

**Jorges Luis Borges and Italian Literature: a general organic approach**

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## Abstract

Following a review of the corpus of literary critique about Borges, this thesis questions the limited space that has been given to the analysis of aspects related to Italian elements and concerns in his work, despite the fact that Dante is one of authors he studied the most in his life, he lived in an eminently Italian neighborhood, he was actively connected to networks of Italian intellectuals and received from Italians (directly or indirectly) a greater number of literary prizes than from any other country, among other things.

What aspects of Italian popular culture and/or readings were absorbed in Borges' work and which were rejected? What were the reasons for his acceptances and/or rejections and how did it vary through Borges' different creative periods? Why did Borges have such a positive and unprecedented historical impact on a full generation of writers and scholars in Italy? How did the literary critique, reception and links with Italy affect Borges' career and his literary production? How was Borges' most memorable style and most praised production linked to Dante? What smokescreens or real motives have there been that have diverted the attention of critics away from these important Italian issues?

This thesis aims not only to find answers to these and other fundamental questions, but also to start constructing a wide scope organic analysis about themes pertaining to Italy and Italian studies, hitherto surprisingly little explored in Borges. The first part of the thesis traces the Italian background of Borges, both of the popular culture that surrounded him in the Italian neighborhood of Palermo during his childhood and youth, as well as his Italian literary readings and changing interests at different periods of his career. The second chapter focuses on the impact that Borges had over Italy: the enormous influence he had on an entire generation of writers and the unprecedented chain of awards that Italy bestowed him. These events unusually combined the

academic, cultural, political and mediatic spheres. This in turn had a quite positive, and direct impact on Borges' career. The third chapter traces the importance as well as the assimilation and applicability that certain Italian readings found in Borges' work. The prolonged study of Dante Alighieri, that started within a group including (but not limited to) Alfonso Reyes, and the stylist Amado Alonso, intervened in particular in the consolidation of Borges' more mature style.

This thesis argues from textual evidence that some of the most emblematic stylistic features of Borges originate from creative reflections on Dantesque topics or stylistic traits; that some of Borges' most recognized works were written in periods of particularly intensive study of Italian themes; that Borges was sensitive and reactive to the highly favorable Italian critique and reception, and he maintained contact and a symbiotic relationship with a specific network of Italian intellectuals. Opening up the general literary criticism to certain Italian aspects can unfold enriching and new possibilities of interpretation and research in Borgesian studies.

Key-words: Jorge Luis Borges, Italian Studies, Dante Alighieri, Literary Style, Classics, Literary Awards, Italian Popular Culture, Argentine, Lunfardo.

## Résumé

Après une revue du corpus de la critique littéraire sur Borges, cette thèse questionne l'espace limité qui a été accordé à l'analyse d'aspects liés à la culture italienne et à la relation de Borges avec l'Italie dans son travail, et ce malgré le fait que Dante soit l'un des auteurs qu'il a le plus étudié dans sa vie. Qui plus est, entre autre choses, Borges vivait dans un quartier éminemment italien, il était activement lié à des réseaux d'intellectuels italiens et avait reçu par le biais de l'Italie ou d'italiens (directement ou indirectement) un plus grand nombre de prix littéraires que de ceux originaires de n'importe quel autre pays.

Quels aspects de la culture populaire italienne et/ou des lectures que Borges a effectués de matériel italien, ou lié à la culture italienne, sont absorbés dans son travail, lesquels sont rejetés pourquoi? Comment, et pour quelles raisons, ce processus d'incorporation ou rejet varie-t-il au cours des différentes périodes de création de Borges? Pourquoi Borges a-t-il eu un impact historique positif sans précédent sur une génération entière d'écrivains et d'érudits en Italie? Comment la critique littéraire, la réception de ses travaux et les liens entretenus avec l'Italie influencent-ils la carrière de Borges et sa production littéraire? Comment le style le plus mémorable de Borges et sa production littéraire la plus acclamée sont liés à Dante? Quels sont les écrans de fumée ou les vrais motifs qui ont détourné l'attention des critiques de ces importantes questions ayant trait aux études italiennes dans les travaux de Borges?

Cette thèse vise non seulement à trouver des réponses à ces questions fondamentales (ainsi qu'à d'autres questions importantes), mais aussi à lancer la construction d'une vaste analyse organique sur des thèmes relatifs à l'Italie et aux études italiennes, jusqu'ici étonnamment peu explorées dans l'étude de travaux de Borges. La première partie de la thèse retrace les premiers contacts de Borges avec le monde italien, qui ont été à la fois la culture populaire qui l'entourait dans le quartier italien

de Palerme pendant son enfance et sa jeunesse, ainsi que ses lectures littéraires italiennes et ses intérêts changeants à différentes périodes de sa carrière. Le deuxième chapitre se concentre sur l'impact que Borges a eu sur l'Italie: l'influence énorme qu'il a eu sur toute une génération d'écrivains et l'attribution sans précédent dans l'histoire des prix que l'Italie lui octroie, combinant singulièrement les sphères académiques, culturelles, politiques et médiatiques, qui à son tour causent un impact direct positif sur la carrière de Borges. Le troisième chapitre retrace l'importance, ainsi que l'assimilation et l'applicabilité que certaines lectures de matériel italien ont trouvées dans l'œuvre de Borges. En particulier l'étude prolongée de Dante Alighieri, qui a intervenu dans la consolidation du style plus mûr de Borges. Beaucoup de ces aspects ont été pris d'un groupe d'étude comprenant (mais non limité à) Alfonso Reyes, et le styliste Amado Alonso. Cette thèse soutient à partir de preuves textuelles que certaines des caractéristiques stylistiques les plus emblématiques de Borges proviennent de réflexions créatives sur des sujets et traits stylistiques dantesques; que certaines des œuvres les plus reconnues de Borges ont été écrites dans des périodes d'étude particulièrement intensive des thèmes italiens; que Borges a été sensible et réactif à la critique italienne et à la réception très favorables de ces travaux en Italie; que Borges maintient une relation symbiotique et un contact avec un réseau spécifique d'intellectuels italiens; et qu'en ouvrant la critique littéraire générale à certains aspects italiens, on peut ouvrir de nouvelles possibilités d'interprétation et de recherche dans le domaine des études borgesienes.

Mots clés: Jorge Luis Borges, Études Italiennes, Dante Alighieri, Style Littéraire, Auteurs Classiques, Prix Littéraires, Culture Populaire Italienne, Lunfardo.

## Sinopsis

Después de una revisión de la crítica literaria sobre Borges esta tesis cuestiona el escaso espacio que se ha dado al análisis de aspectos italianos en la obra de Borges, a pesar de que Dante es uno de los autores que más estudió en su vida, vivió en un barrio eminentemente italiano, estuvo conectado de forma activa a redes de intelectuales italianos y recibió de italianos (directa o indirectamente) una mayor cantidad de premios literarios que de ningún otro país, entre otras cosas.

¿Qué aspectos de cultura popular italiana y de sus lecturas se filtran en su obra y cuales son rechazados en sus diferentes periodos creativos y por qué? ¿Por qué Borges tuvo un impacto histórico sin precedente tan positivo en una generación completa de escritores y académicos en Italia? ¿De qué forma la crítica literaria, recepción y vínculos con Italia afecta su carrera y su producción literaria? ¿Cómo se liga el estilo y producción más sobresaliente de Borges a Dante? ¿Qué cortinas de humo o motivos reales ha habido que han desviado la atención de la crítica fuera de estas importantes cuestiones italianas?

Esta tesis pretende no solo encontrar respuestas a estas y otras preguntas fundamentales sino empezar a construir de forma orgánica un estudio general de italianística hasta ahora sorprendentemente poco explorados en Borges. La primera parte rastrea el background italiano de Borges, tanto de la cultura popular que lo rodeaba en el italianizado barrio de Palermo durante su infancia y juventud, así como de sus lecturas literarias italianas e intereses cambiantes en diferentes periodos de su carrera. El segundo capítulo se enfoca en impacto que tuvo Borges en Italia: la enorme influencia que tuvo sobre una generación entera de escritores y la cadena sin precedente en la historia de premios que Italia le rinde, conjuntando inusitadamente el mundo académico, el cultural, la política y los medios de comunicación, que a su vez tuvieron un impacto directo

bastante positivo en la carrera de Borges. El tercer capítulo rastrea la importancia así como la asimilación y aplicabilidad que encontraron ciertas lecturas italianas en la obra de Borges. Entre ellas destaca muy en particular el prolongado estudio de Dante Alighieri que interviene en la conformación de su estilo más maduro y que surge a partir de un grupo de estudio que incluye (y no se limita) a Alfonso Reyes, y al estilista Amado Alonso.

Esta tesis sostiene a partir de evidencia textual que algunos de los más emblemáticos rasgos estilísticos de Borges tienen origen a partir de reflexiones en temas o aspectos dantescos; que algunas de las obras más reconocidas de Borges se escriben en periodos de particular intensidad reflexiva en temas italianos; que Borges es sensible a la crítica y recepción altamente favorable italiana y mantiene una relación o contacto simbiótico con una red determinada de sus intelectuales; y que abrir la crítica literaria general a cuestiones italianas puede abrir enriquecedoras nuevas posibilidades de interpretación e investigación a estudios borgesianos.

Palabras clave : Jorge Luis Borges, Italianística, Dante Alighieri, Estilo Literario, Autores Clásicos, Premios Literarios, Cultura Popular Italiana, Argentina, Lunfardo.

## Dedication

A Maria por a pesar de todo siempre estar, en este duro periodo,  
a mis amadas hijas, incalculable sorpresivo regalo de la vida,  
a mis infatigables padres por su incondicional apoyo,  
y a todos esos amorosos seres que afortunadamente me he topado en este largo  
desbrujuleado deambular que es mi camino

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## 0. Introduction

Within the truly vast assemblage of borgesian literary criticism, the study of Jorge Luis Borges' relationship with Italian literature has, until now, remained tangential and of little importance. Furthermore, the few limited studies that have been written are far from interrelated; they are more akin to isolated studies with little to no association amongst themselves and corresponding more to the personal tastes of certain critics rather than a desire to create a systematic knowledge and analysis. The purpose<sup>1</sup> of this thesis is threefold: in the first place, to establish the role of Italian literature in Borges' work from a broader cultural point of view attempting to demonstrate its importance systematically from selected readings and the impact of certain authors on his own style; secondly, to explore Borges' presence in Italy and his influence on an entire generation of Italian writers, as well as his contact with various Italian intellectuals, and how it contributed to his international fame; and, finally, the impact of Italian intellectuals in Borges' own career. Having established that many Italian characteristics and authors are more relevant and integral to the general understanding of Borges' work than previous criticism has identified, I believe that this will open up new lines of study in little understood knowledge-areas and create previously unexplored perspectives within the existing criticism. Such previous criticism seems to have exhausted much of its potential along lines of study already much analysed, which lately seem only to repeat themselves. This is leading to few innovative studies about this

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<sup>1</sup> For the moment, I seek only to state my intentions and the motivation behind these intentions. Later, I shall clarify the structure of this thesis in detail as well as the distribution of the chapters to make my arguments.

widely-studied author, sometimes considered the greatest and most-influential Latin American writer of the twentieth century.

Before granting the necessary recognition to those critics who have advanced in the area of Italian study of Borges, which of course exists, although their areas of focus have been so diverse, I shall begin with an explanation of the factors, which have limited such analysis.

One of the greatest obstacles to the study of Jorge Luis Borges is, perhaps, Borges himself. In “Ideología y ficción en Borges”, Ricardo Piglia cogently captures the essence or basis of that complexity and complication:

Hay una ficción que acompaña y sostiene la ficción borgeana: se trata de un relato fracturado, disperso, en el que Borges construye la historia de su escritura. Formado por una multitud de fragmentos, escrito en la obra, perdido en ella, este relato es un lugar de cruce y de condensación. En un sentido pareciera que esa es la única historia que Borges ha querido narrar, sin terminar nunca de hacerlo, pero también, habría que decir sin dejar nunca de hacerlo: la ha disimulado y diseminado a lo largo de su obra, con esa astucia para falsificar que le es característica y a la que todos hemos convenido en llamar su estilo. (3)

Two aspects stand out in Piglia’s commentary: fragmentation and falsification. I shall begin by analysing the first point. Borges’ works are as vast as they are fragmented, *una selva oscura* in which it is easy to lose one’s way. As it frequently happens with some publications that we can qualify as *total books* or *all-encompassing works*, such as the Bible, one is given the impression of finding practically everything in Borges’ work. Paradoxically, this obstacle is also an incentive, as each time it invites the reader to explore a new area of analysis (a distinct reading), artfully combining a tendency towards the infinite and the insane. Just as Daniel Balderston suggests, the

briefness and fragmentary nature of much of Borges' works favours the poetics of fragmentation and invites the reader to consider "la relación entre un texto y otro, de una idea con otra que la repite (y a veces la contradice) y aun sobre fragmentos textuales que se reiteran" (*Innumerables* 24). Thus, depending on the religion, faith, ideology, life experience or perspective of the reader, or critic, given that Borges himself expected and, indeed, fostered the view that his work would be subject to changing contexts, there will be different readings and interpretations of the same works generating an imposing and inexhaustible Babel-like polyphony. However, this is what keeps Borges alive and relevant; an open-ended subject for his readers, infectious even for those who have not read him. Consequently, in libraries the shelves of books dedicated to Borges' work are consistently propagating. This is largely due to the fact that Borges revelled in sending mixed messages, disseminating false and misleading evidence in an infinite house of mirrors, reflecting and distracting. Borges adopted a behavior similar to that of Hansel and Gretel, leaving a trail of breadcrumbs, only in this case, the trail is altered by choice, and meandering in an organic pattern, as disorienting as an endless garden of bifurcating paths. One of the main reasons for this outcome is that Borges treats truth and deceit in a very similar manner. In Piglia's words, "esa astucia para falsificar que le es característica y a la que todos hemos convenido en llamar su estilo" (Piglia 3). Borges takes pleasure in both traversing and dissipating the boundaries between truth and evasive deception,<sup>2</sup> between history and fiction, between himself and a fictional characterization of

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<sup>2</sup> Many critics have already explored the theme of systematic obfuscation in Borges as well as the transposition or mixture of truth, fiction, and lies, just as much in his narrative work as his autobiography. See "Borges como problema" (115-137) by Juan José Saer for a general analysis of Borges' predilection, or tendency, towards obfuscation. As one of many such examples of

himself. In this way, as in so many other cases with Borges, what is claimed to be truthful, brought to the reader's attention, and purported to be factual, is not necessarily so, conversely on occasions, what is hidden, or subsumed in lies (including fiction), may carry more weight and be more revealing. This applies to the mixed messages that Borges sent regarding his own image, his work, and the way that they are to be read or interpreted. Borges emphasises certain aspects of his work, while hiding others and critics have restricted their lines of study to certain themes or characteristics, and specific elements of his works, which are, mostly, the same as those highlighted by the author. Borges has predicted, or even insidiously influenced, the interpretation of certain elements, and as a result critics now find themselves facing a dead end within his labyrinth. In other words, Borges slyly sets out various elements that have somehow biased the possible reading and interpretation of his work. At the same time, due to its own fragmentary nature, Borges' work remains open to many valid and substantive interpretations. These aspects

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voluntary confusion, or blurring of lines, between reality and dreams, fiction, or false appearances, see the analysis by María Cristina Pons "Las mentiras de las apariencias en Borges" with regards to the blurring of history, plot, or verisimilitude, in the short story "Abenjacán el Bojarí, muerto en su laberinto". See Robin Lefere's work on falsification or the confusing of reality and fiction in Borges' autobiography, "La biografía según Borges" ("Biografía según" 83-98). Borges treats reality and fiction, dream, or fantasy as equally valid, most of all in his readings of idealism in Schopenhauer and the *Divina Commedia* of Dante, which can be seen as examples of narratives mixing history and fiction. See also "In Search of the Aleph: Memory, Truth, and Falsehood in Borges's Poetics" by Núñez Faraco.

are major factors, which have, until now, greatly limited the study of Italian content in Borges' work, as the author himself takes various steps to obfuscate those specific elements.<sup>3</sup>

Besides these questions pertaining to Borges' works proper, which in fact contribute to its richness, there is a lack of manuscripts that constraints and complicates any analysis and comparison, not only of what is Italian, but in general. This limited quantity of manuscripts may be the direct result of Borges' blindness, his mocking and playful nature, or the refusal of collectors and curators in charge of safekeeping the materials to grant access to them. This propensity for chaos was further fuelled by Borges through a constant process of modification and editing of his works, which is disorienting for readers and critics alike. When comparing versions, it becomes difficult to decide which version to consider, or favour, because Borges' conscious goals were to complicate and multiply the interpretations of his work. Thus, the reader is confronted with the option to select an interpretation randomly, or to alternately accept all available interpretation, if possible. The critic is obliged to adopt as many interpretations as possible, whenever the work itself merits them. This is yet another reason to open the critique to little-studied elements in Borges' work, such as the Italian influence. This would only serve one of the author's intent to keep his work relevant and open to interpretation.

Nevertheless, this problem created by the nature of Borges' work in general does not mean that it must remain indecipherable, but rather, as I have said, that this dilemma can give new life to the wider critique of Borges, which has never exhausted opportunities for further study. The

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<sup>3</sup> I take this from the in-depth study by Annick Louis, supported by well-known critics such as Daniel Balderston, who explored this concept of work overshadowed by its author through a process of constant reduction and redaction to manipulate his work.

structure of this thesis deals specifically with largely untapped areas of study and attempts to create a structure for the literary critique of Italian aspects in Borges which are so far under-studied, while remaining conscious of points of analysis in existing critical work. I shall next detail the specific subjects of this thesis and how they will be laid out to later explain the reasoning behind this layout.

