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Abstract: Provides information on the relationship and work of novelists James Joyce and Jorge Luis *Borges*. Contributions of Joyce and *Borges* in literature; Why Joyce held a fascination for the works of *Borges*; Information on the Irish-Argentine connection between Joyce and *Borges*.

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NOTES TO *BORGES'S* NOTES ON JOYCE: INFINITE AFFINITIES

Man is the creature that cannot come forth, who knows others only in himself. (49)
Proust, cited by Beckett.

THOUGH JAMES JOYCE AND JORGE LUIS *BORGES* shared the brotherhood of blindness, we would not immediately consider the Irish modernist polyphonic novelist and the Argentine author of compressed, self-negating "postmodern" fictions that tolled the death knell of the modernist novel to be literary confreres.(n1) Both had a comparable impact on the direction of literary innovation, however: Joyce in the first half of the twentieth century, *Borges* in the second. From his 1925 review of *Ulysses* to his 1969 poem "Invocation to Joyce," *Borges* alternated between admiration and criticism in his assessments of Joyce. As his biographer Emir Rodriguez Monegal comments, "more than Pound or Eliot, Joyce] was the symbol of the Modernists, the one who had explored and discovered new forms for the language" (347). *Borges's* early enthusiasm for Joyce coincided with his "ultraista" phase in the early 1920s, a time when he focused on the revival of Baroque metaphors and syntax and helped initiate ultraismo, a Spanish avant-garde poetic movement. This phase would lead to gorges's revolutionary poetics of prose, which reached full fruition when he began writing fiction in the mid-thirties.

As Gerald Martin suggests, Joyce held an early fascination for *Borges* because he had produced "new ideas about what a book, a writer, a person, life and words are" (152). But while *Borges* admired what Joyce intended (the portrayal of a total, simultaneous mental reality), as well as what he represented as a writer, he questioned Joyce's excessive demands on the reader. Joyce was one of a series of patriarchs, beginning with gorges's father, whom *Borges* superseded through mentally fathering his own forebear. *Borges* created an autonomous American literary language that turned the tables and colonized Europe, in effect making the son into the father. According to L.A. Murillo, if Joyce's polyphonic language represented a "stream," gorges's "compact, conceptual" writing represented a "'structure' of consciousness" (xviii). John Irwin also compares their similar way of representing infinity by creating texts that contain themselves, producing endlessly circular readings (20).

Borges confirmed his affinities with Joyce both explicitly--in several short articles from 1925 to 1941--and through the implied presence of Joyce in some of his key fictions written in the 1940s, notably "Pierre Menard, Author of Don Quixote," "runes the Memorious," and "The Aleph." In

his January 1925 review in *Proa* of the newly published *Ulysses*, Borges, while admitting his limitations as a bilingual reader of Joyce's expansive English, registered both boundless admiration and ironic ambivalence about a literary figure who would become a legend in Borges's lifetime, a priest of the new who both scandalized and inspired. Newness or perhaps originality is the key to this ambivalence and to the particular confrontation between Joyce and Borges. *Borges* would ultimately translate Joyce's efforts to write the simultaneity of perceived reality into his own terms by going beyond verbal language's limitations as a successive medium and transcending the temporal linearity of texts through the inscription of circular readings(n2)

Borges's ambivalent mode of admiration is ever-present: while perversely executing his review in the mannered style of his early prose, he disapprovingly compares Joyce's excess to Gongora's. (n3) Speaking for other Latin American writers as well, Vargas Llosa has said that *Borges* shaped "our personal geography out of an intense involvement with European literature," creating a new world literary identity by rewriting the old world (10). Rewriting the Spanish Language with the help of French and English literary models meant subverting "the Spanish language's natural tendency toward excess." Joyce then curiously represents an excess that *Borges* was both turning toward and against: he embodied but also contested literary authority. As cannibalistic reader and fanatically original (re)writer par excellence, *Borges* made European writers such as the "excessive" Joyce his own. Like Joyce, *Borges* was drawn to the vast canonical works they both inherited as readers, particularly Homer's epics and Dante's encompassing allegories. In his Anglo-Argentine father's library, *Borges* needed to transform this reverence for the canon--which now included Joyce's rereading of that canon--in order to follow his own path.(n4)

Narcissistic identification and filial rivalry enter into this combat of texts, Joyce representing both the writer's idealized virility and the modernist father. As John Irwin comments on Borges's first literary acts--the translation into Spanish of Oscar Wilde's "The Happy Prince," and the translation into "quite bad English" of "a handbook on Greek mythology"--the "whole question of translating a text into or out of English was coded...as a paternal inheritance" (302). But Joyce was also a "third world" brother disguised in European clothing--colonially marginalized as both an Irishman and as an exile, whose only territory, the written page, was further shadowed by blindness. Blindness--the blindness of Borges's father--was after all at the root of Borges's creative career; as he says in his "Autobiographical Essay," "it was tacitly understood that I was to fulfill the literary destiny that circumstances had denied my father... I was expected to be a writer" (211).

