

PERILOUS PERIPHERIES:  
THE PLACE OF TRANSLATION IN JORGE LUIS BORGES<sup>1</sup>

*Marcy Schwartz*

Translation in Latin America, since the colonial enterprise, has been one of the preeminent strategies for defining the region's independent cultural identity and its relation to world cultures. Often writing and translating have been simultaneous practices in Latin America, where giving a voice to foreign language authors and producing one's own creative work mutually nurture a dialogue with the rest of the world. Many Latin American writers such as Haroldo de Campos, José María Arguedas, Julio Cortázar, Octavio Paz, and Jorge Luis Borges also worked as translators, to the extent that translation became integrated into these writers' intellectual practice and reflection on translation fueled their own creative work. Through his role as a practitioner and editor (even promoter) of translations, Jorge Luis Borges is recognized as a catalyzing force behind literary development in Argentina. The intertwined functions of writing and translation for Borges "become nearly interchangeable practices of creation" (Waisman 88). While many critics have considered Borges a "cosmopolitan" in-

---

<sup>1</sup> These comments on Jorge Luis Borges grew out of research for the volume *Voice-Overs: Translation and Latin American Literature* that I co-edited with Daniel Balderston. An earlier version of this article was given as a talk at the American Comparative Literature Association conference in 2002 on a panel concerned with Antoine Berman's *The Experience of the Foreign*.

tellectual disassociated from his national and regional surroundings, his interest in translation actually grows out of an intensely *local* preoccupation with belonging and place in a heterogeneous, postcolonial society (see Sarlo, Balderston, Rosman and Molloy).<sup>2</sup> Waisman's study of Borges and translation elaborates the Argentine writer's identification with the periphery. According to Waisman, Borges uses translation as a means of "rewriting the foreign in an Argentine context" (35). He even values the translated text over the original, such as in his famous essay on Beckford's *Vathek* (1943), where he complains that "el original es infiel a la traducción" (Borges 732).<sup>3</sup> Borges's writing questions the primacy of the "original" in order to privilege translations as sites of transnational nexus between the periphery and the "center."

The role of translation in Borges's work stretches beyond his own translations from English and infiltrates his essays and fiction (see Kristal). Translation forms part of his narrative strategies that present the narrator as a recorder or commentator on other cultures' writings. He teasingly obscures his role as author through the invention of scribes, translators, ethnographers and scholars who work from the sidelines. Andrew Hurley calls many of Borges's stories "found fictions," "edited fictions" or "pseudo-translations" (298). According to him, "they are stories that masquerade as documents discovered by a person who then publishes them, or, if the case demands, *translates* and publishes them" (298).

Borges's efforts to expose the mastery of the translator divert attention from the main textual event. This peripheral, or displaced, perspective in his writing parallels the cultural politics of his self-

<sup>2</sup> In Johnny Payne's consideration of Borges's relationship to translation, he situates the writer in a zone of political neutrality that he calls "rioting degree zero" (after Barthes's "writing degree zero"). He says Borges seeks "a zero degree of culture, exempt from those warring, mutually implicated factions" of his time (206). While Payne eloquently contextualizes the xenophobia of a tumultuous period of Argentine urban modernization, I part company with him on the issue of "neutrality." The political and historical underpinnings of Borges's work, detailed in Balderston's book-length study, correspond with his stance on translation and its significance in Argentina and the region.

<sup>3</sup> In this case, Borges refers to the English translation of Beckford's French original, a translation in which the author was involved.

declared marginality as an Argentine intellectual who confronts world literature as a critic, translator, poet and fiction writer. As Beatriz Sarlo states in her book, *Jorge Luis Borges: A Writer on the Edge*, "To read all world literature in Buenos Aires, to rewrite some of its texts, is an experience which cannot be compared to that of the writer who works on the secure terrain of a homeland that offers him or her an untroubled cultural tradition" (36).