This thesis is divided into three parts. The first section will deal with the Italian elements to which Borges was exposed through his upbringing in a neighbourhood established by lower-class Italian immigrants, as well as the vast collection of Italian literature and culture in books that he would read, mostly in his father's personal library. This will also include a review of the many creative phases in Borges' life, from his beginnings, with specific emphasis on the different Italian readings absorbed, and Dante, as well as the way in which each creative phase relates to the definitive style he established later in life. A few important points in this chapter include the debate about language in Argentina and the direct influence of Alfonso Reyes and Paul Groussac. The latter led Borges to a period of reflection and re-reading of Dante with respect to his own work. In this section, I will make use of various sources and methodologies. Firstly, I shall collate intertextual references to Italian authors and aspects within Borges' work, including his authorised published work (especially the most recent edition of his complete works in Emecé, a much-awaited annotated version in Spanish, published in 2009) as well as other sources<sup>4</sup>. This

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<sup>4</sup> These sources include three early books of essays rejected by Borges (*Inquisiciones*, *El Tamaño de mi Esperanza*, and *El idioma de los Argentinos*), a three-volume collection of a great part of the essays that are not included in his authorized complete works, published with the title *Textos Recobrados*, his publications in *Hogar* magazine (both *Textos Cautivos* and *Borges en el Hogar*) and his publications in *Sur* magazine (*Jorge Luis Borges en Sur*).

intertextuality will engage with literary, biographical and historical sources, and by necessity, also with to biographical details from the many existing academic biographies, as well as primary sources concurrent to certain periods in his life. This will be further complemented by specific biographical and intertextual references by Alfonso Reyes from the period when he lived with Borges and started developing a close relationship that would continue through correspondence.<sup>5</sup>

It is crucial to make some reference to the biographies of Borges, as they could be an area of study in and of themselves. By the 1980s, there were already dozens of biographies, almost all written by people known to Borges. Friends and acquaintances, as well as those who were readers for him in the later years due to his blindness, all felt obliged to write about Borges from their own point of view. In addition to these many biographies, each approaching the subject of Borges in a distinct way,<sup>6</sup> Borges also wrote an autobiography, assisted by Harvard academic Thomas di

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<sup>5</sup> This is only one partial collection of letters between Borges and Reyes published under the title *Discreta Efusión* by Carlos García.

<sup>6</sup> Amongst the many biographies of Borges I would like to highlight some of the most important, grouped by types of acquaintances and relative age:

- By girlfriends or lovers of Borges: Alicia Jurado (*Genio y figura de Jorge Luis Borges*); Estela Canto (*Borges a contraluz*); and Maria Esther Vazquez (author of five books containing biographical material pertaining to Borges: *Everness*; *Borges, esplendor y derrota*; *Borges: sus días y su tiempo*; *La memoria de los días*; and *Crónicas del olvido*).
- By close friends: Bioy Casares (*Borges*; posthumous publication of personal diaries under the care of de Daniel de Martino); Roberto Alifano (*Borges: biografía verbal*).

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- By collaborators, editors or translators at certain times during Borges' life: Alberto Manguel, current Head Librarian at the Argentinean National Library, but also a reader to Borges when he was blind (*Con Borges*); Domenico Porzio, translator and editor of Borges' complete works in Italian (*Jorge Luis Borges: immagini e immaginazione*); Jean Pierre Bernés, editor of Borges' complete works in French (*Jorge Luis Borges: la vie commence...*).
  - By foreign academics: Emir Rodríguez Monegal, Uruguayan critic and professor at Yale (*Borges: una biografía literaria*); Edwin Williamson, professor at Oxford University (*Borges: A Life*, 2004); James Woodall (*Borges, A Life*, 1996).
  - By Argentine Academics or writers: Marcos Barnatán (*Borges: biografía total*, 1995; criticized for lack of documentation, and areas of uncertainty regarding his personal opinion); Alejandro Vaccaro, the greatest collector of Borges, writer and critic of various volumes related to Borges (*Georgie 1899-1930; Borges, 1001 imágenes; Una biografía en imágenes: Borges; Borges: vida y literatura; Borges, imágenes y manuscritos*).
  - By others: Isaac Wolberg (*Jorge Luis Borges*; amongst the first biographies to appear in 1961), Horacio Salas (*Borges, una biografía*; hyper contextualizing national life). Thomas di Giovanni, (*In Memory of Borges; The Lesson of the Master: On Borges and His Works; Georgie & Elsa*; about translation and the time with his wife Elsa); Rodolfo Braceli (*Borges-Bioy: confesiones, confesiones*; criticized for unrigorous journalistic approach); Epifanía Ulveda (Fanny), Borges' housekeeper (*El señor Borges*, 2004); Daniel Balmaceda (*Romances argentinos de escritores turbulentos*, 2013; *La comida en la historia argentina*, 2016; this last touches upon popular themes such as food and the writer's sexual life).

Giovanni. This autobiography (halfway between fiction and history) further complicates the analysis of Borges' biographical materials by adding yet another vision, that at least in historical terms is far from being the most accurate. The aim of my analysis of these texts is not to debate these biographies, nor the limits of biography and autobiography, history and fiction. As previously mentioned, while drawing from these works, my only biographical focus in the first chapter is Borges' childhood in Palermo, his knowledge of *lunfardo*, tango, the suburbs and slums (all of which relate to Italian communities and/or are of Italian origin), as well as his Italian readings. Additionally, my analysis explores Borges' interests at different points in his life as well as his *criollista* linguistic debates against Américo Castro. Of particular interest are biographies including testimonial sources, who were close to Borges, such as friends (Bioy and Alifano) and partners (above all, María Esther Vázquez<sup>7</sup>), complemented by serious academic studies (mainly, Woodall, Rodríguez Monegal, and Williamson).

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<sup>7</sup> Vázquez was Borges' dedicated assistant; they were going to marry but never did. Nevertheless, she continued collaborating and assisting him with editing work, accompanying him on trips and conferences, etc. She is the author of 5 biographical texts about Borges. They are as follows: *Everness*, 1965; *Borges: imágenes, memorias, diálogos*, 1977; *Borges, sus días y su tiempo*, 1985; *Borges, esplendor y derrota*, 1996; and *La memoria y los días*, 2004. *Everness* is a mix of literary criticism and biographical-testimonial material. In *Borges: imágenes, memorias, diálogos* there is a particularly useful interview recorded on April 3<sup>rd</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>, and 16<sup>th</sup>, 1973, in the National Argentinian Library for the Italian edition of *El Congreso*, published by Franco Maria Ricci. In *La memoria de los días: mis amigos, los escritores* the chapters exclusively dedicated to Borges are

The second chapter will deal with aspects of Borges' reception and presence in Italy, the impact he had at a very significant period in that country, as well as Borges' transition to international fame. Importantly, this transition was supported by numerous and prestigious Italian prizes, which catalysed Borges' raising international popularity. Unfortunately, the results of the many prestigious Italian literary prizes awarded to Borges have remained unexamined by critics. Given the lack of critical study in this area, I shall review some important texts from the first editions of books and anthologies published in Italy (see Appendix 3) as well as some analyses of the history of Borges' reception (see Appendix 4) in Italy. In addition to sources that have already been studied and scant references to the series of prizes won by Borges, most of my analysis of Borges' visits to Italy from 1977 to 1985, his publications in Italy, his impact and reception in Italy as well as any information about the literary prizes themselves, is taken from periodicals, including *L'Unitá*, *La Repubblica*, *Il Messaggero*, *Il Corriere de la Sera* and *La Stampa*. Although largely unstudied until now, Italian literary prizes played a critical role in Borges' international presence and media impact, not only in Italy, but also internationally. The rhetoric associated with Italian literary prizes, the prestige it conferred Borges, and the people who presented the prizes, or acted as judges, will all be subject to close analysis. Literary prizes are the convergence of cultural, political, and economic concerns, which cannot be ignored. In certain instances, there are official documents to accompany the prize, as is the case of the Formentor Prize and the Novecento Prize. However, in most cases, local press plays a key role in the promotion and coverage of such events. At the centre of these literary prizes and the promotion of Borges, there is a close-knit group of

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“Borges, Clemente y la biblioteca” and “El viaje europeo.” However, there are mentions of Borges in the entirety of the book among other writers.

Italian intellectuals, including Italo Calvino and other collaborators from the Einaudi publishing house, such as Elio Vittorini and Rodolfo Wilcock. Vital information has been drawn from the Einaudi archives and publications.

I will build an historical review, incorporating various sources, making use of biographical details, as well as deciphering the forces behind the prizes leading to a larger series of recognitions and mutual benefits (for Borges and the third parties involved). In other words, I shall deal with sociological practical aspects of literature. The final point of interest, still little touched by critics,<sup>8</sup> is the relationship between Borges and a network of Italian intellectuals<sup>9</sup> (headed by Calvino) which would, in turn, directly influence Borges' career.

Borges' presence in Italy and how it benefited him, has been previously studied<sup>10</sup> only nominally and without much detail. This analysis of Borges' reception in Italy will emphasize the important positive impact of his time there and his position as one of the greatest foreign influences on Italian culture in the last century. However, at present, studies of the importance and

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<sup>8</sup> Probably the only two serious critics that have addressed this practically unexplored field are Roberto Paoli (mainly in his *Borges e gli Scrittori Italiani*) and Enrique Santos Unamuno (in his book *Laberintos de papel* and his essay "Borges in Italy").

<sup>9</sup> Led by Italo Calvino but including other personalities like Carlo Bo, Sergio Solmi, Duilio Dabini, Domenico Porzio, Rodolfo Wilcock, among others.

<sup>10</sup> See the book by Paoli (1989). Other such analytic and detailed studies include the book by Aizenberg (1990) and the thesis by Santos Unamuno (1989). These make evident his profoundly positive impact on an entire generation of Italian writers and intellectuals at a time of creative crisis.

possible role Italian critics played in the reception of Borges' works outside of Argentina are practically nonexistent. Furthermore, there are no analyses of the role that Italian critics played in Borges' reception in their country and the construction of his global image, which in turn led to his definitive entry in the canon of world literature. As such, Chapter 2 will expand on these nearly unexplored areas. Borges' influence on certain internationally-known writers or intellectuals (such as Italo Calvino, Umberto Eco, and Leonardo Sciascia) has been the subject of interesting articles written by these authors themselves.<sup>11</sup> Occasionally, moreover, Borges' works have been the subject of studies by critics such as Paoli and Aizenberg.<sup>12</sup> Yet, nothing has been uttered about other important Italian scholars of Borges, who ought to be part of borgesian studies, such as for instance Domenico Porzio, Carlo Bo and Franco Lucentini. Nevertheless, the details of this admiration for the author in Italy, and the extent of its implications, both for Borges and for Italian Literature, remains to be revealed. Although this goes beyond the scope of this thesis, it is an area for future study. My focus is to analyze the direct and indirect benefits Borges drew from this network of intellectuals that admired him, and the extent of their influence, — not only in the Italian world, but internationally.

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<sup>11</sup> See "Borges and my anxiety of influence" (in *On literature*) by Umberto Eco; "Scrittori esemplari, vi odio tutti" (published in *L'Unità*, on September 20, 1984), "Jorge Luis Borges" (in *Perché leggere i classici*) by Italo Calvino; and *Passioni della ragione e labirinti della memoria : studi su Leonardo Sciascia* by Ivan Pupo.

<sup>12</sup> See particularly *La presencia de Borges en la literatura italiana contemporánea: Calvino, Eco, Sciascia, Tabucchi* by Roberto Paoli and *Borges and His Successors: The Borgesian Impact on Literature and the Arts* by Edna Aizenberg.

Lastly, the subject of Chapter 3 will be the gradual incorporation of Italian elements in Borges' own work and the way that some of such elements became part of Borges' definitive style.

While in Chapter 1 focuses on Borges' readings and encounters with certain Italian authors, Chapter 3 deals with the inclusion and pertinence of those readings in his writing. A specific area of focus is directly related to authorship and the notion of what constitutes a *Classic Author*, as it relates to Dante. From this analysis I shall build a genealogy of the process of Dante's influence in Borges's works, ideas adopted from Dante as well as aspects inspired by Dante. These aspects are crucial in the construction of Borges' authorship and style; the way that Borges modelled himself on Dante is most evident and concrete in *Nueve Ensayos Dantescos*. To demonstrate this process of appropriation or assimilation of ideas from Dante, I will briefly review the distinct creative phases in Borges' work which later led to his definitive style. To this end, I shall analyze his work on anthologies<sup>13</sup>, which reflects these artistic periods and his adhesion to different literary genres, creating a sort of contemporaneous declaration of literary values, style, and ideas.

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<sup>13</sup> A small group of Mexican borgesian critics composed of Rafael Olea Franco, Antonio Cajero, y Daniel Zavala Medina are specialists on Borges' anthologies, their uses, his intentionality, and representative role. Of particular interest is their collection of essays *Márgenes del canon: la antología literaria en México e Hispanoamérica*, (compiled by Cajero in 2016). As for Borges' revisionism, see Louis, Annick. *Jorge Luis Borges: obras y maniobras*, as well as the article "Definiendo un género la antología de la literatura fantástica de Silvina Ocampo, Adolfo Bioy Casares y Jorge Luis Borges" in *Nueva revista de filología hispánica*, 49, 2, 2001, pp. 409-437.

In concordance with this, I shall make a series of commentaries on Borges' work as an anthologist, which has remained little researched, as the basis of the analysis in Chapter 3. The Italian world and Italian publishing houses are closely linked to Borges' sideline as an anthologist, especially the editor Franco María Ricci. Borges established an intimate friendship and a working relationship with Ricci that would lead to the publishing of anthologies, collections of books, and prologues, as well as previously unpublished work in Spanish. In general terms, all of Borges' work must be considered a continuum of constant labour of anthology, as argued by the new and well-researched work by Annick Louis and Rafael Olea Franco.<sup>14</sup> Borges' work is, itself, commensurate to a vast anthology, in a constant process of evolution and revision. This conforms to the characteristics of authorship and style that Borges defended at each stage of his literary career through an unending labour of review. In this overview of Borges' work, I highlight specific Italian authors (other than Dante) and texts, which Borges variously embraces or rejects at different creative periods, returning to the major sources already mentioned in Chapter 1 such as textual references, biographies, critical essays, letters, marginalia, etc.

Another point of interest in Chapter 3 is the greater or lesser recognition that Borges grants to the influence of Italian elements, in particular Dante, at two distinct points in his later years: the time of the writing of his autobiography under the title *Autobiographical Notes* and when he wrote *Nueve Ensayos Dantescos*.

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<sup>14</sup> Of particular interest are *Jorge Luis Borges: obras y maniobras*, by Annick Louis, "Borges precursor de Borges: la constitución de las obras completas como una antología" by Rafael Olea Franco (in Cajero Vázquez's *Márgenes del canon: la antología literaria en México y Hispanoamérica*).

This comparison of the *Autobiographical Notes* and *Nueve Ensayos Dantescos* will serve to evaluate Borges' retrospective efforts to exert authorship and authority over his persona and works at two distinct periods towards the end of his life. Borges declares and adopts his own authorship in different ways according to the destined audience and momentary context when he takes a given position, or promotes a public image. As we shall see, the latter of these texts is inarguably the most Italian-influenced he would ever write. Both these texts reflect late periods of Borges' life. Through these he constructed and manifested specific characteristics of authorship, associated most closely with Classicism<sup>15</sup>, and attempted to build up a desired public image and make a declaration of his official position. It is, in the end, the position laid out in the autobiography that would influence, or even limit borgesian criticism, despite its many inaccuracies, especially those pertaining to Italian content. This chapter will entail an analysis of the genealogy of appropriation and assimilation of dantesque characteristics as well as differing notions of Classicism, held by Borges during his lifetime.

This structure aims to provide a global overview of the role of Italian culture and literature in the works of Borges and, in turn, his influence on Italian literature. Within the framework of borgesian studies, the topic of Italian influence is far from being sufficiently explored. Besides Stelio Cro<sup>16</sup> and Roberto Paoli,<sup>17</sup> important pioneers in this area of research, only a limited number

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<sup>15</sup> See *El nacimiento de un clásico: Borges y la crítica* by Maria Caballero Wangüemert.

<sup>16</sup> Mainly in *Jorge Luis Borges: poeta saggista e narratore, Borges e Dante, Borges and Boccaccio*.

<sup>17</sup> Mainly in *Percorsi di Significato, Tre saggi su Borges, Borges e gli scrittori italiani*, and *La presenza de Borges en la Literatura Italiana contemporanea*.

of themes relating to the Italian influence within Borges' work have been approached by academics, meaning that a number of areas remain under-studied, and the resulting works lack a systematic and fundamental structure. By incorporating works published thus far, and further identifying unexplored topics, I hope this thesis will mitigate this lack and establish a more structured view of the field of borgesian studies.

Regrettably, in the field of Italian Studies, as it relates to Borges, the two biggest obstacles are the absolute lack of a systematic and consistent approach in the analysis, and the absolute absence of diversity in interpretive approaches. Both are necessary for an analysis of Borges' work, by its very nature. Apart from Roberto Paoli, whose study<sup>18</sup> is of a more organic nature, other

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<sup>18</sup> Paoli's first book, *Borges: percorsi di significato*, published in 1977, nearly 5 years prior to the publication of *Nueve Ensayos Dantescos* by Borges, is one of the first studies of the most obvious dantesque elements in some of Borges' texts. Paoli payed particular attention to "El Aleph", and only tangentially referred to other texts such as "El sur", "La muerte y la brújula", "La espera", "La casa de Asterión" and "La escritura de Dios". Thus, the focus is Borges at the time of *Ficciones* and *El Aleph*, and the most important attribute of this work is to identify the highly Italian character of those two books and the intertextuality with Dante, as well as the ironic use of various Italian content and motifs. After a series of newspaper articles about Borges' relationship with Schopenhauer, English literature and a commentary on Borges' poetic evolution (which were largely synthesized in the book *Tre saggi su Borges*), Paoli returns to the theme of Borges' relationship with Italian themes in the book *Borges e gli scrittori italiani*. This study gives a more panoramic view of Borges' Italian influence, and although each section is very brief and largely superficial, I have used it to a large extent as a starting point in my thesis. The first section of the

studies either investigate isolated aspects, lack concrete examples, or fail to outline their position and pertinence in the panorama of borgesian critique. In many cases, such studies are mainly motivated by personal interests, as intriguing as they might be, and thus leave significant areas of study unexplored and unquestioned. Additionally, critics have focused on a few recurrent topics and problematics, and often approach the topic from a predictable perspective. Nevertheless, these are far from being the only problems and limitations encountered in this field. I will next summarize some of the precedents for each of the chapters of this thesis, including my reasons for adopting such structure and the areas that require further study, and which I cannot properly address here given the limitations of scope.