I. Joyce and Borges: Brotherhood and the Irish-Argentine Connection

Borges was always seeking himself in the writers he read, loved, or loved to hate--a Narcissus perpetually leaning over the mirror of letters. His "psychoanalysis" of precursors--he would mock the first term and reinvent the second--is a displaced route into his own psyche.(n5)

In the 1937 condensed biography, *Borges* writes: "Joyce's personal history, like that of certain nations, gets lost in mythologies" (83). One of Borges's chief lessons, learned from his readings as well as the act of reading, is that the line between history and myth, biography and fiction, is often too fine to perceive. The Joyce "legend" that *Borges* fixes on is one that reflected Borges's own life: "At age nine, he [Joyce] published an elegiacal pamphlet on the heroic leader Charles Stewart Parnell." At age nine, *Borges* publishes his first work, a translation of "The Happy Prince" by another admired Irishman, Oscar Wilde. In fact Parnell's name comes up in "The Shape of the Sword," one of several "Irish" tales by *Borges* about a hero who, torn between the idealism of revolution and the compromises of politics and cowardice, is also a traitor.

It is not hard to read Joyce's presence among the doubles and rivals in the "Shape of the Sword" and "Traitor and the Hero" and in a character named Black Finnegan in "Death and the Compass." These stories are full of identification and rivalry, struggles with national as well as biological

fathers, and conflicts between idealism and reality. Moreover, in "The Shape of the Sword" and "The Traitor and the Hero" there is a brotherhood of colonial marginality between Argentina and Ireland vis a vis successful imperialisms. For gorges, history is repeated in colonial Argentina's rebellion against mother Spain and cannibalistic appropriation of father France, the capital of culture. As the son of an Anglophile, he perhaps sees in Argentina's relation to Europe a mirror of the iconoclastic relationship between Ireland and England.

Borges's and Joyce's shared sense of marginality, and perhaps their shared sense of filial rebellion, enabled both to espouse an impersonal, subversively creative view of tradition. *Borges* writes in the 1925 review:

James Joyce is Irish. The Irish were always famous for being the iconoclasts of the British Isles. Less sensitive to verbal decorum than their detested lords, less inclined to pour their eyes upon the smooth moon or to dissect in long free-verse laments the impermanence of the rivers, they have made deep incursions into the territory of English letters, pruning all rhetorical exuberance with frank impiety. Jonathan Swift acted as corrosive acid upon the elation of our human hopes, and Voltaire's *Micromegas* and *Candide* are nothing if not cheaper versions of his severe nihilism. Laurence Sterne unraveled the novel by making merry with the reader's expectations and with those oblique digressions that are now the source of his multitudinous fame; Bernard Shaw is today's most pleasing realist; but of Joyce I will say that he exercises with dignity his Irish audacity. (3-4)(n6)

This passage leaves no doubt that Joyce's Irish subversiveness contributes to the bond of affection felt by his fellow "odd man out" in Argentina. Throughout the condensed biography, *Borges* weaves a web of affinities: gorges, who, like many writers, rejected his early experiments and even tried to burn all the copies of his early publications, comments that "Joyce's first books are not important. Or rather only as anticipations of *Ulysses*" (83). *Borges* also notes that Joyce worked on *Ulysses* those "terrible years" from 1914-1921, years of the first world war and of civil strife in Ireland, an observation that oddly foreshadows gorges's own wartime alienation from his fellow Argentines during those terrible years of WWII when many of his friends were praising Hitler and National Socialism, and when he wrote some of his best fiction.

Borges highlights the fact that Joyce married "Miss Norah Healy" (*Borges* is referring to Nora Barnacle by another of her family names) from Galway the same year that his mother died (1904); Joyce apparently consummated his love for Nora Barnacle on June 16 of that year, hence the magical importance of "Bloomsday." In gorges's life an equally momentous occasion is connected with the death of a parent: in 1938 gorges's father dies, and he begins to write fiction. (n7) The last affinity, with which *Borges* ends his obituary, is the bond he most obviously shares with Joyce: blindness. *Borges* and Joyce were, like their beloved Homer, blind bards. How could they not be kindred spirits, two avid readers for whom words could only be music to their ears?

