elaborations on contemporary brandings of cities in the Pacific Rim, especially their discussion of the virtualization of life in the interactive city 'as bits' (2007: 16-21); the notion of the 'city of bits' is elaborated by the Australian critic Mitchell (1999).

Mexico's principal television channel, which allowed the false accusations to be woven as a second layer of fiction within the concluding episode of one of its popular soaps, thus contributing to a now well-established practice of gender profiling that positions *travestís* as inherently suspect, abject, and on the bad edges of the law. What is significant, besides a gross misapplication of state police justice, is the sheer immediacy with which rumour and innuendo (stoked by the Chief Public Prosecutor announcing that the killer could be a *travestí*) are taken up as more grist for the mill for the ever-hungry culture industries' addiction to sensation as commodity. As Lewis notes—drawing on Susan Rotker's (2002) observations about urban violence in Latin America—the entwined *historias* of 'real-world' serial killer and fictive, telenovelized murder exemplify how Mexico City has become 'just one among several Latin American cities seized by its own sense of vulnerability and danger, whose impacts are increasingly seen in social relations, and whose register is the real turned hyperreal.'

Another indicative phenomenon of hypercultural flows in the Americas and elsewhere is the inevitable generation of cultural mixings and transculturations that defy locational fixing. A historical case in point is salsa, the neocultural outcome of Puerto Rican and Cuban musical migration to New York in the post-World War II era. According to William Rowe and Vivian Schelling (1991: 101), salsa's origins and morphing into multiple sites of production typify the hyperworldization of culture per se.[12] As the authors argue, Afro-Caribbean musical traditions anchored in the plantation and slave economies—and their attendant sociocultural resistances—evolved and translocated in line with the Caribbean region's 20th century entry into an international capitalist order, one that also impelled numerous immigrant trajectories: rural to urban, island to island, and Caribbean island to the New York metropolis. Thus, by the 1970s when New York-based Cuban and Puerto Rican musicians were popularizing the then 'new' sounds of salsa, the genre could not be fixed or homed in a single cultural or national tradition. That is to say, its many origins sustain its constant morphing in numerous worldly sites, with deep consequences for cultural signification in and beyond the Americas. Thus, if salsa is both 'product and symptom of the globalization of culture,' further challenges 'to received notions of what "Latin/o" culture signifies in a globalized epoch are posed

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[12] The main centres of salsa production remain New York, Cuba, Puerto Rico, and Colombia, although the genre has practitioners across the USA, in most Hispanophone countries, and in many non-Hispanophone countries, including Australia.

by Japan's Orquesta de la Luz, which emerged in the 1990s to international acclaim with songs such as "Salsa no tiene fronteras" (Salsa Has No Borders), and Salsa Celtica, a Scottish Celtic and salsa fusion band formed in 1996, which combines bagpipes and flute with Afro-Caribbean percussion' (Allatson 2007b: 208-9).

A second example of musical morphing in the Americas is tango, a musical form considered in this special issue in Guillermo Anad's 'La nueva guarida del tango.' The tango is archetypically associated with Argentina, another instance of country branding (and city branding in the case of Buenos Aires) through culture. Anad's essay explores the fate of the tango form during the period hitherto classified as the *Período contemporáneo*, which coincides with military dictatorship (1976-1983), the increasing mass-mediation of Argentine society, and the emergence of *rock en español* as a new cultural form in Argentinean popular music, and in the broader Hispanophone world, a phenomenon with multiple genealogies that coalesced with MTV's penetration into Latin American television markets. In order to give a more inclusive and political reading of the tango's trajectory during the *Período contemporáneo*, Anad renames the era *la nueva guarida del tango* (the new hideout/den/shelter of tango) and realigns its reformation with the refashioning of new subjectivities and identities among the youth who fused elements of tango and the globalizing rock music phenomenon.