Continually undermining the cosmopolitan nods to Western thought and tradition, Borges implicates his own, and Argentina's, marginality in his textual maneuvers. His references to, and work in, translation explore the issues of sacred and secular, local and foreign, verbal and non-verbal communication, the literary canon and its periphery. The insistence on translation in his essays and fiction questions those very categories and reasserts the periphery over the center.<sup>4</sup>

While many of Borges's stories hint at or toy with translation ("Pierre Menard, autor del Quijote," "El etnógrafo"), and still others pretend to be translations ("El jardín de senderos que se bifurcan," "El inmortal," "Un problema," "El informe de Brodie," "La secta de los 30" and "Undr"<sup>5</sup>), his story "El evangelio según Marcos" from the collection *El informe de Brodie* (1970) makes translation the center of its plot. The story borrows and transposes Bible stories, embedding them within dramatic reenactments, to reveal both the power and the peril of translating the sacred canon. This story is emblematic in its use of intertextual narrative games for the purpose of Borges's complex positioning within world litera-

---

<sup>4</sup> Walter Costa considers Borges's peripheral position in relation to his strategies of translation: "If a writer in a peripheral country dares to do more and to speak to the world he or she will probably be attacked for being alienated, elitist, and insensitive to the situation of cultural poverty suffered at home. . . . [Borges] did not merely transcend local limits by following the example of great foreign writers, but . . . [t]his gesture of exploration of dominant culture, which might have been viewed as a proof of subordination, is instead transformed into an affirmative gesture of autonomy" (184).

<sup>5</sup> Kristal discusses the presence of translation in the following Borges stories: "Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius," "El inmortal," "La muerte y la brújula," "Emma Zunz," "El jardín de senderos que se bifurcan," "Las ruinas circulares," "La escritura del dios" and "La lotería en Babilonia."

ture. Antoine Berman considers Luther's translation of the Bible as the pivotal event that launched the tradition of translation for German letters. With his typical irreverence, Borges continues the drama of Biblical translation in the Americas by problematizing the categories of the sacred and the profane, the oral and the written, and the original and the imitation in the context of Argentine lettered ground. As Sylvia Molloy notes, this story's cultural binarisms are "compromised, contaminated, always already *mixed*. Borges destabilizes both sides. . . . problematizes clean-cut divisions, univocal formulations of difference" ("Lost" 11). "El evangelio según Marcos" maps Borges's geocultural perspective by means of fictionalized Biblical translation.

In "El evangelio según Marcos," Baltasar Espinoza, a medical student from Buenos Aires, spends the summer on his cousin Daniel's ranch in the provinces. Daniel leaves within a few days for a business deal, leaving Baltasar at the ranch with the barely articulate foreman family, the Gutres. Heavy rains and flooding prolong Daniel's absence, and Baltasar emerges as the leader, teacher, interpreter, and new head of the household. In close quarters with the Gutres, he begins to read to them from a Bible he finds in English, spontaneously translating into Spanish. After numerous repetitions of Mark, the Gutres begin to attribute healing and mystical powers to their interim leader. Finally, when the rains cease, they lead Baltasar out to a patio where they have built a cross, destined for their transformed Christ-figure.

The protagonist of this story transmits the Gospel by re-telling and reading aloud in translation for his listeners. The metanarrative incorporation of Biblical tales and their translation exploits Biblical oral tradition.<sup>6</sup> The text questions both oral and written sources, and hints at the notion of a unitary original, or universal textuality. The translator's mastery is enhanced by the power of his sources and the circumstances of his delivery. Before a sug-

---

<sup>6</sup> "El evangelio según Marcos" offers a written reenactment of oral transmission in a metafictional move that reconstitutes the Bible tales in oral performances within written texts. The story simultaneously employs a number of metafictional and intertextual transformations, using citation, paraphrase, linguistic translation, dramatic adaptation and *mise en abîme*.

gestible audience, the potency of the translated narration leads to crucifixion.

Baltasar confronts the challenges of communicating across a series of cultural and linguistic divides. The Biblical tales are supposed to provide a foundation of recognition and understanding beyond the translating character's linguistic prowess or uncertainty.<sup>7</sup> For Berman, Biblical translation generated reflection on translation's "linguistic, literary, metaphysical, religious and historical implications, on the relation among languages, between same and other, between what is one's own and what is foreign" (12). Borges in this story has Baltasar attempt to bridge the gap of inarticulation and difference only to turn the familiarity of the Gospel against its "interpreter." Baltasar's spontaneous translation of Mark becomes an oral performance of human contact set against the characters' isolation. He resorts to translating for moral and cultural survival. Borges's successful protagonist suffers quite an unexpected fate: the efficacy of his translation transposes his own epiphanic destruction.