II. Brilliant Failures

Joyce's presence can be read in many of gorges's key stories, not only the "Irish" ones. There is little doubt that, as Daniel Balderston argues, Joyce's impossible enterprise of rewriting the foundational epic *Odyssey* inspired the absurdly ambitious Pierre Menard's impossible enterprise of rewriting the first modern novel, *Don Quixote*. Indeed, the date of *Ulysses's* publication in Paris in 1922 corresponds to the time of Menard's tour de force, and Menard, a provincial writer from Montpellier, would certainly have his eyes "cast in the direction of Paris" (21). Menard's polyglossia--a Frenchman who writes in Spanish, just as gorges, an Argentine, writes in Spanish a text that is supposedly written in French--is perhaps the principal evidence of Joyce's presence in this parable. We need only remember gorges's praise of Joyce's "contaminated" polyglot Irish language(s) not only in *Ulysses* but in "Work-in-progress" or "Obra-en-gestacion." "From what

I've seen," writes *Borges* in the condensed biography, "[It] is a texture of languid word play in an English run through with German, Italian and Latin . . ." (84). In "Pierre Menard" we are not dealing with procedures identical to those "excesses" of Joyce, but "Pierre Menard," supposedly written by a Frenchman in a French style, asks an answerless question about the supposed clear "national" boundaries between languages.

Borges's character Ireneo Funes is yet another avatar of Joyce; who but "runes the Memorious" with his unlimited memory could do the kind of "simultaneous" reading that Joyce's "inconceivable" books require?(n8) The story was written in 1942, the year after Joyce died. In "Fragment on Joyce" *Borges* says that he cannot be the reader Joyce required, and alludes to the story he's writing about Funes, the only lucid man on earth who can see and remember all (135). Funes is also *Borges's* ideal reader carried to an extreme, as Matei Calinescu observes, a reader who would be able to conjure with each sign the whole design of the narrative (22). At the same time, Funes (like Menard) is a brilliant failure; because of his vast memory, he cannot select, hence cannot think, make discoveries, or draw analogies. *Borges* both mocks such impossible tasks and regrets the human limitations (upon "time, the intensity of sustained attention, the quality of memory") that make them impossible, as Calinescu observes of *Borges's* refusal or inability to finish reading Ulysses.

Perhaps the ultimate confirmation of Joyce's presence in these fictions of the early forties is in "The Aleph." Wandering around Dublin in chapter 1 of Ulysses, paternal Leopold Bloom passes "the face of Bethel. El, yes! house of: Aleph, Beth" (71). In his 1925 review of Ulysses, twenty years before *Borges* wrote his "Aleph," whose narrator attempts to describe a tiny point in the basement of a poet's house which contains all space and time, *Borges* paid tribute to Joyce's pursuit of the Aleph:

In Joyce's unrelenting examination of the tiniest details that constitute consciousness, he stops the flow of time and defers its movement with a mollifying gesture contrary to the impatient goading of the English drama, which encloses the life of its heroes in the narrow thrusting rush of a few crowded hours. (5)

Doesn't gorges, a labyrinth builder and a son like (Stephen) Daedalus, both supersede Joyce and mock the attempt to represent totality (which can only be a failure) by enclosing the universe in the narrow thrusting rush of an instant, the fleeting moment when he suspends language's successive motion to give us the Aleph?

III. Joyce and the NEW (logisms)

The future of the text is never closed... The pun is the philosopheme of this ear tuned to the other. (Ulmer 167-8)

Borges's first contact with Joyce coincided with a period of ultraist fervor: armed with the project to express the new and contradictory Argentine reality, *Borges* adopted a radical poetics arising from the European avant-garde. The 1925 review begins with the discourse of a discoverer, comically appropriating Joyce's telescoping citations back to antiquity's "first travelers," Homer and Horace:

I am the first traveler from the Hispanic world to set foot upon the shores of Ulysses, a lush wilderness already traversed by Valery Larbaud who traced its dense texture with the impeccable precision of a mapmaker. I will nonetheless insist upon describing it again, even though, as a flighty dilettante, I have merely skirted its underbrush. I will speak of it with the license my admiration lends me and with the murky intensity of those ancient explorers who described lands new to their nomadic amazement, and whose stories about the Amazons and the City of the

Caesars combined fantasy and truth. (3)

Here the colonized becomes the colonizer! Aping Joyce's urbanity with selvatic metaphors, *Borges* hacks his way through Joyce's metropolitan jungle with a sharp-edged machete:

He is a millionaire of words and styles. Aside from the prodigious funds of voices that constitute the English language, his commerce spreads wherever the Irish clover grows, from Castillian doubloons and Judas's shekels to Roman denariuses and other ancient coinage. His prolific pen exercises all the rhetorical figures. Each episode exalts yet another poetic strategy, another private lexicon. One is written in syllogisms, another in questions and answers, another in narrative sequence. In two of them there is a silent soliloquy--a heretofore unpublished form (derived from the Frenchman Edouard Dujardin, as Joyce told Larbaud) through which we hear his characters think at length. (6)

Fourteen years later in an article on *Finnegans Wake* called "Joyce and Neologisms" (1939), *Borges* continued to praise Joyce's polyglossia, pointing out his favorite calembour from this work, an allusion to *Samson Agonistes*: "Secular phoenish" (phoenix and finish). But in "El ultimo libro de Joyce," a previous note on "Work-in-Progress" (an early stage of *Finnegans Wake*), *Borges* claims he is not impressed by most of the wordplay, and that other writers before Joyce, such as the Uruguayan-French poet Jules Laforgue and Lewis Carroll had done "a better job" at making calembours and portmanteaus. Yet he insists that Joyce is "one of the first writers of our times. Verbally, perhaps the first. . ." and that there are sentences and paragraphs as good as Shakespeare and Sir Thomas Browne. He quotes frugally the last line of *Finnegans Wake*, Part 1: "Beside the rivering waters of, hitherandthithering waters of Night" (328).(n9)

He admires the polyglot musicality of Joyce's inventions and their evocation of his favorite Baroque writers; as he reiterates in his 1941 obituary note "Fragment on Joyce," their "verbal knack . . . can be compared to that in Hamlet or Urn Burial" (136). On the other hand, he sees them as compensations for what (opposing Gilbert) he calls a lack of "the talent to construct, . . . which he was obliged to supplant with arduous symmetries and labyrinths" (136). At the center of *Borges's* combativeness toward Joyce's genius is the following question: can Joyce construct a readable narrative?(n10) As *Borges* seems to acknowledge, Joyce captures a reality that *Borges* could (or would) not. Yet *Borges* implies that Latin American fiction needed to recalculate realism. What drives *Borges's* writing is, precisely, an Argentine sense of unreality, hence, in his texts he strives to create at the very least a simulacrum of a simulacrum.

IV. Joyce and the Total Reality

In the 1925 review, *Borges* presents Joyce as a clever re-creator of canonical narrative forms:

Shakespeare--to use his own metaphor--invested in the turning of the hourglass the exploits of many years; Joyce inverts the procedure and unfolds his hero's single day into many days upon the reader. (I haven't said, by the way, many siestas.) (5)

The allusion to Ulysses as an antidote to insomnia could be seen as *Borges's* playful way of turning his filial ignorance into patricidal irony, but *Borges* would reply that he is, above all, a hedonistic reader." *Borges* continues, however, with a comment that seems to denigrate his own "mediocre" efforts and praise the complex totality of Ulysses:

A total reality teems tumultuously in the pages of Ulysses, and not the mediocre reality of those who notice in the world only the abstract operations of the mind and its ambitious fear of not being able to overcome death, nor that other half reality that enters only our senses, juxtaposing our flesh and the streets, the moon and the well. The duality of existence dwells within this book,

an ontological anxiety that is not merely amazed at being, but at being in this particular world where there are entranceways and words and playing cards and electric writing upon the translucence of the night. (5)

In his delicate discernment between "being" and "being in this world," it is hard to distinguish whether "mediocre" refers to the representation or to the reality itself (though one may argue that in *Borgesian* terms there is no difference), but in any case the irony is multiple: the mediocre reality of the mind is not only *Borges's* but also Joyce's world. The chaotic enumeration (entranceways, words, playing cards) summarizes, of course, all that gorges, regardless of Joyce, was writing about at that time in his poetry devoted to the brave new city of Buenos Aires.

In talking about what Joyce is doing, *Borges* is talking about what he is doing. Later, in his condensed biography, he emphasizes praise rather than criticism by shifting the discussion from structure to style: "At first sight it is chaotic; Stuart Gilbert's *Ulysses* (1930) declares its strict and hidden laws. The delicate music of its prose is incomparable . . ." (84). And yet there is implicit praise of the work's structure. The words "strict and hidden laws" define, after all, *Borges's* own magical causality, what he himself would practice as a narrator who, for example in the magnificent chaotic enumeration that describes the "aleph," was also seeking ways to write "a total reality."

He continues:

In no other book (except perhaps those written by Gomez de la Serna) do we witness the actual presence of things with such convincing firmness. All things are latent and the diction of any voice is capable of making them emerge and of leading the reader down their avenue. De Quincey recounts that it was enough to name the Roman consul in his dreams in order to set off fiery visions of flying banners and military splendor. In the fifteenth episode of his work, Joyce sketches a delirious brothel scene, and the chance conjuring of any loose phrase or idea ushers in hundreds--the sum is not an exaggeration but exact--of absurd speakers and impossible events.