In a related if tangential way, Jim Levy and Peter Ross offer a politico-economic reading of late nineteenth-century Argentine liberalism as a cautionary tale for our contemporary era. In 'The Limits of Liberalism in Argentine Provinces 1890-1940: An Analysis of Provincial Expenditures,' Levy and Ross analyze population shifts and economic development during a key historical period of Argentine liberalism in the country's provinces. Their contention is that the limitations of classical liberalism were exposed in this era, thus driving societal and governmental changes that challenged the philosophical and, to an extent, the economic foundations of the liberalist model. Levy and Ross's analysis reminds us of how late nineteenth-century *laissez faire* economic liberalism was an earlier manifestation of contemporary neoliberalism, starkly reprised under Carlos Menem, especially in relation to what the authors regard as 'the underlying antagonism between the laissez-faire liberal state dominated by political-economic elites and underpinned by a discourse of 'law and order,' and fair and equitable social welfare provisions for the poor.' Neoliberal hegemony in Latin America mimics this

antagonism with its mantra of the need for the withdrawal of the state from the social realm. Only after two decades of mostly disastrous neoliberal policies have social democratic reforms re-asserted themselves in political discourse, if not in practice.

If the 'hyper' in 'hyperworld(s)' has relevance here, then, it is not only in terms of expanded speed, reach, links, and spatial dimensions—many of the standard dimensions of capitalist expansion since the industrial revolution and, as Virilio argues, of modern warfare and media structures (1986)—for it also extends to the liberal philosophical underpinning in which the individual is privileged over the collective. But whatever fantasies of freedom that hyperworld(s) might proffer the individual, 'materialism cannot be completely overcome or ignored. The sting in the tail of the sustained trip into the hyperworld is increased stress in the real world of time, human relations and environmental well-being.'[13] Moreover, hyperworld(s) themselves may become more disordered and dangerous, in eerie parallels of numerous science fictional accounts that depict societies careering out of control.

As noted earlier, such questions of control very much pertain to the nation, and in this issue are raised in two articles dealing with post-revolutionary Cuba. Like all national illusions, Cuba attains meaning in terms of its ability to generate a nationalized identity that might be called *cubanidad*, or Cubanness.[14] But the nation's identity productions emerge, to borrow Nicole Stenger's definition of cyberspace, from a place that like 'Cyberspace, is like Oz—it is, we get there, but it has no location' (1991: 53). Virtually nowhere, Cuba operates in what is, to borrow again from Stenger, 'a sort of atmospheric depression in history,' concentrating in itself 'aspirations for fundamental re-sourcing' (56). By this Stenger means data storage in the virtual realm and its interactive retrieval by cyberusers. But in the case of the Cuban nowhere, 're-sourcing' would also encompass rival (island, exile and other) aspirations to secure and maintain image-sets of national identity that can be retrieved ready for ideological deployment. As a result, Cuba represents a scenario of competing virtues and virtualities, with implications far beyond the imagined boundaries of the Cuban nowhere. Crucial here is the aura of post-revolutionary Cuba in continental American imaginaries. Since 1959, and particularly during the Cold War stand-offs of the 1960s, especially the failed Bay of Pigs invasion

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[13] We thank Jim Levy and Peter Ross for permission to include their informal observations here.
[14] This section on Cuba-as-virtuality reprises and reworks arguments made in Allatson (2004).

(1961) and the Cuban Missile Crisis (1962), Cuba has occupied a central role in a pan-Latin American imagination that interpreted the island's struggle against the USA as paradigmatic of broader continental power struggles, economic inequities, and ideological polarizations. The corollary of this has been the centrality of a demonized Cuba in the USA's own hemispherical presentation of itself as a bulwark against Marxist-Leninism, and as a Cold-War champion of democracy and capitalist enterprise. And intertwined with those versions of Cuba are the many fantasy Cubas that emerged, according to Alan West, from the island's history of subjugation and exploitation under the Spanish and the US empires:

> Pearl of the Antilles, tropical paradise, whorehouse of the Caribbean, Cuba as gold mine, cane field (slave trade), military outpost (strategic location/geopolitical pawn), tourist haven, exotic folkloric locale (flesh depot, fun in the sun, shed your inhibitions), investment opportunity (source of cheap labor), or revolutionary menace/terrorist haven (a U.S. nightmare). (1997: 2)

But whatever the potential in the past for military engagement between the two countries, this has been displaced onto media and cultural battles for hearts and minds around the world. Such battles have been prosecuted through media representations and cultural initiatives trading on Manichean versions of Cuba as both 'potential' and 'lost ideal,' a notable example being the eruption into global media view of the bitter custody battle over Elián González in 1999/2000.[15]

The historical competition between these imaginaries continues to overdetermine the virtual potentiality and governing (national and ideological) logics of the Cuban nowhere in its post-1959 guise. Cuba as 'lost ideal' expresses the lament on the Left for either a sense of betrayal (Castro's authoritarianism) or loss in the face of conservative reaction (revolutionary Cuba's failure is all the fault of US interventionism and thus Cuba's now eternal 'special period'). Cuba as 'lost ideal' among liberals and conservatives turns on an image of pre-revolutionary Cuba idealized by both the US middle-classes (Cuba as exotic cabaret) and the displaced Cuban upper and middle classes in south Florida (Cuba as tropical paradise with radical class and racial disparities conveniently expunged). Such crude Manichean readings have made it difficult to say what and where Cuba is, or is supposed to be, and what it was before rival devils (imperialism and communism) squared off. A space of present-absences

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[15] For divergent elaborations of the extraordinary (hyper) impact and importance of the Elián case see, Fernández (2000), McLaren & Pinkney-Pastrana (2001), Bardach (2002), Rowe (2002), Banet-Weiser (2003), De La Torre (2003), Allatson (2004), Sahlins (2004), Molina Guzmán (2005), and Demo (2007).

(Ramos 2000: 155), the Cuban cultural artefact thus obeys logics very much like those Stenger identifies as guiding the appeal, and danger, of the cyber-nowhere. Cuba, too, occupies an inexhaustible 'ontological time … that can be reintegrated at any time' (1991: 55), but it is always faced by ontological stalling and proliferation.

In his analysis of one controversial struggle over the control of Cuba's hyperworldized image, 'At the Crossroads between Paris, Texas and the Buena Vista Social Club, Havana: Wim Wenders and Ry Cooder as Collaborators,' Stephen Gregory uses the motif of the 'crossroads' to theorize the kind of politics that Wenders and Cooder practice in their world-wide hit documentary about a group of aging Cuban musicians who have witnessed Cuba both before and after the revolution. For Gregory, Buena Vista Social Club is not an instance of cultural imperialism or imperialist cultural appropriation, the charge that has been often levelled at the film by critics in the USA and elsewhere. Rather Gregory highlights how the 'controversy' (only an issue, it seems, on the Left) was part of a much wider struggle in the Americas over control of historical memory within a context of collapsed utopian narratives.

Marivic Wyndham and Peter Read's 'Memory and a Hard Place: Revisiting Central Havana,' approaches a similar struggle between competing Cuban memories and imaginations since the Revolution. In their piece the struggle over the Cuban image is displaced onto central Havana as perceived by two aging Cuban men—one a resident of Miami and a television celebrity, and director of the clandestine video, *La Habana de hoy y de siempre* (Villaverde 1991), and the other a Havana local, Raúl, a dockworker—as well as by the authors themselves, who recount their 2000 walking tour of the central Havana in question, accompanied and guided by Raúl, in the process becoming shadowy interactive agents in the narrative that unfolds. That narrative becomes a tale of unmet expectations, evocations (on Villaverde's filmic part) of a purportedly halcyon pre-revolutionary idyll (not shared by Raúl), mourned as 'lost love,' and habitations of separate universes that are yet to converge 'with good will and understanding.'