When considering Borges' early education, background, and first readings in Italian (which is the subject of the first chapter), the first thing that stands out is his great admiration for Dante. In reality, Borges had a two-fold input in his background. On the one hand, he was born and raised in a highly Italianised neighbourhood of Buenos Aires, in direct contact with common cultural and

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book deals with Borges' travels to Italy as well as his reception there, especially his favorable reception by important figures such as Calvino, Eco, Sciascia and Tabucchi. The second part of the book explores how Italian culture is present in Borges' work, such as the lower-class Italian presence in the neighborhood of Palermo, where he grew up. Importantly, this topic is not analyzed in terms of its impact on Borges' work, and is only mentioned in passing. Furthermore, this part of the book also examines Borges' interest in Dante, summarizing some of the themes already touched in *Percorsi di significato*, and adding an analysis of the dantesque in "El Poema Conjetural". Moreover, there is also some attention given to Borges' interest in Ariosto, Marino, Papini and Croce.

linguistic forms of Italian-Argentine life. On the other hand, he was exposed to what is considered the Italian golden or high culture, through readings of Classic authors of Italian literature (especially from the Middle Ages and the Renaissance) such as Dante. With respect to the first element of this background, it was very surprising to me that, despite Borges being born and raised at the heart of one the largest Italian communities found overseas - where the Italian language and culture are pervasive- there are no studies to date investigating the influence (either in acceptance, or rejection) of that cultural aspect of Borges' surroundings. Borges demonstrates an obvious fascination with suburban culture and its manifestations including, of course, the tango. Nevertheless, there are no studies relating this interest of Borges to Italian or Italian-immigrant culture, nor to the position Borges takes towards it. Any study of this nature must include a study of Borges' systematic and unshakeable aversion of *lunfardo*, which populates the common speech of *Porteños* and Argentines in general, as mentioned in the first chapter. Throughout the editions of all his work, Borges carefully refined his writing to an increasingly standard form of Spanish (see Chapter 3). Apart from existing critique, I focus on texts and statements of Borges<sup>19</sup> regarding

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<sup>19</sup> This thesis analyses many texts Borges wrote on the subject of tango, and the fact that in some of those, his opinions are contradictory. Borges' first essay on the subject was part of the book *Evaristo Carriego*, but he continued to write about this theme, in many cases controversially, making incendiary or unconventional statements. This continued until his last public presentations on the subject in 1965, recently published in the book *Tango: cuatro conferencias*, published by Editorial Sudamericana.

tango and compare them to historical studies<sup>20</sup> on the subject. Another controversial way that Borges separated himself from Italian culture in relation to the question of *lunfardo* was in the language debate that he would carry out in discussions, or arguments, with Américo Castro<sup>21</sup>. While always focusing on primary sources to shed light on Borges' Italian surroundings, the secondary sources for this first chapter relating to the contextual framework will be varied: there is ample documentation<sup>22</sup> on the culture of Italian immigrants and Italian ghettos, like Palermo, where Borges lived early in life. As for the aspect of Italian-Argentine popular culture, I make use of a rich collection documenting the Italian migration in Argentina, more specifically, the cultural

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<sup>20</sup> See, principally, *Breve historia crítica del tango* by José Gobello and the theoretical introduction to *Música y poesía del tango* by Antonio Pau Pedrón.

<sup>21</sup> There are various sources on this linguistic debate with respect to nationality and identity between the Argentines and the Spanish. However, the best documentation of its link to *lunfardo* comes from Conde, the current president of la Academia Porteña del Lunfardo, in *Lunfardo: un estudio sobre el habla popular de los argentinos* (published in 2011).

<sup>22</sup> The non-profit institution Fondazione Giovanni Agnelli carried out the most definitive and wide-ranging study of this kind. The Institution's work was promoted and facilitated by bilateral agreements between Argentina and Italy, and the study *Euroamericani*, published in three volumes includes different perspectives: demographic, political, linguistic, cultural, literary, etc. The second volume, *La Popolazione Di Origine Italiana in Argentina*, is of special interest.

manifestations that are associated with it, such as the tango, the *sainetes*<sup>23</sup>, and literature about the *arrabales*, the argentine slums.

The second area of this cultural and linguistic background is essentially literary, and directly linked to Borges' readings. The first chapter of this thesis lays out the sequence of certain Italian readings, which took place early in Borges' life and would be reflected in his writing. The third chapter, however, will demonstrate a genealogy for Borges' usage of elements from Italian readings and authors in his work over the course of his career. Moreover, I will analyse the way in which this content evolves and is assimilated in his writing and stylistic choices. This process of evolution in content is more evident with respect to readings and authors to which Borges showed continuous interest over the course of many years and at different points in his life. This process also makes Borges' changing interests evident, as in the case of his readings of Dante. Nevertheless, it is extremely difficult to trace Borges' reading patterns, especially because he was such a voracious reader. Manuscripts or early drafts of work may prove very revealing as a sort of workshop, with intertextual references or annotations for specific sources and readings. Notwithstanding, it is practically impossible to gain access to such writings due to the extreme care with which they are maintained by collectors and curators. The most viable path is, perhaps, to follow the mentions or references to books, or authors, in Borges' writings, while also considering the chronology of different editions of his texts or complete authorised works. Another key source is the relent and impressive work on the study of marginalia (notes in the margins of books from Borges' library) led by Laura Rosato and Germán Álvarez, as discussed below.

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<sup>23</sup> In particular two books: a publication by the Argentinean National Library *Teatro, Sainete y Farsa*, and a complete history of the genre in Argentina by Suárez Danero, *El sainete*.

Beyond these references present in various works, it is further possible to scrutinise texts that Borges consulted and the marginal notes therein. There are three large collections of books that can be traced back to Borges. A large number of them are in the possession of Maria Kodama (his widow). Another 800 volumes were donated to the Biblioteca Nacional during his time as its director, while many others have become dispersed in libraries or private homes, having been left behind after reading. It is difficult to locate those that were borrowed from libraries or loaned to him by acquaintances, unless the person in question makes mention of having loaned something to Borges. Access to Kodama's inherited collection is discretionary and highly restricted; my own visit resulted in valuable, if limited, information. The portion donated to the Biblioteca Nacional has already been the subject of serious study regarding marginalia and physical annotation by Rosato and Alvarez in their book, *Borges libros y lecturas*. This in-depth study undertaken of the collection in the Biblioteca Nacional remains in progress, awaiting further study in a second volume.

Within Borges' readings, the most evident link to the Italian world is his constant study and admiration for Dante, as can be examined in the publication of *Nueve Ensayos Dantescos* in the 1980s, the most known product of his study. However, despite its pivotal position in Borges' works, this area of study remains little analyzed and without much scope. Most of this scholarly literature is limited to list, or superficially name<sup>24</sup>, the intertextuality with Dante in certain writings by Borges. Furthermore, all of these analyses are based on a historical error. Borges misleadingly

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<sup>24</sup> One representative work among many is the book *Borges y Dante* (1993) by Julio Chiappini, which remains superficial and names dantesque moments in Borges without exploring their significance.

stated (in his autobiography and many interviews) that he read Dante for the first time in 1938, despite textual evidence in his own works to the contrary. Among the critics who have dedicated their attention to intertextual reference to Dante in Borges' works, very few have analysed the nature of those references or their purpose. None of them, moreover, has ever attempted to place these analyses within a broader framework of collected works or to examine changes from one edition to another in Borges' published works.<sup>25</sup> Beyond the lists identifying the series of references to Dante in Borges' works, there are studies applying textual analysis to certain works, some of which have great depth and insight.<sup>26</sup> However these have been followed by a wave of repetitive studies<sup>27</sup> adding little to the discourse. Even though Dante's influence is directly

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<sup>25</sup> With regards to Borges' constant redaction and revision of his own work, refer to the theoretical work by Annick Louis, *Jorge Luis Borges: obras y maniobras*. Louis explains the way Borges' working process, redaction, constant modifications to texts and works in progress, which very much complicated the critic's attempts to trace the genealogy of Borges' texts. Of further importance is the article by Daniel Balderston "Palabras rechazadas: Borges y la tachadura" (2014). There is also an in-depth philological investigation of different versions of texts by Borges, in this case, his early poetry published in different editions. See the book *Concordanze per lemma dell'opera in versi di Jorge Luis Borges* by Tommaso Scarano.

<sup>26</sup> Some of the best examples are *Tre saggi su Borges* by Roberto Paoli and "La « poétique conjecturale » de Dante selon Borges" by Erica Durante and "'El Aleph: Dante y los dos Borges'" by Rafael Montano, among others.

<sup>27</sup> There are numerous critical works that add almost nothing new to the discourse. These studies only repeat or concatenate what has already been said, and it would be impossible to mention all

mentioned and referred to in a significant number of Borges' publications (see Appendix 1), most of critiques tend to analyse only a few texts and are consistently centred on *El Aleph*<sup>28</sup>. Although

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of these works. Some of these have even received prizes, such as the book *Peregrinaje de Borges por los laberintos de Dante* by Arrassay Carralero Mariño, which essentially synthesizes many aspects that have already been explored by various critics and is useful mainly as a didactic tool to approach the relationship between Borges and Dante. However, the abundance of such material becomes an obstacle to newer readers and researchers, as it becomes difficult to identify new themes or facets of Borges' work within the veritable sea of repetitive material.

<sup>28</sup> The first commentaries regarding elements of Dante in *El Aleph* in Italian critique can be found in the early work of Stelio Cro in the article "Borges e Dante," in the periodical *Lettere Italiane* (July-September 1968), and in the book *Jorge Luis Borges: poeta saggista e narratore* (1971) which constitutes a more in depth analysis. Other such critics whom focused on Dante include Roberto Paoli (1977), Cesco Vian (1980), Graciela Ricci et al. (2005), among others. Paoli was one of the first to explore the extremely complex dantesque structure in *El Aleph*, especially the figures of Beatrice and Carlos Argentino Daneri, as an ironic reflection of Borges or Dante (see the chapter "El Aleph: biforcazioni di lettura" in *Borges: percorsi di lettura*). Daniel Balderston approaches the theme of totality contained within a single object, linking Dante and Borges in *El Aleph*, in his essay "The Universe in a nutshell", 2012. Traces of a similar theme can be found in the article by Thiem "Borges, Dante and the poetics of total vision", 1988. The majority of such authors base their study on the false premise that Borges encountered Dante relatively late in life (shortly before the age of 40), due to false declarations by Borges, rather than in concrete evidence of that encounter. Although particularly affected the focus and scope of certain studies, which as

*El Aleph* is a cornerstone of Borges' work as far as the application of themes, concepts, and style elements are concerned, it also represents the tip of the iceberg of all the *dantesque* material that can be found in Borges' works. Those most prevalent, other than *El Aleph*, include studies or commentaries on "El sur", "El poema conjetural"<sup>29</sup>, "La muerte y la brújula", "La escritura de Dios", "Manual de Zoología fantástica", and poems with motifs from "Inferno" y "Paraíso", among others.

Nevertheless, to this day, no one has undertaken a comprehensive analysis of the genealogy of ideas, motifs, and other dantesque elements, progressively adopted, assimilated, and incorporated by Borges in his work. It represents the work of many years, and as such, I will only approach this subject in one section of Chapter 3 of this thesis, as it relates to authorship and the direct links between Borges and Dante. Even though there have been studies enumerating the instances of Dante's presence, or intertextuality in Borges' works, the work to date has not traced the echoes of Dante on a wide scope over the greater part of Borges' work to create a general outline. The critic who has, very recently, made the most progress in tracking dantesque echoes in Dante (although without analysing each the nature nor implications of those echoes within Borges'

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a result contributed little to the discourse. One example of this is "El Aleph: Dante y los dos Borges," 2016, by Rafael Montano. Of further interest are works by Rosa Maria Menocal, Alberto J. Carlos, Georg Rudolf Lind, and Rafael Montano, among others.

<sup>29</sup> There are two main critics on this matter. Paoli, who dedicates an entire chapter to analyze "El poema conjetural" in relation to Dante (see "Gli spunti danteschi del <<Poema conjetural>> di Borges" in *Borges e gli scrittori italiani*, p1997), and Ariel De La Fuente (see "Conjectures on Some Sources of Jorge Luis Borges' 'Poema conjetural").

works framework) is Riccardo Ricceri in his doctoral thesis, which has now been transformed into a book, *Dante e il dantismo immanente nell'opera de Jorge Luis Borges*. However, despite representing a great advance in its quite nominative purpose, it remains far from conclusive. In general, Italian Studies of Borges have tended towards brevity in the form of short essays or articles. Nevertheless, there are some chapters in more substantial books<sup>30</sup> and three monographs that have been written, as previously cited, by Paoli and Riccardo Ricceri, as well as Humberto Núñez Faraco<sup>31</sup>.

From my point of view, the main issue in the exploration of the relationship of Borges and Dante is that many studies mention the influence of Dante in Borges' work, but the genealogy and importance of such influence has not been sketched out. There is no analysis of why Dante had such a prominent role and of what was the extent of his influence as well as its implications. There has been no attempt to determine the reach of this influence and how it shaped Borges' original style and the structure of his work. It is obvious that such a genealogy cannot be built on erroneous

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<sup>30</sup> The chapters from books that have made the greatest contribution to these fields are: Roberto Paoli ("Borges e Dante" in *Borges e gli scrittori italiani*, 1997), Maria Rosa Menocal (two chapters in *Writing in Dante's Cult of Truth: From Borges to Boccaccio*, 1991); other chapters from authors with a more modest contribution that tend to reformulate previous knowledge are: Peter Hawkins ("The Divina Commedia: Jorge Luis Borges" in *The poet's Dante*, 2001), Lore Terraccini ("Un lettore d'eccezione: Borges legge Dante" in *I codici del silenzio*).

<sup>31</sup> Núñez-Faraco, Humberto. *Borges and Dante: Echoes of a Literary Friendship*. Oxford: P. Lang, 2006. Print. This book focuses on three main topics: the poetic language, the ethical dimension and the topic of love in a selection of both authors' work.

historical information. As previously mentioned, most critics erroneously assume that Borges first encountered Dante in his late thirties, as per his autobiography. In addition to these considerations, I shall include concrete proof countering this assertion, my analysis will find evidence of the influence of Dante in Borges' writings since the late 1920s, and the way Borges start appropriating some dantesque ideas.

Apart from Dante, who was a significant a part of Borges' readings and whose ideas were clearly incorporated into Borges' work (explored in the first and third chapters) there are many other Italian readings that make up Borges' Italian background and merit mention in the first chapter. However, limitations of space within this project will reduce such discussion to just a few Italian references, whom were relevant to certain phases in Borges' literary work. Even though Dante is the most important Italian figure for Borges, there is a plethora of Classic Roman, Latin, and Italian authors in whom Borges demonstrated interest (see Appendix 2), and remain unexplored by the critics. Among them, and worthy of our attention, are the Latin Classics, as well as Croce and Papini. Borges' associations included not only the Latin Classics, but extended into a continuum of Modern Italian writers, not limited by geography or chronology. This goes hand in hand with a symbolic or mythical structure for Borges, in which he places Italy as the origin and source of Western culture, extended, broadened, and enriched by each different Western language and tradition, and which Borges considered himself a true inheritor, or vessel.

To conclude, I must mention a practical concern, which impacted my work from its beginnings, due to the complexity of Borges' work, its enormous number of editions, in which content varies widely from one to another, and that had to be resolved during the writing process. This issue was the fact that the tools — general indices of Borges' work — that should assist in the beginning of any analysis, and allow the reader to navigate from one text to another, are in

many cases incomplete, or riddled with errors and inconsistencies. As a result, I had to build specific indices relating to the Italian world, collecting and comparing information drawn from general indices. The indices<sup>32</sup> assembled so far by certain academics and bibliographers are useful, especially to identify the most evident references, but I have identified various issues. Among other flaws, their scope is limited, they are not by any means exhaustive, they do not consider the

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<sup>32</sup> The Index done by Nicolás Helft, a renowned bibliophile and collector, is the one that includes the greatest span of material. However, although the second edition of his *Jorge Luis Borges: bibliografía e Índice* from 2013 is much better than the previous edition *Jorge Luis Borges: Bibliografía completa* from 1998, it is still incomplete, full of typos, mistakes and inconsistencies, being far from a thorough and complete work, despite the first title that had to be changed indeed given the evident incompleteness of the work. There are many books not listed, some editions with substantial changes, or works with the same title that are misleadingly labeled as the same text. Other Indices (even more incomplete but that can be compared to each other) are the following: Horacio Becco (*Jorge Luis Borges: bibliografía total, 1923-1973*), José Gilardoni (*Borgesiana: catálogo bibliográfico de Jorge Luis Borges, 1923-1989*), David William Foster (*Jorge Luis Borges: An Annotated Primary and Secondary Bibliography*). Beyond the aforementioned defects, the issue is that the thematic portion of the index is quite limited or simply nonexistent. Daniel Balderston attempted to solve this problem with *The Literary Universe of Jorge Luis Borges: An Index to References and Allusions to Person, Titles and Places in His Writings*. It is helpful and listed many topics, places and persons indeed, but it remains incomplete, there are books not considered, and it does not always take into consideration the different editions of the works or its changes.

multiple editions and revisions between different publications, they have omitted certain works. Furthermore, some references require a certain level of interpretation that is often absent. Even the references Borges makes directly to his own readings aren't always precise, either because his memory of such vast readings betrays him, or because they are part of a game of misleading references. Borges' references can never be assumed to be true, and previous researchers have not taken the care to amass. A serious philological study of the various editions of Borges' works, cataloguing differences and modifications, is imperative, as the multiplicity of versions of the same texts is an obstacle to the study of Borges' works. The gradual compilation of complete works, given the limited access to manuscripts closely guarded by heirs or collectors, renders the task almost impossible.