Joyce portrays a day in modern life and piles up a variety of episodes in its course which equal in spirit those events that inform Homer's *Odyssey*.(n12)

Not only Homer and Shakespeare but also Aristotle and Dante are implicated in Joyce's rewriting of the canon:

Ulysses . . . is the story of one single day, on the edge of one lone city. In that voluntary limitation it is licit to perceive something more than an Aristotelian elegance; it is licit to infer that for Joyce, every day was in some secret way the irreparable Day of Judgment; every place Hell or Purgatory. (136)

As poet-stroller on the metaphysical edge of Buenos Aires, *Borges* admires *Ulysses's* unity and cosmic vision--Joyce and *Borges* were brothers in their appreciation for all forms of magic and mysticism, including the Kabbalah and Buddhism--but, again, notes what he considers Joyce's inability to construct a readable labyrinth.

V. Joyce, *Borges* and the Reader as (Re)Writer:

When *Borges* remarks in the 1925 review that "Joyce portrays a day in modern life and piles up a variety of episodes in its course which equal in spirit those events that inform Homer's *Odyssey*" (56), he is admiring how, in Pound's words, Joyce "selects the living part" of the canonical Homer. The modernists embraced a "collective" view of artistic production to the extent that they reacted against Romanticism's perspective on the "individual talent" and the quest for

originality.

Thus, in the condensed biography *Borges* observes that Ulysses seems more the work of many generations than the work of a single man. Here Joyce exemplifies that "individual talent" whose strength lies in its impersonality, or as *Borges* writes in his obituary of Joyce: "Like Shakespeare, like Quevedo, like Goethe, like no other writer, Joyce is less a man of letters than a literature" (135) (n13) Perhaps *Borges* is inspired by the remark of another modernist (who thought of Ulysses as a glorious defeat!), Virginia Woolf. In *A Room of One's Own* (which *Borges* translated into Spanish with his mother) she writes: "Masterpieces are not a single and solitary birth, but the outcome of many years of thinking in common" (6869).

In "*Borges* and I" (1960), *Borges* makes essentially the same assessment about himself as "literature," but this time the emphasis is on the reader's experience rather than on the producer: what is good (about my writing) no longer belongs to me but to language and tradition (279). That is, *Borges* takes one step further the modernist posture vis a vis originality and authorship. Thanks to *Borges's* rereading, we are also able to interpret in the modernist questioning of the individual talent as interrogating the modern reification of art as property, a questioning which becomes more explicit in postmodernism.

For *Borges*, the great virtue of Homer (Joyce's model) was not his proprietorial originality nor his actuality but the fact that Homer effectively produced a library of English literature, enriching the lives of successive generations of readers. Before Joyce's "version" of Homer, *Borges* had admired Alexander Pope's translation. In one of his earliest essays on translation, "Some Versions of Homer" (1932), *Borges* gives us a preview of his theory of the "reader as writer," which he later demonstrated in "Pierre Menard, Author of the Quijote," "Kafka and His Precursors," and other essay/fictions. (n14) *Borges's* view of translation as a model for the "rudimentary" art of reading prefigures the Germanic invention of reception theory, stressing the relationship between the text and its reader's context, bombarding the concepts of authorship and originality. The "spectacles and speeches" of Pope, like those of Gongora, revived and renewed for the Baroque era the epic poem (*Borges* always preferred the epic to the lyric) and classical rhetoric. In this essay *Borges* takes pleasure in translating the translations, giving a virtuoso performance in Spanish of different styles and eras of Homer, culminating in a simulacrum of Gongora offered as a version of Pope's translation.

I refer to "translation" literally as well as figuratively here because what initially provoked my meditation on *Borges* and Joyce was *Borges's* 1925 review of *Ulysses*, which concluded with his own translation of the book's famous last page, Molly Bloom's verbal orgasm. In a translation seminar, my students and I compared *Borges's* playful, musical translation with the original and with two other Spanish translations (one by Salas Subirat [1945] and the most recent by Valverde [1989], based on the "authorized" Gabler edition), and we were struck by the fact that *Borges's* version was less literally "faithful" and yet closer to the breathless ecstatic language of the original than any of the subsequent versions. Years later, *Borges's* comments on Salas Subirat's version (the only Spanish translation he got to read) reaffirmed his poetics of translation. He stated that while translating *Ulysses* into Spanish was impossible because of differences between the languages, Salas did better when he played with neologisms and worse when he limited himself "to translating the meaning." (n15)

