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ARGENTINE CULTURES OF TRANSLATION: FROM BORGES TO DE SANTIS

Tú, que me lees, ¿estás seguro de entender mi lenguaje?
[You who read me, are you sure that you understand my language?]

Jorge Luis Borges (1899-1986),
"La biblioteca de Babel," 1944.[1]

Can a library be a universe, and if so, what kind of universe would it be? What would be the geography of a universe shaped by or created for the primacy of the printed word, which, like the universe, extends toward the infinite? The myth of Babel, both as a representation of linguistic dispersal and cultural decadence, is continually revisited in theories of literary translation.[2] To those familiar with Buenos Aires, a city often understood in terms of migration, sexual transgression and linguistic difference, it comes as no surprise that not only Babel, but also Babylon appears as a recurrent theme in Argentine literature.

The best-known portrait of Babel in Argentine literature is Jorge Luis Borges' short story entitled "La biblioteca de Babel" ("The Library of Babel"). Borges' Babelian library is constituted first and foremost as a space, its books secondary to its systematic hexagonal layout and construction. Here all writing appears as an imperfect copy or variation of something already written somewhere else where the existence of a definitive, central text has been ruled out,. It is a continually repeating place where even the dimly lighted physical space resists the act of reading, but where the endless sequence of letters also creates a vocabulary for not one, but for a multiplicity of different languages, none of which can claim absolute linguistic normativity.

Today I wish to elaborate upon texts in the work of Borges which deal either directly or indirectly with the act of translation, and the flux between the national and the foreign that translation inevitably creates, in an Argentina whose project of national consolidation has always been shaped by its relationship with a series of translatable Others. These limits of the translatable foreign are revealed as an inseparable part of Argentine national identity; when either of the two appears absent, the other emerges, irrepressible, complicating any clear dualistic distinction at the limits between the nation and its presumably translatable foreign. When the French philosopher Michel Foucault credits a short story from Borges for providing

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[1]Borges, *Ficción completa.* Madrid: Bruguera Ed. 1981.

[2]For a further discussion of the image of the Tower of Babel and its relation to the theories of translation, see Amati Mehler, J. et al. *La babele dell'inconscio: lingua madre e lingue straniere nella dimensione psicoanalitica*. Milano: Rafaello Cortina Editore, 1990. Chap. 1, "Viaggio a Babele," pp. 1-24, which discusses how the bilingual subject is the source of paranoia within nationalistic discourse: "L'atteggiamento teorico con cui ci si accosta al fenomeno del bilinguismo è profondamente condizionato dall'ideologia e dalla cultura di un'epoca; a seconda che prevalgano le spinte nazionaliste e integriste, la paura di veder minacciata dall'esterno, dallo "straniero", la propria identità..." (p. 1.) Also Derrida, J., "Des Tours de Babel," in Graham, J., ed., *Difference in Translation.* Ithaca, N. Y.: Cornell Univ. Press, 1985.

the theoretical departure for his *Les mots et les choses*, an "archaeology of the human sciences," he also makes a commentary on the crucial and enduring role of literature in the structuring of human thought, scientific or otherwise:

> Ce livre a son lieu de naissance dans un texte de Borges. Dans le rire qui secoue à sa lecture toutes les familiarités de la pensée –de la nôtre: de celle qui a notre géographie--, ébranlant toutes les surfaces ordonnées et tous les plans qui assagissent pour nous le foissonnement des êtres, faisant vaciller et inquietant pour longtemps notre pratique millénaire du Même et de l'Autre. (Foucault 1966, p. 7)

Through Foucault's recognition of Borges' extraliterary relevance, it also becomes all the more clear how such putative "fictions" come to shape epistemological processes of categorization in the West, and well as those of identity and alterity which are central to any theory of translation.

Borges began writing on translation in a 1926 article for the Buenos Aires newspaper *La Prensa*, one entitled "Sobre las dos maneras de traducir" ("On the Two Ways of Translating"). This essay is characteristic of the renewed interest in national identity in the Argentine essayists, and seems in many places to have served as a rough draft for Borges' later essays on literary translation, each echoing or revising the one which precedes it, each changing its references or emphases, especially those which counterpose references to national literature alongside foreign quotations. Borges continues his writing on translation in two texts which in content continually overlap with each other almost word for word: the prologue to the 1932 translation of Paul Valéry's novel *La Cimetière Marine*, and the essay entitled "Las versiones homéricas" ("Translations of Homer"), published in the 1932 collection of essays *Discusión.* Oddly enough, it makes no reference to Valéry or the translation to follow; what concerns Borges is not the specific translation which he introduces, but the opportunity to voice a series of more generalized concerns about translation using Homer as a point of departure:

> " There is no problem as concordant with literature and its modest mystery as the one posed by a translation. [...]
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> The superstition of the inferiority of translations--coined in the well known Italian adage--comes from a distracted experience. There is no good text which does not appear invariable and definitive if we repeat it a sufficient number of times. Hume identified the habitual idea of causality with succession. Thus a good film, seen a second time, seems even better, considering that we begin them already knowing them. The common phrase of *rereading the classics* assumes an innocent veracity. I do not know whether the quote: *En un lugar de la Mancha, de cuyo nombre no quiero acordarme, no ha mucho tiempo que vivía un hidalgo de los de lanza en astillero, adarga antigua, rocín flaco y galgo corredor*, is good

> for an impartial divinity. I only know that any modification is sacrilegious and I cannot imagine any other beginning for the Quijote.[3]

Here the aforementioned Italian adage "Traduttore, traditore" is not quoted directly; it is assumed that readers are already familiar with it, perhaps even comfortable with its presumed truth; by repeating it, it seems that one would be complicit in furthering its status as definitive of translation. The issue of repetition of the original as central to the formation of truth is one underscored by the experience of the cinephile; a film seen twice "seems" even better because one is presumably more comfortable with what one already knows. Its images are irreplaceable, its cinematic visual language untranslatable. Film thus appears, alongside classical works of literature, as the emblematic example of repetition, and the main source of repeated images from which the early 20th-century viewer participates in an encounter with a mass-induced vision of what is good, true or desirable. The repeated image of a favorite film, as it comes to represent a flash of what is 'good,' 'pure' or 'true,' much like the famous quote from a classical text. Its image is irreplaceable; any attempt of reproduction would only be a disappointing and ultimately unsatisfactory imitation, to the one who knows the Spanish original. But what of the reader that does not know Spanish, who is left to glance at the passage left untranslated above and to ponder the "divine" essence of its untranslatability? This "truth" is presumably reserved solely for those who have access to the original, but that does not seem to be ultimately what Borges is suggesting. On the contrary, it is in translation that reading begins to operate in a new space, one where the grip of the original text over truth has been loosened from the constraints of a specific and singular cultural certainty.

It is interesting that this same point regarding the incommutability of the classical text is itself a repetition, having been already made in the 1926 *La Prensa* article, except that the literary example given to illustrate his point was not the *Quijote*, but rather the first stanza of *Martín Fierro,* the Gauchesque poem of the 1870's considered to be the Argentine national epic. The references to the gauchesque are nonetheless still legible in this literary palimpsest. In the same way that Alonso Quijano speaks in the place of the Arab Cide Hamete Benengeli, whom he is translating during the Spanish Inquisition, José Hernández captures in written form the voice of the exiled gaucho after his exile and eventual disappearance into the "barbaric" South after a military campaign designed to eliminate the indigenous populations and replace them with European immigrants. The *Quijote* and *Martín Fierro* are both *fictions of translation*, i.e. texts in which the act of translation figures prominently in the literary work. Moreover, both attempt to document the erasure of a voice considered impossible to translate adequately precisely because of its poetic nature or cultural particularity. This voice continues to manifest its presence in the text after its physical departure; one might even argue that it is the very reason of the text's emergence. When rewritten, the truth of this voice is duplicated, as are the notions of history and time that they convey. The Arab, as the classic subaltern of Hispanic civilization, doubles for the particularly Argentine version of him at a more recent point of its expansion; when speaking of translation, Borges substitutes "gaucho" for "moor," calling into question once again who is speaking in this discussion of literary translation in the Spanish language, whether it is the author or those other presences which continue to erupt in

[3]Ibid., "Las versiones homéricas." *Obras completas.* Buenos Aires: Emecé 1989. (My translation.)

this theory of translation which is, as we have already established, by its very nature a theory of alterity as well.[4]

