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“Against Telephysics” from *Contra la tele-visión*

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In lieu of an abstract, here is a brief excerpt of the content:

“Against Telephysics” from *Contra la tele- visión*

Heriberto Yépez (bio) and Introduction

Viviane Mahieux

Translated by Jake Nabasny (bio)

Introduction

Heriberto Yépez is a Mexican writer who practices many genres. He is a poet, a novelist, an essayist and a translator who maintains a highly visible profile in Mexican letters. For many years, he has published regularly in the country's most important newspapers and cultural supplements, and he also cultivates an online presence, maintaining a blog where he reposts some of his work and engages with literary and cultural polemics in both Mexico and the United States.

Yépez is from Tijuana, and unlike many Mexican writers from northern states who crave a national audience, he has chosen not to move to Mexico City, the highly centralized cultural nucleus of the country. The experience of living in the U.S./Mexico borderlands informs his writing on many levels, and he continually experiments with the delicate balancing act of speaking for a local culture while addressing a broad and often distant public. Some of Yépez's best-known works deal specifically with Tijuana and how the city oscillates between two contradictory imaginaries: it is either condemned as the junkyard of postmodernity, or singled out as a promising laboratory for cultural hybridity. In his novel *A.B.U.R.T.O.* (2005), for example, he parts from the figure of Mario Aburto, the presumed killer of presidential candidate Luis Donaldo Colosio, who was shot in Tijuana in 1994, to recreate the atmosphere of the city during one of its darkest periods. *Tijuanologías* (2006), a combination of essay and chronicle, is not exactly a book about Tijuana, but rather about how the border city is imagined and mythified in both Mexico and the United States. In this work, Yépez constructs Tijuana, and the region of northern Mexico, as a space that stands in opposition to a hegemonic center (the capital), paradoxically reaffirming the interdependence between both spaces in the national Mexican imaginary.

Although Yépez presents himself as a writer from the borderlands, located far from the cultural capital of Mexico City and outside the vast academic and literary networks of the United States, he is hardly a marginal figure. His online presence has effectively counterbalanced the limitations that often accompany publishing in small regional presses—the circulation and distribution of books in Mexico is notoriously deficient,

and it is often difficult to find books published in Tijuana, for example, in the rest of the country. Yépez has also published in mainstream transnational presses such as Editorial Planeta, and in some of Mexico's most established media outlets. In his weekly newspaper column, published in *Laberinto*, the literary supplement to the Mexico City daily *Milenio* until the summer of 2015, Yépez was relentlessly polemical, sometimes to the point of being self-defeating. His articles often launched heated discussions, staging—and reaffirming—his contentious relationship with both established Mexico City writers and academic culture on both sides of the border. More than constituting a rejection, Yépez's provocations mark a will to engage with these different cultural spheres. As a self-styled border intellectual with a flair for performance—his new blog persona is “Border Destroyer”—Yépez places himself in a privileged position to intervene in conversations both north and south, assuming an ironic critical distance and a belligerent tone that can obscure how astutely he navigates both spheres.

The border—both in its immediate political reality and in its potential for conceptual thought—also informs Yépez's essays in literary criticism and theory. As a harsh, nonsynchronic space, where polyphony is possible but at the cost of great inequality, the border enables the development of a critical double distance, one that serves as a starting point for cultural analysis. Thinking theoretically from the border also constitutes an exercise in forging—sometimes even forcing, if need be—a coincidence between the practical and the abstract, the objective being to transform a border space generally placed at the receiving end of theory into a source of theoretical thought in itself.

“Against Telephysics” is the first essay of Yépez's short book *Contra...*



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