At the same time *Borges* paid homage to Joyce in his translation, his review of *Ulysses* (which I have translated) was a baroque maze of filial admiration and patricidal mockery, brotherhood and rivalry, typical of *Borges's* perverse tendency to weave, as Willis Barnstone expressed it, "a circle of protective rejection around elements he revered" (169). Plato, the source of *Borges's* idealist speculations, once observed that "patricide is the inevitable form of faithfulness"; Mikkel Borch-Jacobsen suggests that "in the realm of thought, true faithfulness is not faithfulness to solutions

but to problems" (267-8). As I have argued in *The Subversive Scribe: Translating Latin American Fiction* (1991), the same applies to translation. In his translation of "I love flowers . . . [to] . . . yes I will yes," *Borges* attended more to the "problem" posed by Joyce--how to make music out of words--than to Joyce's precise words.

Like parody and literary criticism, translation is an interpretative move. What writers translate reveals what they read and often influences how they write. *Borges* needed to communicate in both readerly and writerly terms his homage to what he loved most in Joyce--according to his 1937 "biografia sintetica" or condensed biography, the "delicate music" of Joyce's "incomparable prose" (84).(n16) But translating the last page of *Ulysses* can be seen not only as *Borges's* way into a critical appreciation of *Ulysses* but also as a way out. As *Borges* "confessed" in his review:

I have not plodded through all seven hundred pages, but having examined only bits and pieces I know what it is, with that bold and legitimate certainty with which we assert our knowledge of a city, without ever having appropriated the intimacy of its many streets, or even of all its neighborhoods. (3)

Borges dispensed with the critic's responsibility to read the whole work, yet his one-page translation succeeded in giving the reader a vivid taste of Joyce's city of language.

Borges loved "word music"--it was "as distinctive in him," writes Vargas Llosa, "as in Quevedo, whose satirical wit *Borges* admired, and as in Gongora, whom he did not" (7). In *Borges's* reading, Joyce revived the Baroque, and particularly Gongora, but the Irish writer also reminded him of the best of the English Baroque, particularly Shakespeare and Sir Thomas Browne, to whom *Borges* also rendered the homage of translation.(n17)

And here is where I began: with *Borges's* breathtaking version of Molly Bloom's breathless last page beginning with "I love flowers . . ." The motives for *Borges's* version are again hedonistic as well as esthetic, if indeed the two can be separated: Homer's seafaring adventure on the one hand and Joyce's sexual adventure on the other appealed, respectively, to *Borges* the boy and *Borges* the man. As with the passage from Homer, the esthetic reasons for translating abound: Molly Bloom's monologue is where the language of *Ulysses* comes closest to the music to which all writers aspire. But he translates this passage not only for its "vivid lyrical beauty." Gilbert also singles it out because it affirms in a largely pessimistic work "the divine love of Nature for her children" (403). Once again, eroticism drew gorges, as it had the young boy who avidly read the forbidden *Thousand and One Nights*. Can we doubt that sexual as well as writerly rivalry also lurk in the translator's trying to outdo the author? Here is an excerpt from *Borges's* translation:

... usare una rosa blanca o esas mesas divines de lo de Lipton me gusta el olor de una tienda rice salen a siete y medio la libra o esas otras que trace cerezas adentro y con azucar rosadita que salen a once el par de libras claro una linda planta pare poner en medio de la mesa yo puedo conseguirla barata donde fue que las vi trace poco soy loca por las flores yo tendria nadando en roses toda la case Dios del Cielo no hay como la naturaleza las montanas despues el mar y las olas que se vienen encima dispues el campo lindisimo con maizales trigales... ("La ultima hoja del Ulises" 8)

Again, one only need compare this brief exercise with the corresponding translations by fellow scribes from the Iberian peninsular: Valverde's "authorized" version is more "accurate," more scholarly, but *Borges's* is more breathless, more erotic. Following the spirit of *Borges's* comment in "*Borges* and I," it's hard to know whether the virtues of his translation belong to him or to "the language itself," in this case, colloquial Argentinian. But many Hispanic readers have agreed that the Latin American translators of North American and English literature (among them writers such as *Borges* and the Cuban Lino Novas Calvo), because of the very nature of their Argentine or Cuban brand of Spanish, produced more vivid and colloquial translations than their Spanish

cousins. Just as Joyce distills the English language, bringing out its musical repetitions, so *Borges* condenses Spanish, turning "fields of oats and wheat" into "maizales trigales" as opposed to the more literal "campos de avena y trigo." Like Joyce, *Borges* finds the lyricism in common words: "fairy cakes" become in Argentine speech "mesas divines." "And yes I said yes I will Yes" becomes "y si yo dije si quiero Si" (9). The ascetic, supposedly asexual *Borges* is Joyce is Molly Bloom at that moment, just as *Borges* (is Pope) is Homer in his modest "Some Versions of Homer."