Having laid out this project to be developed within the limited scope of a thesis, while maintaining a more panoramic point of view of Borges' work, I must recognise that each section could be expanded upon and explored in more depth, either by myself or others. It is my goal to arouse curiosity in other researchers, as such, this thesis shall serve as the beginning of a refutation of the illogical or unfair relegation of Italian influence to the shadows of borgesian studies.

In summation, it is my position that, dealing with this range of specific problems in an organic and systematic way, rather than attacking simple, isolated issues, will allow for the reclamation of valuable elements of Italian culture and literature in the study of Borges which must not remain relegated to ignominy. Opening the general critique of Borges to new perspectives can only invigorate it, and the area of Italian Studies of Borges is a rich resource, with many facets to be further examined and contribute to general study. Very likely, this will lead, not only to

worthwhile and novel results, but also to renew current critical progress and consolidate ideas from many other fields of research and distinct perspectives.

## 1. Chapter 1 The Most Italian Borges: His Cultural and Literary Background

### 1.1. What to expect?

From all that has been exalted and studied within the literary corpus of the famous Argentine writer Jorge Luis Borges, his ties with Italian culture, literature and intellectual communities, correspond to a critically neglected area of study. Although Borges kept in appearance an ambiguous position towards Italian literature in general, he dedicated most of his life to the thorough study of a few Italian authors.

The overarching objective of this study is thus to conduct a more organic and systematic analysis of Borges' ties to Italian literature and culture, as well as his nexus and his exchanges with contemporary Italian artists. It is necessary to revise the importance of Italian literature in Borges' life and works. Such understanding is fundamental to determine the beneficial transformative implications of such bond, not only on Borges' career, but also the eventual repercussions on the Italian literary tradition.

### 1.2. Historical Antecedents

At the turn of the twentieth century Argentina (particularly Buenos Aires) was prominently influenced by a massive wave of Italian immigration that had exceeded by far the immigration from any other country. As a result, the *arrabal* or *orillas* near the outskirts of Buenos Aires developed a highly Italianized subculture. Buenos Aires itself used to give the impression of an Italian city. According to an article in *La Nación* from September 21, 1895, the city was completely paralyzed on the previous day because of the celebration of the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Italian Unification (Korn 41). At this time, Argentina was one of the richest countries in the world, almost

as rich as the USA (Williamson 34), even if its population in 1870 did not even reach the two million mark. Astonishingly, in the next fifty years three and a-half million immigrants settled in the country (30), most of them being Italians. According to the national census of 1895, just four years before Borges was born, Buenos Aires' population was 663,854 inhabitants. Fifty-two per cent of the total population established in the city were recent immigrants and half of those immigrants were Italians (Korn 44–45). Between 1901 and 1915, the time Borges lived in the Italian neighbourhood of Palermo, Argentina received 994,554 new Italian immigrants (Rosoli 59). In 1906 alone, a record number of 127,348 new Italian arrivals were documented (Foerster 15). During the time Borges lived in Palermo the number of Italian immigrants increased from 181,693 Italians in the census of 1895 to 312,267 in 1914 (45). The neighbourhoods most crowded with Italian immigrants were La Boca (Genoese), Nueva Pompeya (Neapolitans), Palermo (Calabrians and Sicilians), Villa Urquiza, Villa Ortúzar and La Paternal (mixed origins). Thus, it is not surprising that Luigi Einaudi affirms in many occasions that “l'ambiente argentino è saturo d'italianità” (29) and much of the national economy and production were deposited in their hands<sup>33</sup>.

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<sup>33</sup> An example that illustrates the importance of Italians in Argentina: from the total 36,507 bank accounts registered in 1887 forty-four per cent belonged to Italians and many of the newly created banks were actually under Italian ownership (Banco de Italia y Río de la Plata (1871), Nuevo Banco Italiano (1887), Banco Popular Italiano (1898), Banco Francés e Italiano para América del Sur (1909) and Banco *Italo Belga* (1904)) (Korn 46). Italians also invested most of their capital in real estate, owning thirty-six per cent of the total available between 1887 and 1909 (47).

Palermo was an Italian-settled ancient neighbourhood, where Borges spent the first 15 years of his life, prior to his family's move to Geneva (*Autobiographical* 203). By the turn of the century, Palermo was part of the *orillas*, or the shores, of the great metropolis. In Williamson's words, it had quite "an unsavoury reputation" (Williamson 32):

... [I]nhabited by large numbers of poor Italian immigrants, mostly from Calabria and Sicily, it was known as the haunt of petty criminals and pimps; on the other side of the Maldonado river from where the Borges's lived, there was a seedy area of taverns and dance halls, where girls could be hired to dance tango. Just south was the notorious "Tierra de Fuego", an area around the huge state penitentiary that was the stomping ground of some of the more feared knife fighters in all of Buenos Aires. Even so, Palermo was slowly attracting more respectable people [like the Borges family] (32).

In general, marginal risky areas with a strong presence of Italian immigrants (like Palermo) were source of a very enriching cultural interchange and recombination of elements between *criollo*, Italian, and gaucho traditions. One of the results of these crossings between traditions is the emergence of a new linguistic code or vernacular initially unintelligible to middle and high social classes. In these zones (and eventually in the entire city) this novel slang, *lunfardo*, displayed heavy influences of the Italian language and other Italian dialects<sup>34</sup>. Other outcomes of that cultural

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<sup>34</sup> According to Gobello, *lunfardo* was a slang that originated and developed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It emerged among criminals and hoodlums but it was soon adopted by the lower classes and eventually permeated the Argentine and Uruguayan Spanish in a more general manner (Gobello 14). As I mentioned, it was a linguistic mishmash in which Italian dialects

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prevailed because many of the Italian immigrants were mostly peasants or low-class workers with a dialect as their mother tongue. Many of them did not even speak Italian. It cannot be considered a language like its nearest antecedent, the *cocoliche*, because the *lunfardo* lacks of syntax and grammar of its own. More than slang, *cocoliche* was a complete Italian-Spanish macaronic language (10). Moreover, *cocoliche* is a pidgin language, which reflects a process of creolization, confined mostly to the first generation of Italian immigrants striving to communicate on the basis of their Italian language or dialect with Argentines. Second generations acquired a gradual command of Spanish and *cocoliche* slowly fell out of use, although many words were transferred to *lunfardo*. In *lunfardo*, some words were taken as they are in the original dialect or adapted reversing some syllables (i.e. tango was called *gotàn*). Soler Cañas mentions that *lunfardo* was absorbed in many *sainetes*, tango lyrics, and certain types of literature (Soler Cañas 43). In poetry *lunfardo* was first introduced only in oral subgenres like the *payada*, a musical competition of composing and singing of verses accompanied by a guitar in a sort of duel between two persons. The most famous *payador* was José Bettinotti, son of two Italian immigrants. The *payada* led to *tango* that also absorbed many *lunfardo* terms. Tango lyrics use *lunfardo* sparsely, but some songs, such as “El Ciruja”, and most lyrics by Celedonio Flores and Alberto Vaccarezza employ *lunfardo* heavily. Through Carlos Gardel, tango would become the most powerful way of definitively divulging *lunfardo* lexicon among different social classes. Benigno Lugones reproduced the first verses written with *lunfardo* content in the newspaper *La Nación* of Buenos Aires on March 18th, 1879.

hybridization were the appearance of wide variety of unique cultural manifestations and subgenres, in which *lunfardo* was also present. The *sainete criollo*<sup>35</sup> was a very peculiar subgenre of popular play, often performed in local tents or improvised locations, whose subject was legendary heroes or local characters living in *conventillos*, set in a humorous tone. Stories and folk songs were also used to celebrate the feats of brave knife fighters or *cuchilleros*.

Remarkably, there was a very specific type of music that is believed to have arisen among the recently settled Italian communities — the tango. This provocative music first appeared around 1890 and was first heard in brothels and dance halls of the *orillas*. It explicitly alluded to the sexual act as almost a powerful or violent battle (Gobello 26). The main instrument in tango, the *bandoneon*, seems to have been brought to Argentina by Genovese mariners from Germany and later incorporated into this new type of music.

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<sup>35</sup> The *sainete* was not a new genre; it had already been in use since the seventeenth century in Spain. Notwithstanding, according to Ursula Voss in *Der Sainete* (14), between 1894 and 1915, while that European country was coping with its decline, in Argentina the *sainete* was undergoing a revival and transformation. Argentine *sainete* stories used in popular theatre to address the life of new immigrants, mostly Italian, in the crowded *conventillos* (those large houses in popular neighbourhoods where rooms were rented to various families), as well as other low class spaces like coffee shops or streets. Many of the first *sainetes* in Argentina used *cocoliche* or new immigrant characters caricatured with a tone of linguistic parody. Later *sainetes* would use *lunfardo* instead. Some of the most important *sainetistas* were Alberto Vaccarezza, Armando Discepolo (both of them from Italian descent). At a later time, Discepolo gradually developed a more peculiar type of grotesque comedy called the *grotesco criollo*.

The lesser known first phase of Borges' literary production, before the publication of *Ficciones* and *El Aleph* (the two books that later made him famous), was profoundly influenced by the Italian subculture of his hometown.

### 1.3. Borges' Childhood in Palermo: First Contact With Italian Popular Culture

Three contrasting sets of values and cultural traditions mainly marked Borges' early life. While in his family coexisted both an English and a *criollo* tradition, the majority of Italian immigrants defined the environment in which Borges lived. Due to the danger of the neighbourhood of Palermo, Borges' parents tried relentlessly to keep him and his sister segregated from the outside world. Borges' grandmothers, Frances Haslam (from an English lineage), and Leonor Suárez de Acevedo (from a *criollo* lineage), took charge of his early education helping him develop innate bilingual skills and promptly inculcating the habit and joy of reading, in both the English and Spanish languages. The undoubted presence of these three opposed cultural traditions, either from a popular culture or a culturally high (sophisticated or classic) point of view, is an important consideration in the specific case of Borges. This trait will determine an intricate and permanent game of tensions, representing different sets of values and life perspectives that will delineate not only his life but also his entire literary production. In different stages of his life he will privilege one cultural tradition over the other two resulting in different outcomes and effects in his literary production.

Living in such isolation, and with no friends apart from his sister, Borges sought refuge in books and literature a world that, as he discovered later, would re-captivate his father's attention (once he started to write) and used to spend many hours a day in the vast family library. This virtually absolute self-imposed seclusion would only provoke in young Borges a great curiosity for a world he could rarely be in contact with and its highly Italianized cultural atmosphere. This

appealing milieu was often too overtly violent for an extremely introverted child like Borges. He had to abide with minimal discoveries of the hustle and bustle of the outside world by means of spare glimpses from afar, either from the rooftop of his two-floor house at 2147 Serrano (that permitted a good panoramic view) or from behind the fence in his garden. Borges' inquisitiveness and sense of seclusion were probably aggravated by a lack of attention from his father, whom he admired despite his affairs with lovers and friends outside of the household.

With respect to Borges' direct experience with his milieu, he had a slow and gradual level of involvement in the risky environment surrounding him and in its variety of lively popular cultural manifestations. The cultural ambiance from the neighbourhood was gradually filtered into his life, mainly through the guests of artistic gatherings that his father used to host. Among the different guests attending the selected social-literary gatherings were minor writers (e.g. Álvaro Melián Lafinur — Borges' uncle —, Marcelo del Mazo and the Belgian Charles de Soussens) but most importantly, Evaristo Carriego and Macedonio Fernández. Carriego and Fernández are two key figures in Borges' life. They both represented surrogate fathers for Borges at different stages of his life: Carriego during Borges' childhood and adolescence; Fernández later, during Borges' early adulthood.

Carriego, the first influential literary figure for Borges, was particularly interesting for a number of reasons. According to what Borges said: "Carriego was the man who discovered the literary possibilities of the run-down and ragged outskirts of the city — the Palermo of my boyhood" (*Autobiographical* 233). In other words, Carriego was experimenting with many elements from the popular culture derived from that Italian neighbourhood. He assimilated in his poetry the spirit of the cultural marginal areas of Buenos Aires — the cross-road of three key elements: the Italian immigrants and their characteristic *lunfardo*, the fierce *cuchilleros* and the

gaucho tradition. Furthermore, it is worth stressing that Borges discovered the power of language through poetry with Carriego. Borges confessed to Roberto Alifano<sup>36</sup>, an Argentine friend, that he had the magical revelation of language once Carriego was reading aloud the poem “El misionero” by Almafuerte.

Borges idolized Carriego. Not only this man gave him the attention his father never did, but he also made him discover the fascinating world of *cuchilleros*, *compadritos* (e.g. Juan Muraña), local heroic gauchos described in famous *sainetes* (e.g. Juan Moreira), gringos or *tanos*, and also forbidden violent and sexual rhythms, such as the tango. Carriego was a bohemian and wrote about the environment that he frequented: the culture and reality of brothels, the gaucho culture, and some of his most feared *cuchillero* friends in the Palermo neighbourhood (e.g. Don Nicolás Paredes).

It was through Carriego’s experience that young Borges could have a foretaste of the popular culture of the *arrabales* and the *orillas* where country people intermingled with the huge

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<sup>36</sup> Borges said:

“No entendí nada, pero me fue revelada la poesía, porque comprendí que las palabras no eran solamente un medio de comunicación, sino que encerraban una especie de magia”. (Alifano 34-35)

From that moment on he attended all the social gatherings possible when Carriego recited poems, “just standing with his eyes wide open” his mother would remember. Borges idolized Carriego to the point of considering him a surrogate father (Williamson 65), and will later dedicate one of his books to him, precisely with the title *Evaristo Carriego*. The characteristics and style of this book will be examined later in this essay.

masses of immigrants, mainly of Italian origin (Williamson 65). Either personally, through his books of poems, or in articles printed in *La Protesta Humana* (an anarchist newspaper), the world described by Carriego will acquire the enchantment of the forbidden for young impressionable Borges (66). His mother Leonor Acevedo Suárez prohibited any contact with Carriego and forbade him to read stories about gauchos and *compadritos*. However, this would only exacerbate his curiosity and Borges read in secret many of the iconic books of such type of literature (e.g. *Juan Moreira* and *Martín Fierro*). His affection for this world will be preserved and resumed in different periods of his literary life. He will continue investigating *compadritos* as much as he could and after winning his first literary prize in 1929 (second place), he devoted himself to writing the book entitled *Evaristo Carriego*, later published in 1930. This book was the product of this crucial contact with Carriego and pays homage not only to him, but to the popular culture based on courage (from Palermo and other dangerous outskirts of Buenos Aires). This book was even based on first-hand information concerning the fearful *compadrito* Don Nicolás Paredes himself.

The Italianized neighbourhood of Palermo will represent for Borges a very ambivalent and even contradictory world. On the one hand it was a violent and harsh environment. He even suffered bullying from his Italian classmates when he finally attended a public school. Hence,

Borges' rejection<sup>37</sup> of the Italians, their Italianized popular culture and *lunfardo*<sup>38</sup>, an argot he was forced to learn through coercive ways, doesn't come as a surprise. This rejection of Italians and their culture most likely lead Borges to give an utterly negative twist to all the Italian characters in his prose. On the other hand, once the Italianized popular culture was seen through the filter of literature and even romanticized by it (e.g. in Carriego's literature), it will remain extremely appealing to Borges. As a result, he will never completely cease to write about topics related to that low-class peripheral subculture and its characteristic set of values such as courage. In a similar manner, Borges will always admire and study the model of Italian high culture through its highest representatives<sup>39</sup>, not only in literature (e.g. Dante, Virgilio, Tasso, Ariosto and Papini), but also through arts and philosophy (e.g. Croce and Vico).

#### 1.4. His first Italian readings

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<sup>37</sup> One proof of this rejection, that will continue throughout his life, can be found in a letters to one of his (or perhaps his only) friends from childhood Roberto Godel. Borges wrote in 1918 when describing the people from Lugano, an Italian Swiss city:

Los luganenses me resultan antipáticos. Son italianos puros, guarangos, gritones, compadres. Al oírlos me parece que estoy en mi país. Las luganenses son muy morenas y muy cursis. Es una idiosincrasia pero a mí las morochas siempre me dan la idea de sucias (Cartas a Roberto Godel, 2<sup>nd</sup> letter).

<sup>38</sup> According to Maria Esther Vazquez, Borges wrote with Octavio Portela Cantilo a tango lyric (now lost) in *lunfardo* called "Biaba con caldo" — in other words, bloody and beating (or kicking).

<sup>39</sup> Cf. List of Italian authors Borges includes in his work in Appendix 2.

Paradoxically, Borges' attempt to be secluded from the violence and risks surrounding him (inseparable from the hybridized popular culture of the marginal zones of Buenos Aires huddled with low-class Italian immigrants) increased his interest in that world. Also, it allowed a gradual discovery of a very contrasting form of Italian cultural rooted in an ancient tradition. Through books he became acquainted with this high culture tradition, prominently from two of the most remarkable peaks of Italian literature, the Middle Ages and the Renaissance - pillars for the literature of the western world.

It would be nearly impossible to trace all the readings of an incredibly voracious reader like Borges, and particularly difficult to trace are the readings of his childhood or young age — mainly because of the lack of registers or evidence. Borges only preserved a part of his father's library when he became an adult and later he donated many of those books, either to different libraries (mainly the Argentine National Library that he directed), to friends, or in other cases, some books just got lost. A scarce number of his early readings can be traced through a physical direct scrutiny of the remaining partial library, now in custody of his widow Maria Kodama (available at her discretion), or the also reserved special collection of the National Library, both in Buenos Aires. However, some of Borges' readings are mentioned<sup>40</sup> by Borges himself in many of his essays, books, articles, and periodical publications, as well as by many of his friends through biographies, collections of essays and interviews. Nevertheless, the direct perusal of the remaining libraries is significantly more reliable than those accounts, especially if there are still some brief notes at the beginning or the end of books with Borges' initials — from the time before he lost his sight. The readings mentioned by Borges, any other friend or interviewer, cannot always be

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<sup>40</sup> Cf. Appendix 2

corroborated, and sometimes important inconsistencies or contradictions can be detected. Of the many records of interviews available, those conferred to his close friends are probably the more trustworthy. Unexpectedly, some of the most paradigmatic cases of these inconsistencies, or even misleading accounts, are in Borges' autobiography, as it will later be pointed out in detail later.