This conception of translation as a form of "double writing" is continued into that work written both by Miguel de Cervantes and by Borges' own invented second author of the *Quijote,* Pierre Ménard, who is able to write for a second time portions of the classic work without referring to the original. It is perhaps not surprising that the sections which Menard chooses to rewrite include not only those dealing with the original Arab author of the text, Cide Hamete Benengeli, but also the chapter XXXVIII, which deals with the implication of literature within the political, military and ideological machine of the state. In is thus within this abridged context that the famous quote is to be interpreted: "Truth, whose mother is history, rival of time, depository of actions, witness of the past, example and announcement of the present, warning of the future...."[5] When written over again, the truth duplicates itself, and conventional, linear notions of time as a indisputably sequential past, present and future are revealed as fictions. Perhaps a thinking about translation, especially one that finds itself beginning with Borges, could consider this goal, that of a history in translation, one allows the literary work to speak in two languages simultaneously, and from many points in time and place;.[6]; as Borges suggests, there is always something legible in translation that did not exist in the original. It is this lesser-explored space that interests me here: a rereading of that which cannot be read in any original, but only in translation, one which, as the descriptive translation theorist Gideon Toury suggests, is a "fact of a target culture." A rereading of one of Toury's fundamental hypotheses in DTS will also confirm that it is born, at least partially, from an encounter with Borges' fictional character Pierre Menard. (Toury 27)

One of the most elaborate examples of this breakdown between the presumed distinction between the national and the foreign in the work of Borges is in the 1935 essay "Los traductores de las *1001 Noches"* ["The Translators of the *1001 Nights*"]. This is Borges' most extensive study on the art of literary translation; indeed, it is one of the longest essays in the entire career of a writer who dedicated himself more to cultivating a genre of brevity, especially in those short fictions that seem to blur the distinction between the short story and the essay. It may come as no surprise, then, that the *1001 Nights* presents Borges with an exceptional pretext to elaborate not only on the act of translation, but on the desires which motivate its continual transformation across cultures and languages; the *Nights* is, after all, a literary work of dispersed origins, a work which in literary form knows only translation, and whose oral origins are scattered across a number of cultures and historical periods. Borges' reading of the *Nights* is in fact of a library of different works, composed not only of the numerous translations but also of other literary works connected to this continuing sequence of translation. This library of the *1001 Nights,* precisely because of the extensive web of literary reference which this act of translation creates, is no less extensive or elaborate in its reach that

[4]Upon evoking the role of the gaucho in Argentine discourses of alterity, it is impossible to overlook the seminal work on this subject: Josefina Ludmer's *El género gauchesco: un tratado sobre la patria.* (Buenos Aires: Sudamericana, 1988).
[5]Borges, J. L. "Pierre Menard, autor del Quijote." *Obras completas.* (My translation.)
[6]See Morello-Frosch, Marta, "Borges y los nuevos: ruptura y continuidad." in *Borges: el último laberinto* Montevideo: Linardi y Risso, 1987, in which she begins: "There are few things more dear to Borges than the establishment of a literary lineage, the tracing of cultural ancestors and identification of chosen and perhaps apocryphal paternities." Literary paternity, although it appears to provide an alternative to genalogy as a means of imagining one's origins, and identity, still recurs to the notion that literature has a sex, an inverted lineage in which the children bear the fathers.

any of the other literary libraries, real or fictional, of Borges' literary opus explored in this reading, his fantastic Babelian library or his childhood library of English books located in his home on the outskirts of Buenos Aires. The word "library" thus reveals its multiple meanings: it not only refers to the different stories which the frame tale incorporates to form a heterogeneous, hybrid work, one *sui generis* even before the arrival of the translator, but also to a site in which translation has already arrived, one instrumental in the formation of an institutional apparatus which, like Borges the librarian, processes and organizes a constantly expanding series of literary acquisitions.

It is thus impossible, and ultimately unimportant, to determine which version of the *1001 Nights* is the most true to the original, as the translated text invariably extends beyond itself to encompass the narratives which surround the circumstances of their translation; in this case, that "dynasty of enemies" [dinastía enemiga] composed of Western translators--Lane, Galland, Mardrus, Burton, Littman--each translating against the one preceding him. This irresistible necessity to respond to the previous translator is perhaps intensified and more clearly seen due to the absence of an author, exaggerating the differences in their translations: e. g., their use of epithets, their moral stance regarding profanity, or their affinity with literality or poetic license. Each translation allows not only a new reading of the *1001 Nights*, but also of the translator himself and his particular cultural sensibilities. Borges' translators of the *1001 Nights* thus become literary characters which integrate themselves inextricably into the reading of the work, melding with the work's characters, and woven into a narrative of literary rivalries, each translator attempting to replace the one who precedes him.