In 'Doris Salcedo's Melancholy Objects,' Vera Mackie discusses Colombian artist Doris Salcedo's installation 'Atrabiliarios,' a highly acclaimed work that metonymically comments on violence, death and the waning of historical memory by allowing shoes to stand in for the absent bodies of victims. Mackie regards the artworks as indicative of a

dialectic between the processes of melancholy, mourning, and fetishism. Mackie's analysis tracks multiple representations of the women's shoe—on viewing Salcedo's 'Atrabiliarios' she finds herself recalling other shoes in visual art, fairytales and film, a shop in San Francisco's China Town, the Auschwitz museum, and an iconic image from Cold War Australia—with two aims. First, to assess how viewers can acknowledge the specific historical-material contexts in which such representations are made and circulated. Second, to make ethical sense of the cultural politics inherent to museums as repositories for memory. As Mackie says, 'There is no such thing as an innocent or blameless viewing position for tourists, travellers, scholars, or spectators in museums. We are all implicated in multiple matrices of power, and need to choose an ethical position from which to approach such sites.'

Another mode of memorialization, the *crónica* (chronicle) is a strikingly apposite exemplar of the messy transculturations that have characterized hyperworldization in the Americas. Little known or produced in the English-speaking world—until, perhaps, the rise of the chronicle-like blog—the *crónica* is a European textual form dating from medieval times with antecedents in Greek, Roman, Hebrew and Arabic textual traditions. Chronicles melded history, autobiography, and scientific observation and exposition, and were characterized by a (at times loose) chronological ordering of material. Medieval chronicles could be in poetic and/or prose form, and incorporated observational details of interest to the chronicler, as well as elements drawn from myth and legend, Christian debates and texts, historical events, insights into local trade, agriculture, artisan work, and the natural and physical sciences, and genealogies of important people. A highly intertextual and transgeneric (hypergeneric) means of constructing the past, chronicles often looked to earlier chronicles for material and inspiration as well. European chronicles such as *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (800s CE) and the French *Chroniques* by Jean Froissart (early 1400s CE) survive as important repositories of historical detail and data. The chronicle also provided a textual venue for recording the Spanish conquest of the Americas and the early Spanish colonial era, the form being used by conquistadors and priests, and a few indigenous writers, to document Spanish activities, local indigenous sociocultural traditions and customs, and scientific observation of plants, animals and 'new' American geographies. Many contemporary Latin American critics and writers regard the colonial chronicles as the continent's foundational literary form, one that later writers have drawn upon and

modified. At times the genre's traditional respect for historical linearity has been parodied, as exemplified by the Colombian Gabriel García Márquez's short novel, *Crónica de una muerte anunciada* (1987), which casts into doubt the purported veracity of the chronicle as a 'true' account or *historia* (the Spanish word neatly denoting history *and* fiction, thus ensnaring both terms in epistemological uncertainty).

Notwithstanding the chronicle's transportation to the Americas as a textual tool for recording conquest, and its subsequent decline in Europe since the 15th century, the *crónica* survives in Latin America as a respected, popular and widely practiced genre. A resurgence of the chronicle has occurred in many Latin American countries since the 1960s, where it takes the form of short meditative pieces that combine personal confession, quotidian observation, memorialization, and commentary on contemporary sociocultural trends and political events. Contemporary *crónicas*—which may appear as regular newspaper or magazine columns—draw from, combine, and evoke any number of textual forms: autobiography, testimony, the diary, epistolary communication, history, the short story, the essay, journalism, and the political tract. Notable *cronistas* include the Mexican Carlos Monsiváis (his first collection appearing in 1969), and the Chilean Pedro Lemebel, the latter responsible for adapting the chronicle into a personal account of AIDS among the *locas* of Santiago.[16]