According to the information available, most of Borges' childhood readings were in English, Spanish, or French, and most of the material he read from Italian literature was translated in either of those languages. Most of the content of the family library was in English and Spanish because of the bilingualism existent in the family. However, this was more an exception than a rule in society at the time, as French was the leading language in terms of style and taste (Williamson 33), at least since the presidency of Domingo Faustino Sarmiento<sup>41</sup>. Sarmiento was a notorious writer who overtly launched a campaign of modernization based on ideas of the Illustration and adopting France as model of civilization. Nonetheless (contrary to what is said many years later in his *Autobiographical Notes*), Borges started to read some Italian authors early

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<sup>41</sup> Sarmiento was one of the most important intellectual figures of XIX Century in Argentina playing a fundamental role in the modernization and economic boom of Argentina during his presidency from 1868 to 1874. His most famous book *Facundo* was written against and during the regime of the initially federalist, but later dictator Juan Manuel de Rosas (actually a distant relative of Borges). Borges would admire and espouse many aspects from the liberal perspective of Sarmiento, and actually he would consider it a national mistake not having adopted *Facundo* as a symbolic Argentine identity book (due to his liberal ideas) and instead the ideologically ambiguous *Martín Fierro*.

in his life, amongst which can be count in first place Dante Alighieri<sup>42</sup>. The analysis of the peculiarities of Borges' autobiography (its cultural proposal and meaning, the way he negotiates his own identity with the public and the purpose of some possibly voluntary inaccuracies contained therein) will be discussed in Chapter 3 of this study.

Borges read at least two different versions of the *Divina Commedia* (his most relevant Italian reading) in the first 15 years of his life, before going to live abroad. Alifano asserts (*Borges y la D C* 14) that the first version Borges read, by recommendation of his father, was an English translation in blank verse by the poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, published in 1867. However he will also always conserve a vivid memory of the drawings in William Blake's version of *the Divina Commedia*, first published between 1824 and 1827 (78). Most probably he also started reading at that time Edward Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of Roman Empire* as a complement to the reading of the *Divina Commedia* or to satisfy his very early interest in mythology and the classic world.<sup>43</sup> However, even if Borges started reading Dante at this early stage of his life, these were not his most productive reading years. It merely constituted a first approach as future readings of the *Divina Commedia* would fully reveal its transformative power and reflect in his posterior work.

### 1.5. Switzerland and Italy

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<sup>42</sup> For early literary encounters with Dante see Alifano's book *Borges y la Divina Comedia*.

<sup>43</sup> One of Borges' works in English was written before the age 10 years old — an anthology on classic mythology. This work has disappeared; it is just mentioned by some of his biographers, amongst whom Williamson.

On February 3, 1914, Borges' family relocated to Geneva supposedly for medical reasons<sup>44</sup>, in an attempt to avoid the loss of Borges' father's sight (a problem inherited many years later by Borges himself). Borges spent four years of his adolescence in the Swiss cities of Geneva and Lugano.

In Geneva he was admitted to the Francophone school *Collège de Genève* and consequently, most of his readings during that time were in French. Inherently, it is not surprising that, as mentioned by Alifano Borges, read Èmile Littré's version of the *Divina Commedia* (*Borges y la D C* 14), published by Hachette in 1879, in *terza rima* (perhaps the main reason why it might have caught Borges' attention), and written in French of the XIV century. In fact, his curiosity for dantesque topics was increasing, as demonstrated his readings of Benedetto Croce's *La poesia di Dante*<sup>45</sup> and Giovanni Boccaccio's *Trattatelo in laude di Dante* — works he will later consider “essential books” in the matter (14). These readings could have been either a motivation or a consequence of his first direct contact with Italy — according to Paoli, a trip that he made with his family to Milan, Venice, and Verona (*Borges e gli* 34). Borges knew of Dante's famous letter to Cangrande della Scala, ruler of Verona, which describes the ongoing writing of the *Divina Commedia* and provide the reader with crucial interpretative clues. Cangrande della Scala was also Dante's mentor and protector during his exile. Naturally, it is inevitable to speculate that Verona

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<sup>44</sup> Cf. Williamson 76–77 for further discussion about the different possible reasons for that trip.

<sup>45</sup> Although Borges declares in a conversation with Alifano having read this book during his years in Geneva (1914–1919), he must have read it during his stay in Spain (1919–1921), or after his return to Buenos Aires, because the text was first written by Croce and published in 1920 in different magazines and by 1921 as a more organic book.

could have been chosen as one of the destinations of the trip precisely because Dante lived there when he was writing the *Divina Commedia*.

Along with his reading of the *Divina Commedia* in French, he was also experiencing sexual and sensual curiosity natural at his age. Amongst his secret readings he had a book about the sexual customs of some Balkan people<sup>46</sup>. Due to his extremely introverted personality he will have considerable difficulties to connect with the opposite sex throughout his life. He constantly fell in love with someone who did not correspond his feelings. Nevertheless, these women were fundamental in his life and will have a direct influence in his writings. Precisely because of the recurrent unreciprocated love, Borges will find an affinity with Dante and his idealized and intellectualized love for Beatrice. Similarly, he identifies with the iconic case of Francesca and Paolo, who first discover love through literature and only later bring it to reality. Borges will later document this in one of his famous *Ensayos Dantescos*, further discussed in section 1.8 of this chapter.

Adolescent Borges fell in love and was rejected for the first time in Geneva (Williamson 85), where he also had a traumatic sexual initiation appointed by his father in a brothel with one of the prostitutes that he likely frequented himself (Canto 39). Due to these two difficult experiences, and the ensuing depression Borges suffered from, the family moved to the Swiss-Italian-speaking city of Lugano, a city that would be singularly important to him. He arrived to that city in a particularly miserable state of mind, as is reflected in one of the letters he sent to his only Argentine friend from elementary school, Roberto Godel. According to Maria Esther

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<sup>46</sup> See the list of books that Borges himself mentions from his childhood in the short text “El Otro”, in *El libro de Arena*, first published in 1975.

Vazquez, an environment like Lugano, a smaller city closer to nature, had been the doctor's prescription to help him soothe and overcome such recent painful and traumatic experiences (*Esplendor* 67). According to María Esther Vázquez, it was precisely in Lugano that Borges found his first (although ephemeral) reciprocated love — his first Beatrice — and this event would have symbolic repercussions in his further literary works (69). According to Vázquez, the same silent encounter would be reflected in the poem “Escaparate”, published in the magazine *Tableros* in Madrid, in 1922 (70). It is not known if the title of the short story “Ulrica” that Borges wrote in 1975 — the only love story he ever wrote — came from the name of that girl from Lugano or whether it alluded to someone else. At different moments of his life, Borges will make several direct or indirect allusions to different female figures that will constitute for him an equivalent of what Beatrice was to Dante. In *El Aleph* (probably his most famous text and a homage to the *Divina Commedia* in a satiric key), he precisely named the muse of the narrator Beatriz (the Spanish equivalent of Beatrice). Conveniently, the main character's surname is Daneri, probably an anagram or derivation from Dan-te Alighi-eri. In the case of Beatriz in *El Aleph*, there's not only an inter-textual link to Dante's Beatrice, but also a reference to a real Beatrice hidden in Borges' life at that time. Carmen Galindo interviewed Borges during his first visit to México in 1973 and asked him “Who was in reality Beatriz Viterbo?,” to what Borges answered:

Yo he estado muy enamorado de ella. *El Aleph* lo escribí como una elegía. Nunca me quiso. Su verdadero nombre aparece en el cuento atribuido a otro personaje. Es como un juego de espejos, pero ella, que leyó el cuento, nunca se reconoció. Mis otros personajes han sido creados por necesidades de la ficción, pero

Beatriz Viterbo era una persona de carne y hueso. Toda mi vida esperé que alguien me hiciera esa pregunta.<sup>47</sup>

Just in this way, many of Borges' texts will be dedicated to different Beatrice, and it happened that he sometimes changed the dedications of a single text to different women in different editions.<sup>48</sup>

#### 1.6. Experimental Creativity in search of a voice: shifting between socially committed literature, *avant-garde* movements against Futurism and fierce *criollo* identity

After his years in Geneva and Lugano, Borges' family moved to Spain for some years before returning to Buenos Aires (Williamson 78–114). The Spanish period was marked by Borges' adhesion to an *avant-garde* movement, that he will later adapt and propagate in Argentina: the Ultraism. However, this will not prevent Borges from exploring other literary paths outside of

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<sup>47</sup> A reproduction of the interview appears in the magazine Siempre! on August 14, 2012. [www.siempre.mx/2012/08/yo-he-estado-muy-enamorado-de-beatriz-viterbo-borges-entrevista-en-su-primera-visita-a-mexico-en-1973/](http://www.siempre.mx/2012/08/yo-he-estado-muy-enamorado-de-beatriz-viterbo-borges-entrevista-en-su-primera-visita-a-mexico-en-1973/)

<sup>48</sup> One representative example of this problem is the dedication of the book *Historia Universal de la Infamia* addressed the first time to an enigmatic I.J., still unidentified, later Beatriz Bibiloni Webster de Bullrich, and finally to the also unknown S.D. For more details about this discussion see “Dos poemas de Borges y una mujer perdida” by Antonio Camou published in the cultural supplement of the *Diario Hoy* (La Plata), June 2006. Similarly problematic are the dedications of different editions of (or containing) *El Aleph*, and the poems “Ulrica” (in *El Libro de Arena*) and “1964” (in *El Otro, el Mismo*), and the poem “Amorosa anticipación”(in *Luna de Enfrente*), among others.

the *avant-garde* movement he was promoting. This stage of Borges' life can be seen as an experimental laboratory; necessary in order to acquire a definitive personal literary style and voice that will later characterize him and render him recognizable and unique.

This quest for originality and individuality will place him in the middle of important debates and discussions: a linguistic debate on purity and distinctiveness of the *rioplatense* characteristic Spanish and the *criollo* language in Argentina; a continued debate on national identity in a country full of immigrants; the forging and consolidation of a new literary tradition, distinctive not only from Spain, but from the rest of Latin America as well.

As I will further illustrate, Borges went through different ephemeral phases, sometimes simultaneously that even altered one another, true to their merely experimental purpose. Borges will choose to highlight one, or some, of the facets that defined, conditioned, or conformed him since his childhood, depending on the effect he wanted to create or the impression he wanted to give as a writer to the general public. Sometimes, he needed to appear more *criollo* and proud of his heroic historical lineage, other times he preferred to appear more cosmopolitan, universalist, and thus expressed more interest in stressing his English lineage. Occasionally, he preferred to even show off some aspects of the hybrid popular culture from the *arrabales* or slums, typical from his Italian neighborhood but criticized, rejected or avoided by his family, in other words, cultural elements that had defined him in a negative manner. However, these distinctive elements will rarely be presented alone, in any case they will be mixed in different proportions, prioritizing some over the others, but always mixed. At this stage Borges started publishing some texts, shifting from one style to another, creating a game of tensions between the three opposite perspectives already present in the conformation of his family during his childhood.

In Switzerland he had already shown interest, explored and followed very dissimilar and socially committed literary trends including the French Symbolism, German Expressionism and even allusions to the Russian Social Revolution. These currents and elements had one thing in common: they were new fresh patterns defying the established canons. They represented a double operation, loosening the restraining bonds with his over-protective family, and finding alternative ways of attempting to make his voice heard in a *bourgeois* society. Borges' first contact with socialist ideas seems to have been through *Jean Christophe* by Romain Rolland; he also followed carefully the events of the Russian revolution during 1917 (Williamson 82–83). From the Russian Revolution and Symbolism Borges did not retain significant influences, but his contact with Expressionism resulted in a more fruitful lesson (83). The collection of leftist poems that he wrote (*Los Salmos Rojos*) was destroyed before being published,<sup>49</sup> and something similar also happened to some Symbolist and Expressionist<sup>50</sup> poems he had started to write (82).

In Spain, he vividly participated in the *avant-garde* frenzy. There were two irreconcilable groups: the Futurist movement lead by Ramón Gómez de la Serna (the man who published Tommaso Marinetti's Futurist manifesto in Spain) and the Ultraism, a movement headed by Rafael Cansinos-Asséns. Ultraism was a very eclectic movement that influenced and was influenced by

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<sup>49</sup> With the exception of very few of those poems that came to public light in magazines. For example the poem in prose "Rusia" was published in the magazine *Grecia*, issue 48, on September 1, 1920; see republication (*Textos Recobrados* 57, vol. 1).

<sup>50</sup> The Symbolist poems were written in French and they were destroyed. But some Expressionist poems will be published, the first to be published was "Trinchera" in the same *Grecia* magazine issue 43, on June 1, 1919; see republication (*Textos Recobrados* 57, vol. 1).

different personalities and trends — e.g. Marinetti and the Futurism, Huidobro and the Cubism (100), Tristan Tzara and the Dadaism. Borges briefly participated in some public readings of a Futurist style (100), he also flirted with Dadaist ideas (103), but he returned to Expressionism, which resulted in some published poems. After all, Borges' intention was to challenge and explore the limits of art<sup>51</sup> (and at the same time his own limits) in a quest to acquire originality.

Eventually Borges realized that the innovative impulse of the *avant-garde* would fade away. Their colourful frenzy and the rupture with established structures was temporary<sup>52</sup> and

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<sup>51</sup> Borges wrote a text called “Esquisse critique” to be included in the Dadaist periodical *Dadaglobe*. The text was curiously not published because he was considered more extremist or more Dadaist than the leader of the trend, Tristan Tzara himself. See republication (*Textos Recobrados* 43, vol. 1). He defended a particular extreme type of anarchism in art. He claimed every style could be seen as a cage and there are “as many forms as personal equations exist”. Therefore, he would be favourable to promote, perhaps even reach, an ideal situation in which every individual could finally free himself from his own personal style: “Oh el júbilo solar y popular y cotidiano del dadaísmo sin Dadá!” Otherwise stated, he wanted to push Dadaism to such extreme that the authority of Dada would have no place in it anymore.

<sup>52</sup> In the text “Acotaciones”, published in 1922 in the first number of the magazine *Proa* — co-created by him — while praising a book from González Lanuza that he considers iconic from the Ultraist movement so far, he makes count and summarizes the experience and accomplishments of both types of Ultraisms. Borges accepts that in the Spanish Ultraism, where he first participated, there was exclusively a willingness of renewal, to open a new cycle in art, and that its emblems

would not make him stand out permanently, nor allow him to consolidate the image of a respected writer. To find an identifiable voice, Borges was looking for a more substantial literature, with less ephemeral artifices. In this perspective, it is worth noting Borges' reaction to Futurism during and after his participation in the American Ultraism movement. Even if in his young years in Spain, looking to be controversial, he participated some times in public literary gatherings of the most futuristic style looking to be controversial, years later his perspective will shift to the opposite position (especially during the two visits of Marinetti to Argentina, in 1926 and 1936) Borges condemned the extremely limited value of Futurism for literature, considering it but a "prophylactic necessary measure of the times" (*Textos Recobrados* 116, vol. 2). Moreover, in the manifesto of the American Ultraist movement, he would have voluntarily tried to take distance from Futurism.

In Spain Borges learnt how to attract and capture the public's attention to the Ultraist movement, which he also achieved when he created the American Ultraism in Argentina. Furthermore, Borges not only did so, but also took important additional steps to differentiate his movement from other important literary *avant-garde* movements. He aspired to explicitly take distance from Marinetti's Futurism and from *Sencilismo*, a literary trend or movement, which in the case of Argentina tended to capture either the rural side of the country, or the urban reality of Buenos Aires.<sup>53</sup>

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(the airplane, the antennas, the helix) speak on behalf of a chronologic actuality, in other words its validity is momentary and circumstantial (*Proa* 30).

<sup>53</sup> *Sencilismo* was created as a reaction against the formalist tendencies of Modernism. Adepts of this movement tended to use a rather simple language, taken from daily urban or country life. The

The Spanish Ultraism embraced many ideas and practices of Futurism (Williamson 100), to the extent of including them in their own manifesto<sup>54</sup>. Borges instead strived to make a clear distinction between the American Ultraism and the Futurism. In the first article Borges wrote upon his return to Buenos Aires back from Spain he mentions:

En mi explicación, pienso prescindir de la acostumbrada retórica que establece un sonoro antagonismo entre lo viejo y lo nuevo, y grita a la manera de los manifiestos del Futurismo unos cuantos latiguillos borrosos sobre la alborada, los entusiasmos juveniles, y la necesidad apremiante de arremeter con todo y conquistar las estrellas (*Textos Recobrados* 112, vol. 1).<sup>55</sup>

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most famous sencillist figure in South-America was Gabriela Mistral (Nobel Prize of literature in 1945), but its two main representatives in Argentina were Baldomero Fernández Moreno and Evaristo Carriego - both poets highly praised by Borges in a subsequent literary phase of life.

<sup>54</sup> The “Manifiesto Ultraísta” published by Isaac del Vando-Villar in *Grecia* (the magazine that he directed) has some key phrases aligning the Ultraist movement with Futurism such as:

Y nosotros [...] tenemos imágenes e ideas modernas para hacer florecer [...] nuevas flores cuyos perfumes, por lo exóticos, deleitarán a los más sutiles ingenios que sienten la avidez del Futurismo artístico (Del Vando-Villar 9).

The manifest closes with the word *futuro* with a similar connotation: “Ante los eunucos novecentistas desnudamos la Belleza apocalíptica del Ultra, seguros de que ellos no podrán romper jamás el himen del Futuro” (Del Vando-Villar 9).

<sup>55</sup> First published in *El Diario Español de Buenos Aires*, on October 23, 1921.