Is it possible then to speak of an Argentine *1001 Nights* compiled and annotated in an essay by Borges, which, in spite of its brevity still succeeds, through its direct reference to all of the versions that precede it, in being the most comprehensive version? And what of a classic work which, interpolated into 1930's Argentina, complete with its own institutional crises and military interventions, a context usually ignored by most readers? Is it possible that the Nights changes genres to take its place in yet another national literary history, which now recognizes not only a successor, but also a precursor in the national genre of the Gauchesque? Borges' *1001 Nights* can thus be read as an implicit commentary on the ways in which institutional authorities often appropriate texts into national literatures at the same moment that its messenger, author, oral storyteller or translator, is exiled, assimilated or replaced. It is an act of cultural appropriation which remains legible not only in the Western tradition, but one which, as Borges demonstrates, translates all too well into Argentine terms.

This 20th-century Argentine perspective which ultimately directs Borges' reading of the *1001 Nights* does not manifest itself simply through its references to the nation and its most emblematic literary figure, the gaucho; on the contrary, it may be that it bears the most visible marks of its national identity in its ambivalent encounter with the foreign, one which appears increasingly in this 20th-century urban milieu in the form of the Hollywood film. Even in an essay on European translations of a medieval Arabic text, Borges cannot resist the references to Hollywood; it is, after all, in its early and most internationally emblematic moments that Hollywood reinvents the far corners of the globe for the Westerner, one need only imagine the star Rudolph Valentino dancing an Argentine tango or in the role of a Arab sheik. The palace of the Arab potentate is not only the tent in the desert or that of a faraway literary dreamstate,

but perhaps even the cinema in which the viewer watches not only the film, but also the retelling of an continuing encounter with the Other.

Borges thus suggests a new reading of the *Nights* through a cinematic optic: the English translator lane Lane appears as a prudish Hollywood censor, with the French translator Mardrus as a set designer determined to supply "local color": "Mardrus never ceases to marvel at the lack of Oriental color in the 1001 Nights. With a persistence not unworthy of Cecil B. De Mille, he lavishes it viziers, kisses, palm trees and moons."[7] The *1001 Nights* finds in Hollywood cinema a formidable successor; its appearance might even be expected in this 20th-century retelling of the frame tale, for it is the 20th-century frame tale *par excellence*, one which, according to Borges, has transformed into a monopolizing narrative structure which attempts to impose its definitive universality.

For Borges, the cinema seems to allow multiple comparisons with the *1001 Nights* and its structure of a number of spliced and consecutive frames. The cinema as an institutional space also invites a comparison: the darkness of the cinema allows its time and place of to be read as a series of nights in which thousands of stories are continually revisited. The cinema space is one in which the foreign can erupt, especially when aided by translation technologies such as subtitling or dubbing. Subtitles would seem to promise it all to the Borgean cinephile, and not only for the reason that he can continue to read outside his library after hours, even in this darkened theater. Borges would no doubt have envied the uncanny ability of these human figures to generate the hologrammatic printed words which accompany each utterance, to both speak and write, in more than one language, at the same time: their drama thus becomes also that which only exists between languages.

In reference, however, to the cinematic technique called dubbing ("Notas: Sobre el doblaje," in *Discusión*, 1932), Borges is adamant is his rejection, asserting that it creates "monsters": "combining the illustrious features of Greta Garbo with the voice of Aldonza Lorenzo" or "Juana González," although he has heard that "in the provinces dubbing has found favor."[8] Here the Spanish voiceover is associated with the illiterate, rural lower class, cheapening the image of Garbo's Queen Christina and converting her into an ordinary, common woman. Borges goes on to ask in a footnote: "More than one spectator asks himself: seeing that the voice has already been usurped, why not the figure as well? When will we see Juana González herself in the role of Greta Garbo, in the role of Queen Christina?"[9]

Despite the apparently rhetorical nature of this question, I cannot help but take a secret delight in knowing that someone has unintentionally provided at least one answer to this question. In the second edition of his book *Los deseos imaginarios del peronismo* (Buenos Aires: Ed. Sudamericana, 1992), Juan José Sebreli comments on the roles of the radio and film star Eva Duarte de Perón: "Eva Duarte did bad interpretations in radio plays of great women in history--Queen Elizabeth of England, Josephine de Bonaparte, Catherine the Great, Queen Christina, Lola Montes, Eugénie de Montijo, Madame Chiang Kai Shek--, a role that she would

[7] "Mardrus no deja nunca de maravillarse de la pobreza de 'color oriental' de las *1001 Noches.* Con una persistencia no indigna de Cecil B. De Mille, prodiga los visires, los besos, las palmeras y las lunas." Borges, p. 408.