Borges was both repelled and fascinated by the sexual and scatological in Joyce; for the Oedipal gorges, Shakespeare and the sphinx of Thebes provided Joyce with the material for Finnegans "animal that has two backs at midnight" (104). In his poem-homage "Invocation to Joyce" he confesses a clear sexual envy: "We shall die without sighting / the twofold beast or the rose/that are the center of your maze" (295). We can only wonder if producing the best Spanish version of Molly's mythical climax was his way of working through this Venus envy.

VI. The Last Word

One might summarize what *Borges* is saying in this infinite conversation with Joyce--with whom he shares the relief and terror of being unreal, an unrealness heightened by blindness--with these words: "Your Molly Bloom soliloquy was a promise which I admire and enjoy, but my labyrinth is (in comparison to your jungle) a simple straight line. (18) I can also capture life's complexity, but without sacrificing the reader. SO, if you were the greater hedonist in life, I am the greater one in literature. (If you're Achilles, I'm the Tortoise! etc. etc.)."

In any case, looking at these two modern canonical figures provides a critical way into our shifting perceptions of mainstream and marginal. As *Borges* reads him, Joyce can be seen as either marginal outcast or modernist god: imperious and godlike in his demand for an ideal reader, an impossible Funes, but also marginal by virtue of those same demands, as well as his cries-crossing of linguistic borders, his Irishness, and his exile--conditions with which an Argentine can easily empathize. *Borges's* (re)visitations and affinities with Joyce keep alive the impossible project to encompass all of reality. The canon--now including *Borges* as well as Joyce--needs to be subverted, but it also needs to be kept alive because that means keeping alive questioning and questing. We mustn't forget that these literary dandies were also brothers in the cosmic "cyclical night," for whom the book of the voyage was the voyage of the book. Let the penultimate words be from *Borges's* "Invocation to Joyce": "I am those unknown to you and saved by you. " That is, I am your reader, brought to life by you.

(n1) John Barth first labeled *Borges* as a postmodernist.

(n2) Matei Calinescu (22) cites Joseph Frank's observation in "Spatial Form in Modern Literature" that Lessing's classical dichotomy between the arts of successiveness (poetry, music) and the arts of simultaneity (painting, sculpture) is challenged by the sophisticated use of spatial form.

(n3) *Borges* quotes here Lope de Vega's skeptical opinion of Gongora: "Be what it may, I will always esteem and love the divine genius of this Gentleman, taking from him what I understand with humility and admiring with veneration what I am unable to understand" (6).

(n4) The filial "anxiety of influence" is everywhere evident in gorges. See, for example, gorges's and Bioy Casares's satirical dedication of their *Chronicles of Bustos Domecq* (1967) to James Joyce (in the company of Picasso and Le Corbusier) as one modernism. See gorges, *Obras of those "three great forgotten" geniuses of completas, II* (B.A.: Emece Editores, 1979), 300.

(n5) gorges's reading of Dante is exemplary of this self-searching. If Francesca was a model of

rebellious free love for Victoria Ocampo, she was an emblem of the passion *Borges* was missing in real life. In "Meeting in a Dream" his keen interpretation of Dante's frustrated love for Beatrice as the motivation for composing the vast *Commedia* reveals an intimate identification with the Florentine's plight and a raw motive for his own story "The Aleph."

(n6) Of all the Irish writers he loved, Oscar Wilde, whom he doesn't mention here, might be the closest in spirit to gorges: epigrammatic, ironical, understated, paradoxical, an enfant terrible writing and living against the grain. Wilde's subversive words led to prison, a fate *Borges* almost shared when he spoke out against Juan Peron.

(n7) See E. Rodriguez Monegal, *gorges: A Literary Biography* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1977) for a discussion of the link between gorges's fiction writing and his father's death. John Irwin further develops the notion that *Borges* begins to write the original prose that gained him fame when his father dies, undertaking in 1938 the project foreshadowed in the 1920s. Guilt about competition with his father had kept him from overshadowing his father while he was still alive, hence the attribution of his first work, his Spanish translation of the "Happy Prince," to his father. That gorges's "first fictional work in the new style" is "Pierre Menard, Author of the Quijote" confirms that *Borges* was at last able to compete successfully with his father--not as a biological father but as a mental father, a creator. Not only is "Pierre Menard" about a man who sets out to "rewrite the patriarchal figure of Spanish literature," but also Cervantes himself, as he writes in his prologue, figures the author as "step-father," translator into Spanish of an Arabic manuscript (302-304).