In 'There's No Place Like Home/Camino a Casa Crónica,' included in this special issue, Chicana author Susana Chávez-Silverman takes the form in a new 'American' direction by resolutely refusing the separation of English and Spanish and, by implication, of supposedly distinct 'American' worlds. Chávez-Silverman's particular approach and linguistic intentions with regard to the *crónica* were announced in her collection, *Killer Crónicas: Bilingual Memories/Memorias Bilingües* (2004), a lyrical account of the author's year spent in Argentina, which evolved 'virtually' from the *crónicas* that she sent to friends and family in the form of emails. Eschewing the genre's traditional chronological structure, and shifting creatively between English and Spanish, *Killer Crónicas* also builds implicitly on the chronicle-like characteristics of previous code-switching and genre-blurring Chicana texts such as Gloria Anzaldúa's influential

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[16] See the reference list of this essay for details of Monsiváis's and Lemebel's published collections of chronicles to date. For provocative analyses of Monsiváis see Egan (2001), and for Lemebel see Palaversich (2002) and Poblete (2002).

Borderlands/La Frontera (1987). While the code-switching on view in *Killer Crónicas*, and in 'There's No Place Like Home/Camino a Casa Crónica,' might seem to be a hallmark of US Spanglish, the author rejects that label's application to her texts. Despite their intertwining of English and Spanish, her narratives depend on bilingual facility in both languages, a claim that does not preclude monolingual speakers of either idiom from making interactive sense of proceedings. Chávez-Silverman thus appears to take up Anzaldúa's linguistic challenge—'Until I am free to write bilingually and to switch codes without always having to translate … my tongue will be illegitimate' (1987: 59)—in a revolt against national-linguistic purists of both English and Spanish who decry those languages' quotidian and literary interpenetrations inside US borders. In its unique autobiographical reach, and its exposition of multivalent linguistic and geocultural homes, 'There's No Place Like Home/Camino a Casa Crónica' demonstrates that code-switching between Spanish(es) and English is a progressive, creative elaboration grounded in the everyday. Chávez-Silverman's *crónica* thus offers a neocultural insight into the lived realities of millions of US Latina/os, a testament to the fact that socioculturally neither Latin America nor the USA achieve definitional meaning and locational certainty at the US-Mexico border.

The final contribution to this special issue's cultural works section is by Ian Campbell, an Australian poet who writes predominantly in Bahasa Indonesia, an unusual idiom for Australian writers despite Australia and Indonesia's adjacency. As the title of the poetry suite included here attests—'Selatan—Sur—South'—Campbell's poems meditate on the concept of the south as a contested spatialization and geocultural imaginary for diverse residents of the southern hemisphere. That focus is enabled, and encoded in, the poem's internal geographic, literary and cultural references, which, like their places of authorship, shift seamlessly between sites in Australia, Indonesia and Latin America. While Chávez-Silverman's *crónicas* in part recreate the enunciative characteristics of peninsular, Argentinean and Chicana Spanishes as they tangle with US English, Campbell's poetry enacts a trilingual translation between Indonesian, Australian and Latin American (Chilean, Argentinean) cultural fields and dominant languages. A case in point is his translation from Spanish to Indonesian of a famous poem by Francisco Urondo (1930-1976), an homage to the great tango artist, Carlos Gardel, a name synonymous with the 'Buenos Aires' city brand in the first few decades of the 20th century. With his translation Campbell manages a deft rebranding of the tango, and its

greatest exponent, for Indonesian readers. Noteworthy, too, is the selection's concluding statement, 'Lejano Sur (Ke Kejauhan Selatan) Further South.' Incorporating references to Borges's strict definition of where the south part of Buenos Aires begins, and the title from the Australian playwright Douglas Stewart's 'Fire on the Snow,' Campbell here posits the 'south' as 'a land of dust/ where paradox reigned.' It is an apposite summation of a set of poems that defies geocultural fixing as it links disparate parts of the 'south' through transcultural interactions—bits, bytes, networks, flows—as befits the qualities of the hyperworld(s) into which we have forayed, exploratively, here.

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