The translation of Biblical tales in this story problematizes the resonances of historic, mythical and sacred texts that become incorporated into new settings. Displaced and linguistically transposed, these writings and readings are wrenched from their canonical contexts. This displacement is emblematic of Latin America's complex process of cultural identification. In the philosophical and political shift from colonialism to independence, the place of culture comes under scrutiny. Literature from remote places and periods becomes "familiar" while local culture is viewed from within as peripheral. Baltasar arbitrarily employs Biblical tales to solidify his local, immediate affiliation, only to be cast as "other."

The story manipulates Baltasar's tenuous relationship to the Bible and religion to heighten the irony of his destiny. The Biblical "original" persists as a force looming over the protagonist's translation.<sup>8</sup> The responsibility inherent in tampering with the

<sup>7</sup> These translation performances involve "more than just 'verbal' elements. . . . The art and meaning . . . are realised not just in words but in the teller's delivery skills, the occasion, or the actions and reception of the audience" (Finnegan 19).

<sup>8</sup> Alvin C. Kibel mentions the necessity for translation in transmitting the canon:

sacred impinges on the translation scene. In order that some elements of the original's style and tone may come through, Baltasar adapts his own delivery. This is what compels him to stand at the table while reading, remembering his elocution lessons to tap into ancient oral culture and rhetoric (1070). His authoritative stance causes the Gutres to clear the table so as not to stain or mark the book.

Borges's narrator stages the activity and circumstances of the repeated Gospel readings without ever quoting Baltasar's translations. Excluding the reader from the discourse of Baltasar's performance reasserts the distance between textual versions. Borges creates a textual level in which only the Gutres participate, a structural segregation that underscores their marginality. At the end of "El evangelio según Marcos," the various layers overlap, and the gospel tale takes over Borges's story. Borges's text caves in on itself, creating an intertextual *mise en abîme*. This story offers an apocalyptic version of Berman's assertion that "translation seeks to play with languages and their literatures, to make them 'fall into' one another at all levels" (15). In "El evangelio según Marcos," translation together with geographical isolation, two factors that profoundly mark the Argentine experience, form a vortex into which all versions fall.

Baltasar's crucifixion, and its intertextual circumscription, leaves the translation's meaning unresolved. The listeners' interpretation is either ironic or historically fated. Ironically, Baltasar's end could be considered a misguided act based on misinterpreting a translated text. His immortality then becomes a joke, the Gutres' privately canonized mistake. However, perhaps Baltasar's reckless trafficking in the sacred is all too effective and ensnares him in his own success. The story's finale is reminiscent of the sixteenth-century Bible translator, William Tyndale, burned at the stake as a heretic in 1536.<sup>9</sup> Baltasar's subtly efficient performance

---

"the essential feature of the canonical text [is,] namely, that it is established as such only in relation to a secondary kind of writing, which demands the continued presence of an original in the course of transmitting its meaning" (243).

<sup>9</sup> The Protestant reformer William Tyndale was the first to translate the Bible from the original Hebrew and Greek into English. Others before and after Tyndale were

incites the Gutres to reenact Christ's fate with their substitute (translated) master because they no longer distinguish between the original and his translation. Frequently Borges's work invites readers to cross linguistic, geographical and historical divides through translations (real or fictional) that confuse or deny the fixedness of an original. As Balderston states, "Borges opens new discursive spaces by blurring genealogies and points of origin" ("Borges" 44).

In "El evangelio según Marcos," the Bible's familiarity contrasts with the translator's groping and awkward communication with his audience. The story hints at being a transcription of a spontaneous oral performance. This framed tale is structured to implicate all levels of the story in competition for validity and verisimilitude.<sup>10</sup> The activity of translation within the oral episodes contributes to this contest among the textual levels. Linguistic otherness allows the translator/protagonist more authorial leverage in his tale, establishing his role as master of his version. Ricardo Piglia notes that Borges "works in a special, tense way with Spanish" (65), creating tensions between versions (fictitious ones, in this case) that resonate. Marking a translation with signs of its difference, according to Lawrence Venuti, offers the reader an awareness of its otherness not only linguistically but also politically, in time and place, whereby the inadequacies of translation can appear justified, even purposeful.<sup>11</sup> The fictional translation scene in "El evangelio según Marcos" questions the categories of

---

similarly executed for attempting to undermine the political and religious hold of the Roman Catholic hierarchy, although he is the only heretic explicitly executed for Biblical translation.