Similarly, the American Ultraism manifesto declares:

...la exasperada retórica y el bodrio dinamista de los poetas de Milán [futuristas] se hallan tan lejos de nosotros como el zumbido verbal, las enrevesadas series silábicas y el terco automatismo (135).<sup>56</sup>

In the afore mentioned fundamental Ultraist texts written in 1921 by Borges we can find a second opposition, that goes in tandem with the one quoted above, and is against Futurism. This second opposition is specifically against *Sencillismo*. Its literature was full of local color, employed a register close to oral traditions and included manifestations of the previously mentioned hybrid Italianized popular culture in Buenos Aires, in which Italian immigrants were fundamental participants. Borges condemns the poets who hang or asphyxiate the lyric with their indecorous confessions full of gesticulations, anecdotes, and conversational language (Williamson 114). He further specifies that among those condemned elements of popular culture is the typical *lunfardo*:

Por cierto, muchos poetas [...], han hecho bando aparte, intentando rejuvenecer la lírica mediante las anécdotas rimadas y el desaliño experto. Me refiero a los sencillistas que tienden a buscar poesía en lo común y corriente, y a tachar de su vocabulario toda palabra prestigiosa. Pero éstos se equivocan también. Desplazar el lenguaje cotidiano hacia la literatura, es un error. Sabido es que en la conversación hilvanamos de cualquier modo los vocablos y distribuimos los

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<sup>56</sup> First published in the magazine *Nosotros*, 15, vol. 39, num. 151, in December 1921; now can be more easily found in (*Textos recobrados* 135, vol. 1).

guarismos verbales con generosa vaguedad [...] [ello] empuja a los sencillistas a otra clase de retórica vergonzante, tan postiza y deliberada como [esa] jerigonza académica, o las palabrejas en lunfardo que se desparraman por cualquier obra nacional, para crear el ambiente (131).

This double opposition supposes a linguistic choice as well: to the incendiary and fragmentary futurist writings combatting the normal syntax, Borges would oppose order and would give priority to the metaphor<sup>57</sup>; to the conversational language register full of color, and using *lunfardo*, Borges would oppose a high register of language full of neologisms and more difficult syntax structures.

Evidently Argentine Ultraism did not exclusively look for a demarcation from those two contrastive movements related to the Italian cultural world. He wanted his Ultraist movement to take necessary distance from the tradition, from the immediately previous literary styles like modernism or the Spanish Golden Age's Góngora, both inevitable referents in Spanish literary

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<sup>57</sup> My intention is just to stress the existent voluntary opposition between the two movements. However, there are many more elements to take in consideration. I invite the readers to compare by themselves the, *Manifiesto Tecnico della Letteratura Futurista*, by Filippo Tomaso Marinetti, published in Milan, on May 11, 1912 (easily available online in many sources) against the Argentine Ultraist manifesto that I have already mentioned. The pre-eminence of metaphor is one for the most representative elements in their manifestos, as it appears in the first place since the first manifesto "Utraísmo" published in the recognized literary magazine *Nosotros*, in 1921 (year 15, vol 39): "Reducción de la lírica a su elemento primordial: la metáfora" (*Textos recobrados* 99, 130-132, vol. 1).

tradition and criticized for their excesses either in ornament or sentimentalism. In the national arena, Leopoldo Lugones,<sup>58</sup> represented partly a variation of that type of writing. Above all, Borges promoted an “abolición de los trebejos ornamentales, el confesionalismo, ...y la beulosidad rebuscada”, also by “tachadura de las frases medianeras ...y adjetivos inútiles” (*Textos Recobrados* 132, vol. 1).

#### 1.7. The chimera of a *criollo* national identity and language

Not long after creating and consolidating the Ultraist movement in Argentina, Borges seemingly started dedicating himself to experiment often simultaneously, with various literary styles and language registers, some of which were even contrastive with the precepts asserted in the Ultraist manifestos. There were two main identifiable concerns: a national identity, and a national language. Undoubtedly, Borges wanted to place himself in privileged leading position in both topics, and the related national polemic debates, in pursuit of consolidating his image as a leading author in Argentina.

Both debates were not by any means new. Their origin could be traced, according to Mercedes I. Blanco, to the beginning of the independence process, when the country was taking shape and struggling to differentiate itself from Spain (45-68). Yet, in Borges' times, those precedent debates acquired a new relevance as a massive (predominantly Italian) immigration arrives to the country, precisely when the national economy was very buoyant, placing Argentina

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<sup>58</sup> Lugones passes through different literary phases during his life, but he definitely represents the establishment that Borges wanted at that time contradict.

as one of the richest countries in the world at the beginning of the twentieth century<sup>59</sup>. The major difference consists in the actors, or parts, involved in the debate. The original debate was just a matter of rebellion of the new autonomous son (independent Argentina) from his father (Spain). In Borges' times, there was a third party, the newcomers attempting to vindicate their place in the arena.

There were key moments in the country's history that continued fostering the debate of national identity and language through strong opposition to iconic literary works, one example being when José Hernández wrote *Martín Fierro*, contesting both the book *Facundo*, written by the liberal thinker and president Augusto Sarmiento, as well as his regime and Europeanized model and ideal of civilization. During this time, Buenos Aires was imposing its hybrid linguistic variant as a national language, compromising the preservation of the *criollo* identity. The *criollo* class was fierce, proud of their merits and heroic historical deeds in the process of consolidation of the nation —as was the case of Borges' family on his mother's side — and felt menaced<sup>60</sup> (Blanco 78). They

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<sup>59</sup> The origin of such buoyancy is due to the extermination of the indigenous population that liberated enormous portions of land for agriculture (Williamson 30).

<sup>60</sup> This fear from the *criollos* was reflected in linguistic impassioned discussions that can be well illustrated by what Costa Álvarez said at that time:

El hibridismo del castellano...no representa una contaminación ni una infiltración,...sino una lucha a muerte por la vida, conflicto en el cual, si el castellano se mantiene con la civilización, la barbarie caerá al fin con su lengua. Representan esta misma lucha nuestras numerosas jergas gringo criollas, manojos e injertos en cepa gaucha de todos los dialectos italianos, y de algunas lenguas europeas, el ruso entre ellas. (Blanco 78).

wished to execute a double operation in the identity debate, which was obviously a two-flank attack: stress their differences from their ancestors (Spain), while emphasizing or preserving the identity of the nation based in *criollo* origins and elements. As for the attempt at setting off the *criollo* culture from the Spaniards, this operation resulted in a victory, especially given the gradually evanescent economic and cultural relationship between Argentina and Spain, in comparison to other countries. However, it would end in a devastating loss concerning the maintenance of a pure *criollo* identity. The conditions supporting such identity had drastically changed, not only in terms of the language but also the culture. The highly participatory immigrant class that had contributed many elements to the socio-cultural panorama of that period, to a point of no return.

Borges' outspoken interest in the topic of national identity, representative space and language in relation to *criolledad* are indirectly treated in essays like *Crítica del Paisaje* (1921) and *Buenos Aires*<sup>61</sup> (1921) (*Textos Recobrados* 104-108, vol. 1), published soon after he arrived from his first long trip to Europe. Comparably, his first book of poetry further explores the nation-building preoccupations, including carefully weighted linguistic and identitary elements. So far, we merely witnessed a gradual construction of a particular image of Buenos Aires from different perspectives, sometimes lyrical, melancholic, epic, and other times mythical. Borges starts his symbolic poetic journey with his first book, published in 1923, with an already suggestive title — *Fervor de Buenos Aires*. In this book he describes and uses elements from his Italian neighborhood

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<sup>61</sup> Both essays appeared in the *Cosmópolis* magazine, Madrid Num. 34, October 1921, just a few months after the Borges family arrived from Europe in March.

of Palermo with all its suggestive simplicity<sup>62</sup>, while avoiding the use of any Italian or foreign element. As Borges details in the original prologue,<sup>63</sup> he embraces the *criollo* and voluntarily excludes any foreign or foreign-sounding element.<sup>64</sup> As previously stated, in the Ultraist manifesto

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<sup>62</sup> In the prologue of 1923 he mentions:

Mi patria — Buenos Aires — no es el dilatado mito geográfico [...] es mi casa, los barrios amigables y juntamente con esas calles y retiros, lo que en ellas supone de amor, de pena y de dudas. (OC 75, vol. 1)

As consequence of such intention, in the first poem “Las calles” we read: las calles de Buenos Aires ya son la entraña de mi alma” (19) but not the streets with the hustle and bustle downtown (“molestadas de prisas y ajeteos”), but “la dulce calle de arrabal”, and the definitive version of the poem from 1969 will be even more specific saying “las calles desganadas del barrio [de Palermo]” (75).

<sup>63</sup> The prologue, as the most part of the poems, were drastically changed from one edition to another according to the changes of taste and style that Borges himself was experiencing in his life and literary production. The nature and logic of these changes will be discussed in subsection 5.8 of this chapter.

<sup>64</sup> The prologue directly addressing the reader is set in the form of a warning with the title “A quien leyere” and explicitly declares its purpose:

De propósito pues, he rechazado los vehementes reclamos de quienes en Buenos Aires no advierten sino lo extranjero: la vocinglera energía de algunas calles centrales y la universal chusma dolorosa [...] que rubrican con inquietud inusitada la dejadez de una población criolla. (OC 74, vol. 1)

Borges denounces the extremely elaborated and artificial baroque style, yet ironically *Fervor de Buenos Aires* has many neologisms, learned terms and convoluted long sentences<sup>65</sup>. In 1925, the publication of his first book of essays, *Inquisiciones*, further clarifies what was going on behind the scenes of his first book of poetry and tackles the issue of national identity in a more explicit manner. *Inquisiciones* emulates the sententious Quevedo, or Neo-Quevedian style of Torres Villaroel, both of whom are praised in the very first essays of the book and further validated in the essay “Menoscabo y Grandeza de Quevedo”, in the same book (43–50). In *Inquisiciones* Borges designates a place for the relatively new Argentine literary tradition, trying to differentiate it from its Spanish predecessors. It is only in the essays “Queja de todo *criollo*” and “La criolledad en Ipuche” of the same book that Borges directly tackles the topic. “La criolledad en Ipuche” was an effort to trace a historiography of the highly prized *criollismo* and its roots in Argentina. In the first part of the text “Queja de todo *criollo*” Borges makes a long comparison between the

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<sup>65</sup> Just as an example, the thirty-nine verses from the second poem “La recoleta” are constituted by very few phrases from which the first one (nine-verses-long) is:

Convencidos de caducidad/ vueltos un poco irreales por el morir/ altivado en tanto sepulcro/  
irrealizados port anta grave certidumbre de/ muerte/ nos demoramos en la veredas/ que apartan los  
panteones enfilados/ cuya vanilocuencia/ hecha de mármol, de rectitud y sombra/ interior/ equivale  
a sentencias axiomáticas y / severas/ de Manrique o de Fray Luis de Granada. (OC 74, vol. 1)

It is clear that the phrase is extremely complex and full of neologisms or artificial learned words: *altivado*, *vanilocuencia*, and *sentencias axiomáticas*.

Spaniards and the Argentine people and their literature stressing the originality of the latter,<sup>66</sup> due to their *criollo* origins. However, such positive distinctiveness is menaced by the noxious combination of “argentinidad y progreso” that makes the *criollo* himself a stranger in his own land and provokes its own tragedy (145).

The fences of progress and productivity limited the pampa, ancient symbol of freedom. Progress, productivity and massive immigration were also responsible for corrupting the *criollo* and rendering the city, Buenos Aires, a new Babel. Borges concludes in a tone that is at the same time symbolical and catastrophical: “Ya la República se nos extranjeriza, se pierde. Fracasa el *criollo*, se altiva y se insolenta la patria” (145). To save the purity and the pre-eminence, or superiority, of the *criollo* people and culture, the only solution Borges considers (perhaps the only hope he sees) is:

Tal vez mañana a fuerza de matanzas nos entrometeremos a civilizadores del continente. Seremos una fuerte nación. Por la virtud de esa proceridad militar, nuestros grandes varones serán claros ante los ojos del mundo. (145)

In other words, the heroic deeds through the sword (as those of his family) are the only possible way to restore the pristine *criollo* culture free from the invaders’ influences. Borges demands glory for himself, for celebrating beforehand such a great feat.

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<sup>66</sup> He asserts precisely the distinctive personality of the *criollo* (140): its peculiar lyric, the recognizable *gaucho* literature (142), the more elaborated or intelligent sense of humour (143) and in general, the style’s use of irony (144). This makes the Argentine different from the Spaniard: “los sentires que un arte *criollo* puede pronunciar sin dejo forastero” (144).

The next collection of poems *Luna de Enfrente* (1925) continues in the same direction, eulogizing exclusively the *criollo*, although with a more melancholic perspective<sup>67</sup>. Since the very word *enfrente* in the title, Borges included the presence of a third party thus giving the reader the impression of participating<sup>68</sup> in this symbolic re-creation of the neighbourhood and the city. Despite this unifying theme there is a difference between Borges' first two books — *Fervor de Buenos Aires* (poems) and *Inquisiciones* (essays) — and the following two — *Luna de Enfrente* (poems) and *Tamaño de mi esperanza* (essays). He had switched to a register of language closer to orality<sup>69</sup>, in other words closer to the *sencillistas* he had harshly criticized in the Ultraist manifesto as already mentioned. Nevertheless, he would continue to elude as much as possible<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> It could have been for two reasons: he was about to leaving the city again with his family and going to Europe for undetermined time, but he was also leaving behind his first girlfriend Concepción Guerrero (Williamson 138–139).

<sup>68</sup> As Rolando Costa Picazo says (footnotes in Borges *OC* 138-143, vol. 1), there are many elements that give the impression of an ongoing conversation with the reader since the very prologue “Al tal vez lector” and phrases like “éste es el cartel de mi pobreza...verás en él” and later “ hoy no quisiera converdarte de técnica, la verdá es que no me interesa...”.

<sup>69</sup> Apart from the tone of a friendly conversation with the reader, Borges will start using the familiar *voseo* since the first poem (“y solo avos te siento”), the use of apocopes like *soledá* instead of *soledad*, and *intensidá* for *intensidad* already in the prologue but present all over the book.

<sup>70</sup> Despite the effort that Borges put to carefully select the language of his texts to avoid using terms from *lunfardo* it is so infiltrated in the daily language in Argentina that at least one case of *lunfardo* can be detected in this collection of poems in *Luna de Enfrente*.

the use of *lunfardo* or any popular Italianized element. The voluntary exclusion of linguistic and cultural elements of the predominant immigrant group does not stem from lack of knowledge. Rather, it is most probably meant to be consistent with his stand in defense of the *criollo* fundament of Argentine culture. Borges did have considerable knowledge of *lunfardo* and the culture around it, not only from what he was forced to learn in the hostile environment of school, but also from further cumulated considerable knowledge. He will indeed use it, but in a facetious tone, in response to an article published in the Spanish periodical *La Gaceta Literaria*, that proposed Madrid as a “Meridiano intelectual de Hispano-America”<sup>71</sup>. In the magazine *Martín Fierro* (no. 42, June-July 1927) we can read Borges’ humorous answer:

¡Minga de fratelanza entre la Javie Patria y la Villa Ortúzar! Minga de las que saltan a los zogoibis del batimento tagai, que se quedamo estufo, que se... con las tirifiladas de su parola senza *criollismo*. Que se den una panzada de cultura esos rafañosos, antes de sacudirnos la persiana. Pa de contubernio entre los que han patiao el fango de la Quinta Bollini y los apestosos que la yugan de manzanilla. Aquí le patiamo el nido a la hispanidá y le escupimo el asao a la donosura y le arruinamo la fachada a los garbanzelis.

Se tenemo una efe bárbara. No es de grupo que semos de la mafiosa laya de aquellos crudos que se basuriaban las elecciones más trezadas en Balvanera. Par’ algo lo encendimos al tango entre las guitarras broncosas y salió de taco alto y pisando juerte. No es al pepe que entramos en el siglo a punta de faca y tiramos la

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<sup>71</sup> This inflammatory or provocative declaration was made in *La Gaceta Literaria* 8, Madrid, April 15, 1927.

bronca por San Cristóbal y fuimos la flor del Dios nos libre en Tierra del Fuego y despachamos barbijos en el bajo e la batería y biabas agalludas al portador.

¿Manyan que los sobramos, fandiños? No hay minga caso de meridiano a la valenciana, mientras la barra cadenera se surta en la perfumería del Riachuelo: vero meridiano senza Alfonsito y al uso nostro.

Espiracusen con plumero y todo, antes que los faje. Che meridiano, hacete a un lao, que voy a escupir (*Textos Recobrados* 311-312, vol. 1).

The very few times that Borges used *lunfardo* in his life was in other satirical or humorous texts. In general, Borges will choose to keep his distance from *lunfardo* and any cultural element antagonizing the *criollo* identity. Moreover, Borges added as many elements as possible to increase that distance, e.g. in a review<sup>72</sup> of the work of Vicente Rossi (a famous historiographer of tango), he tried to prove that the Italians were completely extraneous of the origins of tango when he says: “surgió el Tango... y aun está vivo, pese a los bandoneons que lo endeblescen y a la jerga italianada y cursilería de quienes lo versifican” (*Textos Recobrados* 261, vol. 1)

In the book *Cuaderno San Martín* published in 1929, especially in the poem “La Fundación Mítica de Buenos Aires”, Borges reinforces this process of re-creation, or foundation, of Buenos Aires on a mythical level (both historical and poetic symbolical). However, while he was writing about, and for, Buenos Aires, mythicizing its suburbs and its historic and poetic foundation, he was perfectly aware of other attempts made by precedent writers — as he later demonstrated in

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<sup>72</sup> “Idioma Nacional Rioplatense, por Vicente Rossi”, was originally published in *Síntesis* magazine, Buenos Aires, Num. 18, November 1928.

the essay “La presencia de Buenos Aires en la poesía”<sup>73</sup>. Borges knew this two-sided operation was difficult. On the one hand, he was emphasizing the originality and uniqueness of Argentine literature, preventing it from being considered a mere appendix, or derivation, of Spanish literature. On the other hand, he needed to prove that the *criollo* local roots were the complete fundament of the national culture and language.