[8] "...por obra de un maligno artificio que se llama doblaje, [Hollywood] propone monstruos que combinan las ilustres facciones de Greta Garbo con la voz de Aldonza Lorenzo. [...] Oigo decir que en las provincias el doblaje ha gustado." Ibid., "Notas: Sobre el doblaje," p. 284.

[9] "Más de un espectador se pregunta: Ya que hay usurpación de voces, ¿por qué no de figuras? ¿Cúando veremos directamente a Juana González en el papel de la Reina Cristina de Suecia?" (Ibid., ibidem.)

be more successful in later in life." [10] This irreverent answer might suggest that in the moment in which Argentines see these feminine figures of authority translated into the Argentine vernacular it may not limit itself solely to media representations: that Argentine politics may actually generate its own version of such a figure by means of the same mass technologies by which these *dubbed doubles* are produced. As the narratives of Borges and 20th-century Argentine history affirm, the monsters are not always content to stay on the screen but often transform themselves into political protagonists in their own right (p. 242). In the cinema as well, the act of dubbing preferred in early 20th-century Argentina creates linguistic hybrids which obscure elements of foreignness, limit access to the original and any comparison between it and the translation, and in this way has often served to facilitate state censorship, both in the Latin American context and beyond.

This cinema to which Borges is subject thus cannot be trusted, as the cuts and state interventions in the audio text are already all too noticeable; the question raised in the *1001 Nights*, as well as in its translations, is whether the state, in the form of the murderous King Shahriyar or any one of his institutional successors, does not continually intervene in the telling of stories as the ultimate frame to the frame tale, tracing the limits of the genre; it is by these terms of framing that this Argentine state also chooses its cinema, delimiting continually the limits of the national and the foreign, of man and woman, and of a whole set of other dualities like a mass-produced hallucination of collected images. It is also precisely in this way that cinema proves itself able, if not superior among 20th-century media, to colonize the popular imagination on a massive scale.

In imagining the *1001 Nights*, the prototypical frame tale, alongside the images of a cinema in which the illusion of narration is created by a rapid sequence of almost identical frames, one senses a powerful double optic with which to examine the institutional role in constructions of a common narrative. This frame is at times national, at times cosmopolitan or supranational, often diminishing or at least attempting to ignore thereby the nation and its boundaries. This optic, strangely enough, might also be compared to the narrative which might result from a continual reading of Borges, in which each apparently short story or essay becomes an endless set of frames of literary reference from which there may appear to be no escape.

Why Not Borges?

The image of the Tower of Babel, the loss of universal language and the diffusion of the incomprehensible, has become perhaps the primary topological point of reference to establish the scene of translation. Perhaps such a Babelian reading of Argentina and its cultures of translation, be it from the outside or the inside, may be too difficult to separate from a reading of Borges. The Argentine translator, editor and writer José Bianco reads his importance accordingly: "many of the miseries of the last few years in Argentina seem to be recompensated knowing that we have lived in the same years that Borges lived among us."[11] In

[10] "Eva Duarte hacía malas interpretaciones radioteatrales de las grandes mujeres de la historia--Isabel de Inglaterra, Josefina de Bonaparte, Catalina la Grande, Reina Cristina, Lola Montes, Eugenia de Montijo, Madama Chiang Kai Shek--, un papel que luego en la vida con mejor suerte."

[11] Cobo Borda, J. G., "Borgiana Buenos Aires." La Gaceta del Fondo Económico: Destiempo de Borges. Agosto de 1986.

spite of the indisputable importance of Borges to Argentina and its literature, there is perhaps no single presence which can serve as a consolation for so many who have lived and disappeared over the last century; nonetheless, in this new century, studies of literature will no doubt continue to characterize Argentine literature out of Borges, as a principal point of departure for meaning. Like the disparate library of works which can often be reached through a reading of Borges, the possibilities of intertextuality extend, like his libraries, toward the infinite.

The search for them may prove too arduous, in order to ensure the arrival of writers who do not appear explicitly in the Borgean literary universe, perhaps it would have been better to depart from Borges and migrate to the fictions of translations to be found in the works of other Argentine writers: consider the literary migrations of the Polish-born author Witold Gombrowicz, who when asked on his departure from Argentina in 1963 what could be done to advance Argentine literature, answered: “Kill Borges”; or the exiled narratives of Manuel Puig, and his literary spiderwebs born of self-translation and translingual writing, Bianciotti or Copi in Paris, or Wilcock, outside Rome; the translation machines in the works of Ricardo Piglia; or the popular novels of César Aira, whose preoccupations with the drama of everyday life may find their origins in his own part-time work translating North American bestsellers into Spanish.