<sup>10</sup> The metafictional episodes of oral transmission dramatize a crisis within the story's fictional classification. The story exploits the uneasiness that arises when the roles of listener/spectator and teller/actor blur. Borges discusses this role reversal in his essay "Magias parciales del Quijote": "¿Por qué nos inquieta que Don Quijote sea lector del *Quijote*, y Hamlet, espectador de *Hamlet*?[...] tales inversiones sugieren que si los caracteres de una ficción pueden ser lectores o espectadores, nosotros, sus lectores o espectadores, podemos ser ficticios" (OC 669). "El evangelio según Marcos" challenges fiction's ontological status by empowering storytelling to take over the story.

<sup>11</sup> See Venuti's *The Scandals of Translation*.

otherness and difference, fundamentally undermining or perhaps even overturning their position in defining Latin America with respect to Western tradition.

Baltasar as translator in this story is cast in a performance role that remains linked to a weighty but inaccessible source. The story hints at citation but provides none, and thus precludes the reader from holding the protagonist accountable for his version. The book from which the story might have quoted is itself in the wrong language. There is nothing coincidental or arbitrary about that language being English. Molloy remarks on Borges's translinguistic positioning of his protagonist, who grew up "with a bilingual education in an English school and with a set of beliefs . . . in which cultural dependency coexists with ambivalent attitudes towards autochthony and a vague sense of national pride" ("Lost" 11). Great Britain as a neocolonial power has a long history in Argentina aside from Borges's own Anglophilia. The British overthrow of Rosas in the nineteenth century, the financing and management of the railroad system, and the control of the Malvinas Islands are some of those neocolonial reference points. The plot's ironic displacement onto the pampa where the Gutres are positioned as the indigenized "other" (or, as Molloy puts it, "Scots 'gone native'" ["Lost" 11]), hints at the nostalgia for gaucho life that Borges so fiercely rejected. The insistence on English, simultaneously a multilinguistic and neocolonial presence, makes the Gutres' Scottish descent another counter-colonial critique. Molloy mentions that the language into which Baltasar translates remains ambiguous,<sup>12</sup> although I contend that Spanish is the implied target language given the story's context, serving the characters, however treacherously, as their lingua franca. The multiple distances, round-about communication and make-shift (if not frankly shifty) loyalties problematize the translation scene around language, politics and genealogy. As usual, Borges "show[s] a desire to distance the translation from the original rather than approximate it to it. . . [he] favours the version which modifies the original, accultur-

<sup>12</sup> "Borges's story is sufficiently ambiguous to leave unclear what is being translated into what. . . we do not know what actual language Espinosa uses to read out loud" (Molloy 10).

ates it, adapts it to its own literary traditions and disfavours that which shows respect for the original" (Milton 91, 94).

Textual authority, in this story and for Borges in general, is generated from the margins, what Molloy calls the outskirts or "las orillas" (17), and what Sarlo calls the periphery or edge. In "El evangelio según Marcos," a young student in a precarious and temporary role spontaneously author(ize)s his text through his translation performance. Extensive intertextuality further complicates the authorial position. A variety of allusions intermingles with the textual layers, as the narrator enumerates literary artifacts that are part of the scene. Baltasar finds that "[e]n toda la casa no había otros libros que una serie de la revista *La Chacra*, un manual de veterinaria, un ejemplar de lujo del Tabaré, una *Historia del Shorthorn en la Argentina*, unos cuantos relatos eróticos o policiales y una novel reciente: *Don Segundo Sombra*" (OC 1069).<sup>13</sup> This list of titles, representing a variety of genres, sets the stage for the textual games to come. *Don Segundo Sombra*, the 1926 novel by Argentine Ricardo Güiraldes, appearing here as a literary novelty, is more than an allusion. This romanticized *gaucho* novel was published around the time the story takes place. Borges inserts it as a metafictional irony that frames Baltasar, since *Don Segundo Sombra's* protagonist is a cultural misfit who awkwardly tries to fuse the nomadic orality of the *gaucho* with the literate landowning culture of the elite. Borges's enumeration of genres reveals pieces of the literary canon isolated among the non-literary Gutres.