Probably the most forceful affirmation against *lunfardo* and the popular Italian culture can be seen in the essay “El idioma de los argentinos” in the homonym book published in 1928. The description Borges gives of *lunfardo* there is as follows: “...lunfardo es jerigonza ocultadiza de los ladrones [...] es un vocabulario gremial como tantos otros, es la tecnología de la furca y la ganzúa” (*El idioma* 146). Immediately after Borges launches a fierce attack justifying a strict lack of use of *lunfardo* in Argentine Spanish:

Imaginar que esa lengua técnica — lengua especializada en la infamia y sin palabras de intención general — puede arrinconar al castellano, es como trasañar que el dialecto de las matemáticas o de la cerrajería puede ascender a único idioma... los primeros tangos, los antiguos tangos dichosos, nunca sobrellevaron lengua lunfarda...Despertar porque sí de la casi universalidad del idioma, para esconderse en un dialecto chúcaro y receloso — jerga aclimatada en la infamia, jerigonza carcelaria y conventillera que nos convertiría en hipócritas al revés, en hipócritas de la malvivencia y de la ruindad- es proyectos de malhumorados y rezongones (146-149).

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<sup>73</sup> Published in the newspaper *La Prensa*, Buenos Aires, on July 11, 1926. In the same year *Tamaño de mi esperanza* was published, his second book of essays.

However, during the years that followed the publication of *El idioma de los argentinos* Borges left behind his unsustainable, but so far relentless, defense of *criollismo*. He had to accept that the reality of the country had permanently changed and Argentina was more than ever before an interactive multicultural place, where the immigrant communities significantly contributed to the country's cultural panorama. On September 1928, Borges suggests<sup>74</sup> the time has come to sacrifice the *criollo* pride for a vaster and more important project — a new nation inclusive of all communities:

Hablé de la memoria argentina [...] en esta casa de América los hombres de las naciones del mundo se han conjurado para desaparecer en el hombre nuevo, que no es ninguno de nosotros aún y que predecimos argentino, para irnos acercando así a la esperanza. Es una conjuración de estilo no usado: pródiga aventura de estirpes, no para perdurar sino para que las ignoren al fin: sangres que buscan noche. El *criollo* es de los conjurados. El *criollo* que formó la entera nación, ha preferido ser uno de muchos, ahora. Para que honras mayores sean en esta tierra, tienen que olvidar honras [...] esas inmemorialidades criollas [...] son reliquias familiares ahora. (*Textos Recobrados* 374-375, vol. 1)

He also seems to have amended his statements about the pure *criollo* origins of the national music genre, the tango:

Recuerdo que hacia 1926 yo daba en atribuir a los italianos [...] la degeneración de los tangos. En aquel mito, o fantasía, de un tango *criollo* maleado

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<sup>74</sup> Conference for the opening of an art exhibition of Pedro Figari. Published in *Criterium* Buenos Aires, year 1, Num 30, sept 27, 1928.

por los gringos veo un claro síntoma de ciertas herejías nacionalistas que han assolado el mundo [... ] Además, los *criollos* viejos que engendraron el tango se llamaban Bevilacqua, Greco o de Bassi... (*Textos Recobrados* 267, vol. 1).

However, the adjustments or corrections Borges made to his stand do not mean that he would later incorporate *lunfardo* in his works, or that he would feel more comfortable making reference to aspects of the surrounding hybrid culture. The significant change at that point is that instead of focussing his efforts demonstrating the cultural purity of the *criolledad* in the national identity debates, Borges simply assumes his *criollo* roots and shifts his attention to more universal topics. This is the beginning of a series of changes announcing a profound reshaping of Borges' style and a new phase in his production: Borges now lets the local speak to the universal. The most notable and clearest example (although not the first one) of his new stand can be seen in the essay "El escritor Argentino y la tradición" strategically published in the famous magazine *Sur* in 1955. But this essay will be late theorization of what he had already put in practice with "Ficciones" and "El Aleph" after having learned some important lessons.

#### 1.8. Productively Reading Dante: Meaningful Lessons Towards a Gradual Acquisition of a Final Voice

The late 1920s was for Borges a period of dramatic transformation at different levels in terms of style. As previously noted, the style and themes characterizing many of his early published poems and essays tended to vary between the overcharged Baroque and the *Criollista* - full of local color, language and nationalism. Borges' reorientation is explicitly announced in "El escritor

Argentino y la tradición”<sup>75</sup>, an important essay published in 1955 when his work was already consolidated with a final voice and style. But the starting point of such transformation coincides with the firsts timid steps towards the narrative genre with his first fiction text “Hombres pelearon” included in *El Idioma de los Argentinos*, although with the tone of legend. If thus far Borges’ production was still easily classifiable by genre, from 1930 onwards, Borges’ texts were marked by an almost systematic transgression and hybridization of literary genres, rendering many texts defying any classification. Moreover, Borges’ language gradually migrates from the complex and intricate Baroque approach to a more simple, precise and concise register that will become characteristic of his individual style. Conspicuously, this period of perceptible, gradual yet radical, transformation in Borges’ works coincides with an exponential increase in the readings of Dante. Borges acknowledges the gradual influence Dante exerted on his work by referring either directly to Dante’s texts or to critical reviews of them (Cf. Appendix 1 for a full list). Indeed, a considerable number of essays have focussed on the connections between Borges’ and Dante’s work. No one has, however, yet made a detailed diachronic study of the developing mentions, incorporations, adaptations and appropriations of Dante by Borges. Similarly, there is no detailed study of the impact of certain intellectuals, who caused Borges to pursue new interpretations of Dante while also revealing important aspects of Dante’s works that would later appear in Borges’ own works. This study intends to provide useful contributions on both flanks and by no means intends to close the topic and make definitive conclusions, quite the contrary, hopefully it will encourage other critics to continue expanding a vast potential for more research and enriching the discussion.

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<sup>75</sup> First published in 1955 in the famous magazine *Sur*, and incorporated in latter editions of *Discusión* from 1957 on.

Borges never revealed what triggered the sudden increase of his interest in Dante. One possible explanation is that Borges was surrounded by some key intellectual figures that could have motivated or abruptly increased his interest in Dante, namely the intellectual circle around the prestigious magazine *Sur* (created in 1931). *Sur* was directed by Victoria Ocampo, but Borges was the initial chief of its drafting committee. Silvina Ocampo, Bioy Casares and Alfonso Reyes, among others, were also part of the intellectual circle around the magazine. They have all declared themselves, at one moment or another, fervent admirers of Dante. As such, it is probable that Dantesque works were part of their debated and circulating ideas, and readings. Of them all, Victoria<sup>76</sup> would consistently display her expertise and passion for Dante — she had taken a course on Dante at the Sorbonne in her youth that would leave its mark on her. From that moment on Victoria became a keen admirer of Dante to the extreme of writing “yo vivía a Dante.” Most of her first

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<sup>76</sup> It was not clear if Borges first met Victoria Ocampo or Alfonso Reyes. She met Borges in 1925, and repeated declarations from Borges insisted that he met Reyes through Victoria Ocampo (Ferrari 57; Alifano 214). Only through the study of the correspondence between Borges and Reyes by Carlos García, seems to be clearer that Borges first met Reyes, initially an exclusively epistolary relationship that started when Borges sent in 1923 a copy of his *Fervor de Buenos Aires* to Reyes before going to live in Europe for a second time (37-38), only to meet him in person in 1924 (46). The relationship between Victoria and Borges was full of unevenness, maybe also due to the strong character of Victoria and is more possible that Bioy, one of his best friends who met after around 1928, and Reyes (for whom he felt an admiration for his solid trajectory) caused much more impact.

writings were filled with Dantesque topics or had dantesque content.<sup>77</sup> Bioy, in turn, describes in his book *De las cosas maravillosas* (1999) what he called his friendship with Italian literatura:<sup>78</sup> “No creo equivocarme al afirmar que, de una forma o de otra, las letras italianas estuvieron siempre a mi lado” (42). Later, he would confess “la primera vez que leí *the Divina Commedia* lo hice en 1933, en la traducción muy anotada de Manuel Aranda y San Juan” (43). Reyes was not an exception in this group, he would also read and study Dante for many years and even if many of Borges’ friends — whom participated and were implicated in the flow of Dantesque ideas — were influential to Borges, Alfonso Reyes held a particularly preeminent position.

Borges met Reyes before meeting Victoria and Bioy<sup>79</sup>. The relationship with Reyes first started in 1923 by correspondence (García 37–38). They possibly met for the first time, fleetingly,

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<sup>77</sup> First, she wrote on April 4, 1920 the essay “Babel” in the prestigious journal *La Nación*, a brief criticism about the Canto XV from the Purgatory. She also makes reference to the letter to Cangrande de la Scala. Her first book published *De Francesca a Beatrice* (with a prologue by Ortega y Gasset and translated from French by Ricardo Baeza) is an homage to Dante.

<sup>78</sup> Many of the Italian readings that Bioy declared to have enjoyed the most coincide with those that Borges did mention in many of his texts, from Dante, Papini (the first fantastic stage before becoming a fascist), Croce, Pirandello, Buzzati and Casanova, among others. Like Borges, he also had a good relationship with Wilcock (half Italian), Moravia, and Calvino (through Silvina Ocampo). He even confessed that his short story “Otra esperanza” was influenced by Buzzati.

<sup>79</sup> Borges used to give two different versions in interviews about the first time he met Reyes. He used to say sometimes that he met him in Victoria Ocampo’s house (Ferrari 57; Alifano 214), and sometimes he used to say instead that it happened in Pedro Henriquez Ureña (*Autobiographical*

in 1924 in Madrid<sup>80</sup> (46). At that time Borges and Reyes had important affinities: both possessed an impressive encyclopaedic knowledge, both were going through a creative crisis (García 102, 167, 177, 184; Reyes 140, vol. 2) and felt the need to renew themselves.

In the second half of the 1920s, Borges and Reyes both displayed a growing interest in the Dante's style, characterised by clarity, precision, powerful imagery and the ability to create a moment or a scene with a surprising economy of language. Borges, however, did not come to this directly, but rather through Alfonso Reyes and Paul Groussac, which would eventually lead him to Dante. Victoria Ocampo does not seem to have had such a great influence on Borges, despite certainly having discussed Dantesque themes occasionally. Though Borges' relationship with Bioy was one of close friendship and respect, they did not spend much time together and Bioy could not have been the real source of the Borges' distinctive style — as Borges claims at certain point in his autobiography — since they only met in 1931, at which point Borges had already established a close friendship with Reyes and radical changes were also noticeable in his style.

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47–48). Both versions seem to be incorrect, according to Carlos García, Henríquez Ureña no longer lived in Buenos Aires in July 1927 when Reyes arrived there in his quality of Mexican ambassador (25), it took a long time until Victoria Ocampo agreeded to meet Reyes (104) and Borges since the very beginning actively participated from the many official receptions that different literary circles from different magazines offered to Reyes (74–82). Reyes would meet Silvina Ocampo in 1929 when she designed the cover for his book *Cuaderno San Martín* (159), and would meet Bioy Casares only in 1935 (263).

<sup>80</sup> Carlos García found evidence of that first fleeting encounter during the Pombo artistic gathering (46).

Despite having both been admirers of Gongorism in their early literary careers, in later years Borges and Reyes would be recognized not only for their encyclopedic knowledge but also the style, which both would adopt and would characterise the rest of their literary work. It is to be noted here the profound influence of Dante on Borges, above all in the basis of the style, which made him famous, but the theme will be explored in-depth in Chapter 3 along with questions of authorship.

In terms of frequency, Borges paid particular attention to the study of Dante in the course three periods. The first period was the longest and most productive, beginning in the later years of the 1920s and continuing until the 1950s. Nearing the end of the 1920s Borges discovered (if we follow Borges' account) or rediscovered (if we follow Alifano's notes and my interpretation) Dante, in the 1930s he began to experiment, theorize, and apply concepts or ideas, and in the 1950s those concepts were consolidated, refined, and developed with great perspicacity. In the 1960s, when Borges was at the height of his literary recognition and his career, he also recognized, in turn, Dante's influence without any real assimilation of new concepts, few usages and less application of the elements he formerly favoured. During the period between the 1960s and 1970s, while residing in the USA and writing *Autobiographical Notes* with the important contribution of his collaborator and translator Thomas di Giovanni, we see the least Italian-influenced period of his career, and references to Dante are at their lowest. This changed in the last years of Borges' life in the 1980s, when there was a renewed or heightened interest in Dante, not only in application to his work but also in recognition. This was a period of re-reading and revision of essays on Dante and was also the point in his career when the most Dantesque work would be written, *Nueve Ensayos Dantescos*.

The latter years of the 1920s were a period of rediscovering Dante, given that the earlier reading of Dante in his youth seems to have left no mark on Borges in his earliest writings.<sup>81</sup> These are the first references to Dante in sporadic form and referring to more broad aspects of his work, as seen in the essay “Las coplas acriolladas” (in *El tamaño de mi esperanza* from 1926), which, as the title would suggest, was wholly dedicated to the exploration of the origin and essence of what is *Criollo*.

Borges upheld this strong *criollista* position only briefly, given that this fanatical purism could only be an artificial construct in a nation of immigrants, especially of Italian origin. At that moment, Alfonso Reyes arrived in Buenos Aires in his position as ambassador, as well as his friend Amado Alonso, who would start a rich discussion of Dante’s style and characteristics. From that point onwards, Borges would discover various themes of interest in Dante (especially through *The Divina Commedia*) from the end of the 1920s through the early 1930s. Many of these readings would be collected in a book of essays, *Discusión*, in 1932 which could be considered the most important theoretical work alongside the narrative works that would bring Borges to fame. The aptly titled *Discusión* represents the complete laboratory for dissecting and reflecting upon aspects of Dante (as well as the non-*Dantesque*) along the different paths taken in his readings. There are numerous references not only to Dante, but also to the Italian world, as well as the incorporation

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<sup>81</sup> Humberto Nuñez Faraco in his essay "Dante, Precursor de Borges" seems to have recently located certain echos of Dante in the early poem from Borges’ youth “Lamarada” from 1920 (419-432). This is, however, appears to be an isolated case with little impact on the rest of Borges’ work. At the very least, there is nothing to suggest that Borges had dedicated time to a serious and methodical study of Dante.

of a clearer and more effective style. During this period, Borges abandoned poetry in favour of a gradual entry into narrative prose, beginning with timid forays into autobiography which can already be seen in *Evaristo Carriego* and erudite biographies such as *Historia Universal de la Infamia*, where his narrative creativity leads to the fictionalisation of history and biography; an aspect which would persist and become more complex and problematic to an extreme in longer texts such as “Borges y yo” and *Autobiographical notes*. In the *Divina Commedia*, Borges perceived an important model for blending or navigating between distinctions of history, myth, and fiction as well as the multiple versions of Dante as character, author, writer, and man (among others). All of this would serve to justify idealistic theories he had studied in Schopenhauer<sup>82</sup> y Berkeley<sup>83</sup>, blurring the lines between reality, dream, and fiction or art. This would also break down the idea of totality in many ways, such as the masterpieces or definitive works that give the impression of being universal or tackling all subject matters inclusive of all cultures and all time. At the same time, this would be the basis for stories on themes in infinity and totality, such as the famous “Aleph”, and “La biblioteca de Babel” in the 1940s, among others. The seed of this line of thought can already be seen in “El espejo de tinta”, which is the most fictional of the stories in *Historia Universal de la Infamia* (1935). Universalism, eternity, the encyclopedic, and the notion of the Classical author are themes that occupied Borges immensely in the period from the late 1920s and 1930s. From that point onwards, he consciously attempted to build for himself a literary style that was less localized and more universal, with issues and themes that would speak to all mankind, not tied to a specific context but, on the contrary, could be read under many

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<sup>82</sup> See in *Discusión* the essay “La penúltima versión de la realidad”.

<sup>83</sup> See in *Discusión* the essay “La postulación de la realidad”.

circumstances interchangeably. This is not to say that he did not continue to deal with local motifs, but that it was no longer from a nationalist or *criollista* point of view, instead favouring a larger sense of perspective, as discussed in “El argentino y la tradición”. There was no longer the need to exalt an artificial Argentineness, instead consciously participating in the Western literary tradition in its entirety.

Here I will only deal with the question of direct references (related to Italian readings) in his critical and fictional work. The discussion on different creative applications (stylistic, thematic and linguistic adjustments) of those readings will be the subject of Chapter 3.

The first references to Dante, apart from the general ones in 1926 in *El Tamaño de mi Esperanza*, deal with themes directly related to the study of stylistics. One of the greatest influences on Borges at a time of creative crisis was the efficacy of Dante’s style. References to Dante are thus to be found in his discussions with Alfonso Reyes and Amado Alonso, and in his essays on Paul Groussac’s works. Borges would make a study of this style and gradually adopt it as his own. There will be a portion of the last chapter dedicated to discussing this process in detail. For now, I will state that texts as early as “Paul Groussac” in 1929 and Amado Alonso’s essay “Paul Groussac estilista”<sup>84</sup> that same year, whose focus is precisely the question of style and homage to the deceased author, demonstrate the interest and stylistic discussion amongst the three

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<sup>84</sup> The volume from *La Revista Literaria Síntesis* (Año 3, Agosto de 1929, No. 27) in which this essay was published was entirely dedicated to an homage to Paul Groussac. Apart from the essay by Alonso, there are other significant contributions such as Juan Canter’s “En torno a Groussac” and Narciso Binayán’s “De la iniciación de Groussac como escritor”. The next issue included also essays in homage from Emilio Ravignani y Coriolano Alberini.

friends as pertains to Groussac and Dante. From then on, Borges developed various aspects of that discussion of style in several essays, many of which were included in *Discusión*. In fact, it is not coincidental that in *Discusión* the essay “Paul Groussac” follows an essay entitled “El arte narrativo y la magia”, reflecting the moment of his transition from poetry to dedicating himself fully to narrative prose. Other essays which deal with different aspects of the same theme of style include “La supersticiosa ética del lector”, which deals with false assumptions about what constitutes a clear, concise, and efficient style, “La postulación de la realidad”, which discusses clear and direct style through archetypes of the Classical vs. Romantic writers, and “Una vindicación de la cábala”, which touches lightly on the efficient and direct style of the Bible and Dante, all of which were published in different forms<sup>85</sup> before being collected in *Discusión* in 1932.