This fascination with fictions of translation in Argentine culture continues, nonetheless: most recently, the 1997 novel by Pablo De Santis entitled, aptly enough, *La traducción*, which deals with a conference of translators held on a deserted coastal resort in southern Argentina. The novel is peopled with absurd characters who employ a wide range of methodologies to arrive at their investigative conclusions, and who insist on the infallibility of their scientific, psychological, linguistic, literary or even paranormal methodologies (UFO’s, obscure prophetic texts, etc.). The novel thus inadvertently becomes a parodical commentary on those territorial disputes “on the name and nature of translation studies” which mark the emergence and development of this discipline which is still by no means one.

One of the most disconcerting caricatures is that of the linguist Naum, who has returned to Argentina from Paris, the scene of any truly Argentine academic or literary success story, not only to present the keynote speech, but also to carry out a bizarre suicide pact with a number of other conference participants. As we shall see, his opening remarks are telling, more in their capacity serve more to obscure his criminal intentions than to expose any theory of translation:

> He spoke of lost jungle tribes found only in encyclopedias who believed that one should not speak too much, that in speaking the world wear out, and of those who came home from war mute, men from different countries who all came to the same conclusion, as if it were some kind of conspiracy, not speaking, unwilling to admit that what one had experienced could be told. He spoke of human hearing and how it can’t stand silence, and how, when it has nothing on which to feed, it begins to generate its own buzzing sound. He spoke of certain shamans who spent years without

> uttering a single word, until they found the one true word that no one understands. He spoke of those who die with a secret.
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> At the end, he said: " The real problem for a translator is not the distance which exists between languages or worlds, nor specialized vocabulary or equivalence or music; the real problem is that of a language's silence—and I won't bother to attack the imbeciles who believe that a text is more valuable the more fragile and less translatable it is, who believe that books are made of glass—because everything else can be translated, but not the ways in which a text remains silent; for this there is no translation possible." (90, my translation)

In short, De Santis presents us with yet another Argentine Tower of Babel, one in which translators refuse to communicate with and understand each other even when they are speaking the same language, that is, when they are not insisting that they understand each other when they in fact do not.

. But then again, none of these fictions of translation would probably have even been conceivable were it not for the continued presence of Borges in Argentine culture. In the end, one must recognize that there is no single academic approach capable of adequately representing the phenomenon of translation and multilingualism in Argentine society, a reality perhaps best underscored by Argentine sociolinguists and the communities they study, reveal a entirely different set of encounters with urban literate culture, be it that of Guarani speakers in Corrientes or Rosario, or Quechua speakers in Santiago de Estero or even Buenos Aires (Armatto de Welti 1996, Censabella 1999). Thus in returning to Borges, I too find that I read him in order to leave him, to imagine where his seemingly universal set of references cannot take me, and thus delve into a more extensive set of writings which appear in Argentina in "his century" and beyond, ones which nonetheless continue to underscore the importance of the act of translation in Argentine culture, even in its most apparently desolate and desperate of spaces.

In conclusion, Borges has become his own library of literature, an edifying rite of passage for the Argentine intellectual and the implicated foreigner, from Toury to Foucault and beyond, a universe which crosses time, language and cultural difference to connect the most dispersed of textual moments. It may well be that his universe is a selective, even exclusive one, nonetheless, it is still one that by nature must differ radically from his own impossible Babelian library, one that by no means contains every possible text. Borges must naturally omit, along with all other mortals, infinitely more than what he includes.

This is seen more clearly in the infinite extension of the gaucho in his short story "The End": "There is an hour in the afternoon in which the plain is about to say something; it never says it or perhaps it says it infinitely and we do not understand it, or we understand it and it is untranslatable, like a kind of music."[12] This is perhaps the literary field in which we are operating, one that speaks by itself, yet that we cannot completely understand, one that is nonetheless sending out a continual signal which we at some unconscious level are already receiving and understanding without knowing it. Perhaps this is what the style of Borges

[12]Borges, J. L., "El fin." *Ficciones. Obras completas,* p. 521.

suggests, one echoed both in the work of De Santis and in the rest of the Argentine culture of translation he played an indispensable role in creating: the idea that every literary work or history allows a reading, however difficult, of its suppressed and untranslatable silences, and it is precisely at these limits of our capacity to understand that we are compelled to translate. Y ahora Uds., que me escuchan, ¿están seguros de entender mi lenguaje? Muchas gracias.

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