The boundaries between writing and speech blur in this story. Baltasar, who refuses his cousin's invitation and stays behind to be with his "textbooks," neglects them for a translated Bible that he must again translate orally. The overlapping of writing and speech in this story rejects any hierarchy that would privilege either source. The narration undermines the expectations of an "original" in the diffusion of storytelling levels that converge in the plot.<sup>14</sup> The translated performance generates catharsis and

<sup>13</sup> For some remarks by Borges on Güiraldes and translation, see Waisman 133-34 and Kristal 9-10.

<sup>14</sup> This textual relativity is coherent with the Derridean concept of Writing that recognizes and incorporates the content underlying writing. Derrida's Writing in-

transformation due to a potent simultaneity of textual levels.

Borges's translation scenes reveal a search for tradition and local identity in his protagonists' estrangement. Translated intertexts attempt to recreate community, to resist distance and absence. The geography, the travel and isolation of the protagonist in "El evangelio según Marcos," contrasted with the ideas of community are reminiscent of Jewish (Old Testament) identity and names, attachment to land, the struggle against exile and dispersion, and the search for a homeland. Those spatial contests hint at Latin America's nation building and cultural development, and the challenge of forging a new literature that will go beyond imitating European letters to find some recognition within world literature. In fact, the interaction and coexistence of languages so characterizes the emergence of literate culture in Latin America that one critic points to translation as the acknowledgment of this multiplicity of languages rather than as monolingualistic nationalism, as "the model for an Argentinian literature" (Rosman 23, my emphasis). When Baltasar is away from home and yearns for familiarity, he surrounds himself with a temporary but incomplete extended family and his storytelling attempts to fill the familial absence. His English to Spanish translation of Mark charismatically establishes linguistic boundaries. It reasserts the local and national, through language, as the home ground on which the Gutres (whose name, he finds out in the genealogy scribbled on the front pages of the Bible, is a translation of Guthries) must function.

For Borges, translation inevitably means dispersion but also deliverance and liberation. Its links with future readers/listeners also reveal previously hidden intertexts. As Sarlo concludes about this story, "[t]his sinister parable of the power of reading demonstrates that, for Borges, cross-cultural blending is one of the imaginative strategies needed to liberate literary invention

---

vites the dynamic presence of a written message's essential roots and substance beyond its material inscription. Derrida defines Writing as "not only the physical gestures of literal pictographic or ideographic inscription, but also the totality of what makes it possible; and also, beyond the signifying face, the signified face itself. And thus we say 'writing' for all that gives rise to an inscription in general . . . not only the system of notation secondarily connected with these activities but the essence and the content of these activities themselves" (*Of Grammatology* 9).

from the claims of realism and the repetitive routine of everyday experience" (29-30).

The Borges story considered here maps out several trajectories of translation: the problematics of "continuity" and fidelity, the cross-cultural role of translation, the potential treason of misinterpretation, and the entanglement of stories within stories. Baltasar engages in Biblical transmission in an effort to reassimilate culturally,<sup>15</sup> and inadvertently becomes a virtual master of the word.

"El evangelio según Marcos" dramatizes a transcultural and translational encounter, an encounter that Molloy considers a "provokingly heterogeneous Latin American cultural scene" (12). The story's heterogeneity emerges not only from the "foreign" references and Biblical allusions so familiar to Borges's readers, but also from the tensions that vacillate between the periphery and the center, the hinterland and the metropolis, the colonized and the colonizer. Certainly no apology for the oppressed, the story overturns hierarchies of language, social class and religious affiliation precisely to complicate the facile notions of cultural dominance operative in Latin America.

At the same time that it demonstrates how pivotal translation has been to Latin American literary and cultural development historically, intellectually, and politically, "El evangelio según Marcos" also dramatizes the risks of translation. Beyond the trope of "traduttore, traditore," these risks are ontological and strategic, since translation as a tool of cultural identification—or even survival—can be a double-edged sword. The Modern Language Association hosted a panel on translation in the Americas to explore the plurilingual nature of contemporary communication, including the richness of its discomfort and misunderstanding. Mary Louise Pratt's contribution discusses the "imperative of translation" (28) in cross-cultural confrontations and elaborates the "entanglements" or the uneasy, often hostile interactions when meaning comes up against alterity. Her examples from Andean colonial documents offer a curious analogue to Borges's story. In one ex-