(n8) Funes is, of course, the perfect "ideal reader" equipped with the "ideal insomnia" to read *Finnegans Wake*.

(n9) In "Joyce y los neologismos" he cites another such high point: "Countlessness of livestories have netherfallen by this plage, flick as flowflakes, litter from aloft, like a waast wizzard all of whirlworlds . . . Pride, O pride, thy prize!" (104).

(n10) *Borges's* twisty praise of Joyce extends to his double-edged appreciation of Stuart Gilbert's classic study. In his famous essay "Narrative Art and Magic" (1932), *Borges* praises Ulysses as an example of magical art but then urges the reader to read Stuart Gilbert instead: ". . . the most perfect example of an autonomous orb of confirmations, omens and monuments is Joyce's preordained Ulysses. One need only look into Stuart Gilbert's study or, in its absence, the dizzying novel itself" (38). By ending his review with the last page of Ulysses, *Borges* mimics and confirms Gilbert, who also ends his study with this passage he considers exemplary of the finest, most vivid writing in the book, but *Borges* also argues with Stuart Gilbert's assessment: "we who admired Ulysses for its structural, enduring qualities and not for the occasional presence in it of words and descriptive passages which shocked our elders . . ." (ix). Andres Sanchez Robayna also emphasizes *Borges's* comparisons of "linguistic experimentation" in English and Spanish and his ironic take on Joyce, citing *Borges's* 1969 foreword to a bilingual *Homage to Walt Whitman* (University of Alabama Press, 1969): "We are apt to think of the twentieth century as a time of esthetic experiments. The word "experiment" is, on the whole, a wise and tactful one since it implies daring and nearly hints at failure. How else could we refer, without impertinence, to such major achievements as those of Pound, Joyce, and Gertrude Stein?" (xiii).

(n11) *Borges* may also be referring to "that ideal reader" of *Finnegans Wake* "suffering from an ideal insomnia" (FW120).

(n12) *Borges*, the critic, takes particular note of the "Nighttown" section of Ulysses, which like Joyce's word music was to have so much impact on *Borges's* successors in Latin American fiction, perhaps most vividly in *Tres tristes tigres* by the Cuban writer Guillermo Cabrera Infante.

(n13) Aside from a literary philosophy, there is no doubt that society's prejudice against the "man of letters" also informs this protective praise of impersonality. The modernists and *Borges* were reacting not only to the romantic cult of the literary figure but also more immediately to the bourgeois image of the "good-for-nothing" dandy, so tainted in the pragmatic newly industrial world they all shared. See Sylvia Molloy, quoting from a letter from Victoria Ocampo to a friend: "Man of letters is a word that is taken pejoratively in our midst... [It] means good-for-nothing..." (61)

(n14) See my preface to and translation of "Some Versions of Homer," in PMLA 107.5 (1992): 1134-1138.

(n15) The complete quotation (in my translation) is as follows: "Sales Subirat thinks that Ulysses into Spanish doesn't present grave difficulties; I consider it most arduous. English (like German) is an almost monosyllabic language, apt for forming compound voices. Joyce was notoriously successful with such conjunctions. Spanish (like Italian, like French) consists of unmanageable polysyllables which are difficult to join together. In this first Spanish version Salas Subirat usually fails when he limits himself to translating the meaning. Much better are those passages where the Spanish is no less neological than the original...A priori, an accurate version of Ulysses (in Spanish) seems impossible." ("Nota sobre el Ulises español," Anales de Buenos Aires, January 1946, ano 1, no. 1, 49).

(n16) *Borges* wrote a column for a woman's magazine, El Hogar (Home) called "biografias sinteticas," introducing literary figures to the Argentine reader by summarizing their lives with a few significant details. The "condensed biography" follows his theory outlined in 1935, in the preface to his tongue-in-cheek Universal History of Infamy, that a person's life can be summed in two or three scenes (7). I discussed this strategy in composing "imaginary biographies," in my study of Garcia Marquez, El espejo hablado (Caracas, Monte Avila, 1975)

(n17) See Javier Marcas's "El apocrifo apocrifo" in Literatura y fantasma (Madrid, Ediciones Siruela, 1993, 213-220) for an amusing discovery that *Borges* and Bioy Casares had translated a chapter from an anomalous edition of *Urn Burial*, an amazing coincidence with "Bioy's" discovery of an anomalous edition of the encyclopedia in "Tion, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius," the story that ends with a mention of this translation.

(n18) I allude to Lonrot's conceit of the perfect labyrinth as he faces death at the end of *Borges's* masterful metaphysical detective story "Death and the Compass" (1941).

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