<sup>15</sup> As Molloy points out about Baltasar, "Borges gives him an Anglophile free-thinking father, a devout Catholic mother, and a name, Baltasar Espinosa, unerringly pointing to a Sephardic heritage" (11).

ample, a *criollo* recounts the execution of Túpac Amaru in 1781 in indigenous terms, transposing the scene into a Christian dramatization: “the account translates back into Christianity, into the scene of the Crucifixion, coding Túpac Amaru as a Christ figure, the Spanish as cruel and pagan Romans” (32). The presentation of the scene, in Spanish but honoring and showing compassion for the vanquished, straddles cultural reference points. Accounts like this one illustrate the intersecting systems of cultural encoding in a heterogeneous community, the inescapable glosses that have infiltrated consciousness alongside the imposition of a colonial language and religion. Baltasar’s fate in Borges’s story becomes another sacrificial emblem of multilingual misunderstanding and misinterpretation.<sup>16</sup> A martyr to the naive belief in language as communication, a casualty of the traffic accidents of meaning, the victim in “El evangelio según Marcos” can be none other than the translator.

The tension and danger associated with translation in this story by Borges underscore the consequences of the presence of translation in Latin American writing culture. Translation’s inevitability, its imperative as Mary Louise Pratt points out in imperial enterprises, does not guarantee proximity or accessibility. Translation in the colonial and postcolonial context also manipulates distances and highlights marginality. Latin American literature exhibits many of the characteristics of “postcolonial” writing that theorists have studied in writing from India and Africa (see Bhabha, Tiffin et al.). The intersection of languages is a hallmark of postcolonial literature, according to William Ashcroft, and Latin American writing clearly demonstrates this distinguishing feature. Translation and language variance are symptoms of “a writing which actually *installs* distance and absence in the interstices of the text” (Ashcroft 61). In Roberto Ignacio Díaz’s study of Spanish American writing in languages other than Spanish, he centers his entire argument around Spanish America’s “eccentric tradition of

---

<sup>16</sup> Waisman devotes an entire chapter to Borges’s adventures in “mistranslations” (chapter 4). He considers mistranslation part of Borges’s aesthetics of displacement, and relates this aspect of his work to Deleuze and Guattari’s concept of “minor” literature.

heterolingualism" (33).<sup>17</sup> The projection onto other cultures and literatures reveals shifting and conflicting identifications, such as that of Europe as a figure of a former colonizer from which the new nations need to be freed as well as a source of "high" culture or "civilization" with which to identify. José Quiroga considers translation especially crucial for Latin America because, according to him, "before being translated into another language, say, English, or French, or German, Latin American texts are already translations of a previous source that in itself questions the notion of original" (Quiroga 168). Foreign terms, neologisms, ethno-rhythmic prose, transcription of dialects, and syntactic fusion are the discursive markers of postcolonial writing before it is even translated. This straddling and intersecting of cultural associations and linguistic practices is what marks the literature of the Americas. These markers are what Homi Bhabha considers a text's "unhomely moments," or the rites of "extra-territorial and cross-cultural initiation" (9). Baltasar's initiation in "El evangelio según Marcos" becomes an ironic homecoming on the pampa. Rather than affirming his national identity, his isolation on the ranch highlights his eloquence as a translator and orator in the great Western tradition, only to destroy him.

Borges is interested in the drama of translation, the circumstances and personalities, their phobias and fascinations. It is clear from essays such as "Los traductores de las 1001 Noches" that "originals" for Borges become simply a first version in a textualization process.<sup>18</sup> If he prefers Mardrus and Burton over Littman and Galland, it is not because their translations are superior, but rather because their versions encompass a whole lit-

<sup>17</sup> Díaz studies writers who have chosen to write in French or English, such as the Countess of Merlin, W. H. Hudson or Guillermo Cabrera Infante (in this latter case, his book *Holy Smoke* in particular). He claims these writers' work in languages other than Spanish ought to be incorporated into a sort of expanded canon of Spanish American literature. For Díaz, despite the dominance of Spanish, the region's literary production "at times also exposes significant cracks through which foreign tongues come back to haunt the critical edifice" (31).

<sup>18</sup> As Costa asserts, "[t]hrough the incessant reading of multiple translations a transcendent instance is created, of which the original is just one version, despite being the first in the series" (185).

erature, “presuponen un rico proceso anterior” (OC 412). Similarly, in his essay “Kafka y sus precursores,” Borges expresses his keen awareness of, perhaps even obsession with, the textual networks that produce what one reads, particularly if one is, as he declares with ironic humility, “un mero literato—y ése, de la República meramente Argentina” (412). Borges’s translations—his actual literary translations, his commentaries on examining others’ translations, and in particular his invented translational episodes—form the foundations of a literary and cultural position that considers relativity, multiplicity and distance inescapable characteristics of Latin America’s developing literary tradition.

*Marcy Schwartz*  
*Rutgers University*

#### WORKS CITED

- Balderston, Daniel. “Borges: The Argentine Writer and the ‘Western’ Tradition.” In *Borges and Europe Revisited*. Ed. Evelyn Fishburn. London: Institute of Latin American Studies, 1998. 37-48.
- . *Out of Context: Historical Reference and the Representation of Reality in Borges*. Durham: Duke UP, 1993.
- Balderston, Daniel and Marcy Schwartz, eds. *Voice-Overs: Translation and Latin American Literature*. Albany: SUNY P, 2002.
- Berman, Antoine. *The Experience of the Foreign: Culture and Translation in Romantic Germany*. Trans. S. Heyvaert. Albany: SUNY P, 1992.
- Bhabha, Homi. *The Location of Culture*. London: Routledge, 1994.
- Borges, Jorge Luis. *Obras completas*. Buenos Aires: Emecé, 1974.
- Costa, Walter. “Borges, the Original of the Translation.” In *Voice-Overs: Translation and Latin American Literature*. Eds. Daniel Balderston and Marcy Schwartz. Albany: SUNY P, 2002. 182-93.
- Derrida, Jacques. *Of Grammatology*. Trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1974.

- Díaz, Roberto Ignacio. *Unhomely Rooms: Foreign Tongues and Spanish American Literature*. Lewisburg: Bucknell UP, 2002.
- Finnegan, Ruth. *Oral Traditions and the Verbal Arts*. London: Routledge, 1992.
- Hurley, Andrew. "What I Lost When I Translated Borges." *Cadernos de Tradução* 4 (1999): 289-304.
- Kibel, Alvin C. "The Canonical Text." *Daedalus* (1983): 239-54.
- Kristal, Efraín. *Invisible Work: Borges and Translation*. Nashville: Vanderbilt UP, 2002.
- Milton, John. "'Make me macho, make me gaucho, make me skinny': Jorge Luis Borges' Desire to Lose Himself in Translation." *Cadernos de Tradução* 4 (1999): 87-98.
- Molloy, Sylvia. "Can We Talk? Introduction." "Presidential Forum. Can We Talk? Translation in the Americas." *Profession* (2002): 4-7.
- . "Lost in Translation: Borges, the Western Tradition and Fictions of Latin America." In *Borges and Europe Revisited*. Ed. Evelyn Fishburn. London: Institute of Latin American Studies, 1998. 8-20.
- Payne, Johnny. *Conquest of the New Word: Experimental Fiction and Translation in the Americas*. Austin: U Texas P, 1993.
- Piglia, Ricardo. "Writing and Translation." In *Voice-Overs: Translation and Latin American Literature*. Eds. Daniel Balderston and Marcy Schwartz. Albany: SUNY P, 2002. 64-67.
- Pratt, Mary Louise. "The Traffic in Meaning: Translation, Contagion, Infiltration." *Profession* (2002): 25-36.
- Rosman, Silvia N. "Of Travelers, Foreigners and Nomads: The Nation in Translation." *Latin American Literary Review* 26.51 (1998): 17-29.
- Sarlo, Beatriz. *Jorge Luis Borges: A Writer on the Edge*. London: Verso, 1993.
- Schwartz, Marcy. "Tradition and Treason: Sacred Translation in Two Stories by Borges and Chekhov," *Canadian Review of Comparative Literature* 23.4 (1996): 1085-95.
- Van Gorp, H. "La traduction littéraire parmi les autres metatextes." In *Literature and Translation*. Eds. James S. Holmes, José Lambert and Raymond Van den Broeck. Leuven, Belgium: Acco, 1978. 101-16.

Venuti, Lawrence. *The Scandals of Translation: Towards an Ethics of Difference*. New York: Routledge, 1998.

Waisman, Sergio. *Borges and Translation: The Irreverence of the Periphery*. Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell UP, 2005.