One of the texts not included in *Discusión* is the foreword to the Spanish translation of a book by Paul Valéry, which makes reference to Dante. The prologue to the book *El Cementerio Marino* (the Spanish version of *Le Cimetière Marin* by Paul Valéry) was published in 1931, the same year as many of the works already touched upon which show characteristic stylistic traits but which is little examined by critics. Dante is mentioned to close an argument which begins to explore important and recurring *Borgesian* themes, despite having been written in a needlessly complex style and saturated with references to other works, perhaps the vestiges of his *Gongorista*

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<sup>85</sup> “La supersticiosa ética del lector”, first published in the magazine *Azul* 8 January 1931; “La postulación de la realidad” also in the magazine *Azul* June 1931; “Una vindicación de la cábala”, which Nicolás Helft suggests was published in 1931 in his notable bibliographical index without indicating where.

phase. In part, it questions the inferiority of the translation, copy, or reproduction as compared to the original, denying that “toda recombinação de elementos” would be “obligatoriamente inferior a su original”, referring at times to his friend Néstor Ibarra, who translated the book, over Paul Valéry himself, giving specific examples. Borges goes so far as to cast doubt on the notion of a “texto definitivo” which “no corresponde sino a la religión o al cansancio”. It is these variations, or, perhaps, translations or interpretations, which reaffirm significance, consolidate and build up a work for posterity, and it is only this accumulation of interpretations and readings that keep a work alive. This argument that the authority of canonical texts is in constant construction and reaffirmation, subject to change, looks at Dante, Shakespeare, and Cervantes as well as the contemporary Valéry. This essay would, in large part, be recycled and used again in extended form in the famous essay by Borges about translation theory “Las versiones homéricas” included in *Discusión*.<sup>86</sup> Nevertheless, this final version of the essay does not preserve the criticism and minimalisation of Valéry as a poor example of the concise style and economy of language found in Dante (made in the Introduction to *el Cementerio Marino*), setting out Ibarra as more effective, and Dante the ultimate version of clear, concise, and effective style.

Beyond this question of style but again associated somewhat with Dante, one of the essays included in the collection of essays *Discusión* is “La duración del Infierno”, whose theme is Hell not only as the ideal impetus for a discussion of eternity but also as a pretext to introduce, at the end of the text in a postscript, some of his idealist concerns. He finds some manifestations of

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<sup>86</sup> First published in *Diario la Prensa* on 8 May 1932 although the mention to Dante included in the prologue to *Cementerio Marino* was cut. However, all the topics seem to be respected including the notion and discussion of classic author, but Dante was substituted by Homer.

idealism present in Dante's *Divina Commedia*, such as the blurring of the lines between dream and reality, the dreamer who dreams of dreaming, or the dreamer dreamed by someone else, as well as the duplication of self. From this moment, the concept of eternity would be central to Borges' work and be applied in a variety of ways, including, in many texts, the name of Dante. His main interest in the idea of eternity was in relation to the notion of classic authors and their consistent positive reception. Eternity is related to two forms of time, circular time and time which leaves open the possibility of multiple endings at the same time, as seen in the character of Ugolino in *The Divina Commedia* and generally associated with open endings to works which each reader can interpret as they will.

In "Una vindicación de la cábala", Borges refers to absolute or definitive books, which contain, or appear to contain, everything and promote an infinite number of interpretations in accordance with multiple perspectives or various angles to each interpretation. To this end, Borges have read the letter to Cangrande della Scala about the multiple levels of interpretation for *The Divina Commedia*. In the same essay, Borges makes one of the first references<sup>87</sup> to Edward Gibbon, who, through his book *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, would bring him to the idea that Rome was the origin of all civilisation and Dante was the greatest writer. Borges' usual method in his creative process was to start by building a theory and then apply it to various elements or concepts. *Discusión* was the experimental space for theory which brought together many of the positions in his narrative fiction, first, timidly, in *Historia de la Infamia* in 1935 and, above all, in *Jardines de los senderos que se bifurcan* in 1941 which would lead to *Ficciones* in 1944.

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<sup>87</sup> The first mentioned was in the essay "La duración del infierno".

The twenty years between the 1940s and 1950s were one of the most productive and active periods for Borges in terms of references to *Dantesque* ideas and references, developing many variations on the concepts already mentioned as applies to narrative and making new discoveries. This alone is worthy of further study as it also coincides with the creation of his most memorable works, *Ficciones* and *El Aleph*, which would bring him international fame and consolidate his inimitable style. These two narrative works include a large number of texts with direct references<sup>88</sup> to Dante, *The Divina Commedia*, and Classical Rome, and were published simultaneously with a series of essays<sup>89</sup> on Dante in a large number of periodicals.

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<sup>88</sup> During this period Borges have references to Dante or *the Divina Commedia* in 27 different texts of his. In *Ficciones* (1944) the texts with references to Dante or Dantesque elements are “Tres versiones de Judas”, “El Sur” and “Funes el memorioso”. As for *El Aleph* (1949): “Historia del guerrero y la cautiva”, “La otra muerte”, “El Zahir”, “La escritura de Dios”, “Abenjacán el Bojarí, muerto en su laberinto”, “Los dos reyes y los dos laberintos”, “La espera”, “El hombre en el umbral” and more than any other “El Aleph”.

<sup>89</sup> “La última sonrisa de Beatriz”, in 1947; “El encuentro en un sueño”, in 1948; “El enigma de Ulises”, in 1948; “El pseudoproblema de Ugolino”, in 1948; “El Simurgh y el águila”, in 1948; “El último viaje de Ulises”, in 1948; “El verdugo piadoso”, in 1948; prologue to *the Divina Commedia* (Editorial W. M. Jackson), in 1949; “El noble castillo del canto cuarto”, in 1951; “Dante y los visionarios anglosajones”, in 1957. Apart from two othertexts in prose “Paradiso XXXI, 108” (from 1954) and “Inferno V, 129” (from 1955), with clear direct reference to specific verses and *canti* from *the Divina Commedia*.

The decade of the 1960s opened with the major prize that Borges was awarded in his lifetime, El Premio Internacional de Editores – Formentor, and which catapulted him to fame worldwide. This was largely thanks to the work of a group of Italian intellectuals as discussed in Chapter 2. In the same years as the greatest recognition of his career Borges also distinguished Dante as the apex of culture, although he did not explicitly state his own debt to Dante in his writing, but, rather, the debt of all humanity.

Borges admired *The Divina Commedia* as the model of perfection, far beyond the distinctive characteristics that eventually had the most important impact on Borges' own works. Borges came to admit to having read as many versions of the *Divina Commedia* as he could as well as a great deal of the reflections upon and criticism of this text from different historic periods (Alifano 13). He did not dedicate such time and attention to any other author than the Florentine author Dante - "el primer poeta de Italia y quizás del mundo" (*Textos Recobrados* 66, vol. 3). As such, no other author would impact Borges as much as Dante did and *The Divina Commedia* is the clearest example of this influence: "La Divina Comedia es una ciudad que nunca habremos explorado del todo; el más gastado y repetido de los tercetos puede, una tarde, revelarme quién soy o qué cosa es el universo" (65). As Borges would later say, there may be a first reading of the *Divina Commedia*, but never a last. Once discovered, the poem inhabits the reader for life (*Textos Recobrados* 64, vol. 3). Borges considered the *Divina Commedia* the very zenith of literature for all time: "No leer la Comedia es privarse del mayor don que la literatura puede darnos" (Alifano 125) simply because "ningún libro humano ha superado en grandiosidad y tema a la Comedia" (127). According to Borges, the *Divina Commedia* is the inevitable pillar for the model of Western civilization and Dante is the archetypical poet of the Western world:

Pensar en Italia es pensar en Dante. [...] Dante [es] el primer poeta de Italia y tal vez el primer poeta del mundo. ¿Qué elementos integran lo que hemos convenido en llamar la cultura del Occidente? Dos muy diversos: el pensamiento griego y la fe cristiana o, si se prefiere, Israel y Atenas. En cada uno de nosotros confluyen, de un modo indescifrable y fatal, esos antiguos ríos. Nadie ignora que esa confluencia, que es el acontecimiento central de la historia humana, es obra de Roma. En Roma se reconcilian y se conjugan la pasión dialéctica del griego y la pasión moral del hebreo; el monumento estético de esa unión de las dos direcciones del espíritu se llama la “Divina Commedia”. Dios y Virgilio, la triple y una divinidad de los escolásticos y el máximo poeta latino, traspasan de luz el poema. Esta armonía de la antigua hermosura y de la nueva fe es una de las múltiples razones que hacen de Dante el poeta arquetípico de Italia y, por ende, de todo Occidente. La circunstancia lateral de que las palabras de este homenaje, escritas en un continente lejano, pertenezcan a un tardío dialecto de la lengua de César y de Virgilio es una prueba más de esa omnipresencia de Roma. Se repite que todos los caminos llevan a ella; mejor sería decir que no tiene término y que, bajo cualquier latitud, estamos en Roma (*Borges Textos Recobrados* 66, vol. 3).

Thus, more than holding that all roads lead to Rome, according to Borges, Rome, culturally speaking, is endless and, by any measure, we are in Rome (*Borges Textos Recobrados* 66, vol. 3).

Following these years of recognition, there was a period at the end of the 1960s leading into the 1970s when Borges made a radical change in direction. This was the period of Borges’ residence in the USA and college teaching positions at some of the most prestigious

locations in the United States, as well as a time of his collaboration with the Harvard academic Thomas di Giovanni and the publication of his only full-length autobiography. This phase was characterised by the exaltation of his own *Englishness* and contained few references to Dante, in favour of motifs or other aspects taken from English culture, literature, or language. This will be examined more closely in Chapter Three, but as far as it relates to the Italian cultural baggage, I will state that Borges' autobiography is part of the creation of the public image which he wanted to leave for posterity, as if he wanted to minimize his previous work and the very intense and rigorous study of Dante. This is also apparent in the choice of texts for his personal anthologies, which will be further explored in Chapter 3. For example, *La Antología Personal* in the 1960s included various texts directly or indirectly linked to Dante's work, whereas *La Nueva Antología Personal*<sup>90</sup> of 1968 is marked by the lack thereof and the inclusion of more *Anglophilic* material.

While in the 1960s Borges refers not only to a personal but universal relationship between Dante and the West, only two decades later he was taking clear steps to explore what he himself admired, assimilated, and incorporated into his work, such as the 1977 talk on Dante, now

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<sup>90</sup> It was published during the period of his residence in Boston, USA. Part of that experience is reflected in the poem "New England 1967". But in that anthology and in every new publication by Borges in that period there are many texts with English titles and content, such as: "Camden, 1892", "El forastero", "Everness", "Ewigkeit", "the Unending Gift", "la flor de Coleridge", "el sueño de Coleridge" and "las Kenningar". There are also many texts in homage to many Anglophone authors or personalities: "A un poeta sajón", "Jonathan Edwards", "Emerson", "Un soldado de Lee", "Adam Cast Forth", "James Joyce", "Nathaniel Hawthorne", "Sobre Oscar Wilde", and "Sobre Chesterton".

included in the book *Siete noches*, and in his celebrated book *Nueve Ensayos Dantescos*. This period stands in sharp contrast to the proudly Anglophile moment just prior to the 1970s, as he passes to a re-reading of Dante and the revision of his previous studies and criticism of his works published in the 1940s and 1950s, extending them and adding new ideas. It is to be noted that the last period of his life coincides with a time of close collaboration with the prestigious Italian editor Franco Maria Ricci, with whom he became close friends and undertook an important task as an anthologist, which will be explored in Chapter Three. This was also the period when Borges was editing the Italian edition of his complete works with Domenico Porzio, whom he invited to stay with him in Buenos Aires on various occasions. During this time Borges also received a series of acknowledgements and awards in Italy, including the most prestigious prize to be awarded to a foreigner and which will be detailed further in Chapter Two.

The anthologies which Borges made of his own work clearly reflects this spirit, and many of the texts included have resonance with, or direct reference to Dante.<sup>91</sup> This breaking down of periods in his work, at risk of being reductive in the way that any classification can be, is far from sharp-edged given the complexity of the body of work, and can only serve as a foundation,

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<sup>91</sup> Apart from the two texts highly praising Dante that Borges wrote in that period “Italia” and “Mi primer encuentro con Dante”, there are two anthologies with Italian motifs or content which were published close to receiving the Formentor. The first is *El libro del cielo y del infierno* (in collaboration with Bioy Casares, 1961) which is clearly tied to Dante not only in title but also the epigraph, which reproduces verses 31-33 of Canto II of Dante’s *Inferno*, as well as other texts linking to or with reference to Dante. The second is his *Antología Personal*, also in 1961, which further includes a large repertoire of texts mentioning Dante or making use of *Dantesque* motifs.

when considering the many draughts and changes that Borges would make in an incessant process of steady revision. Obviously further confirmation will be needed as well by other critics with access to more or different direct sources to corroborate the exact extent to which Dante was, indeed, the main trigger in the transformation of Borges' style of writing and which I will begin to examine and demonstrate in Chapter 3. Borges himself seems to have made it his goal to complicate this sort of rigid timeline by including contradictory elements which, without a doubt, challenge critics. In reality, in his later years Borges adduced many different and conflicting reasons to explain his budding interest in Dante. Firstly, after receiving the Formentor prize in 1961, a prize that launched him to worldwide recognition, Borges asserted in different essays<sup>92</sup> and interviews to have arrived at Dante through English literature (*Textos Recobrados* 62, vol. 3) and that his "first and true reading" of the *Divina Commedia* was on the tram on his way to work to the Almagro Municipal library. Both claims are false. As discussed in section 5.4, it is well accepted not only that Borges started reading Dante during his childhood and adolescence, but he also read different versions of the *Divina Commedia* at an early age. At any rate, what he did in 1936 when he worked for that library was simply a more detailed study of Dante's works, discovering new elements with particular emphasis. Additionally, in his autobiography (published in 1970) Borges did not mention Dante but instead credited Reyes (92) and Bioy Casares (116) for

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<sup>92</sup> He asserts these two misleading facts in his essay "Mi primer encuentro con Dante", written in 1961, the same year that he won the Formentor prize. Later this will be repeated in the only autobiography that he wrote. But he would furthermore repeat them in different interviews, such as the one with Roberto Godel.

having taught him clarity and precision, traits that were already very representative of his writing. These are but a few examples of such contradictory message.

Yet, as we know the Italian background and influences for Borges go far beyond Dante, who, although without doubt the most important Italian writer he read, comprises only a small part of Borges' Italian cultural baggage. Of the vast range of authors which Borges read, both renowned and obscure, there is a catalogue which includes as many contemporaries as Classic, Renaissance, or Medieval. Going even further back, just as Borges traced the origin of Western culture back to Rome, there were Latin writers, both peninsular and provincial, which he read mostly in the original Latin and some few in translation. It is particularly interesting to examine the selection and rejection of certain authors, depending on the phase of his literary career. There were those who would always remain favourably received, even if the exact moment that he first encountered them remains unclear, like Aristotle, Tasso, Papini, Pico della Mirandola, Marco Polo, Vico, etc. Others would be subject to sudden changes in perception and value, such as Giovanni Battista Marino, Filippo Marinetti, Croce, Pirandello, etc. Still others would forever suffer his criticism, such as Petrarch. This is only to name a few important cases.

In one prologue, Borges states that he discovered Giovanni Papini at an early age, between 10 and 12 years of age, but there are no sources to verify the truth of this claim, mostly because this is never mentioned until 1940 in the famed *Antología de la literatura fantástica*. Papini is but one example of a catastrophic fall from grace due to his ties to Fascism in Italy, having at one time achieved a high level of fame, and this greatly affected his reception, almost putting an end to the reading of his work entirely. Apart from certain obvious affinities or

similarities shared by Papini and Borges which previous critics<sup>93</sup> have noted, such as encyclopedic knowledge, being self-taught, as well as being indefatigable and hedonistic readers from a young age, it is largely because of Borges that Papini's work came to be perceived significantly different in Italy, redeemed and positively received, pulling him out of obscurity and reducing attention to his Fascism, which remained a very negatively perceived point in Italy. Borges set him out as one of the greatest Italian contemporary authors and situated him in a particular literary genre, fantasy.

There were two particular elements in Papini which Borges enjoyed as a model for Fantasy literature. Specifically, Borges admired Papini's use of various stories playing with the multiplication on the Protagonist, just as seen in *The Divina Commedia*. Also, Papini's ability to fade the boundaries between reality, fiction, and dream,<sup>94</sup> reminded Borges of Schopenhauer's conception of art in *The World as Will and Representation*, especially because of its metaphysical implications. Paoli has summarised the precise nature of Papini's work which attracted Borges: "Papini attrae Borges perché lo legge come un narratore dell'incubo, dell'onirico... e nell'ambito

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<sup>93</sup> See in particular the essay "Borges e Papini" (326) by Paoli, but also "Jorge Luis Borges" by Roger Caillois in the very famous publication de L'Herne, Paris 1964. Three years after having received the Formentor prize, L'Herne devoted to him (March 1964) the collective volume that brought together more than sixty writers and critics from all over the world for whom Borges, no doubt, was worth the trip.

<sup>94</sup> Borges says that "L'ultima visita del gentiluomo malato", clearly captures the suspicion that in world – including us- does not exist anything else but dreams from an unknown dreamer which has clear influence from idealist philosophy, particularly from Schopenhauer.

non meno familiare, di una visione del mondo allucinata e illusoria, che prende principalmente le mosse da Berkley e Schopenhauer” (327).

Other than *La Antología poética Argentina*, which was compiled in collaboration, Borges first mention of Papini in his work was in the prologue to the Spanish translation of *Pragmatism* by William James in 1945. This reference comes within the context of a reflection on Idealism and Pragmatism, which begins with a contrast of Platonism and Aristotelian thought. When Borges states: “El hecho de que Papini fuera divulgador del pragmatismo y profesara, décadas después, el fascismo ha sido esgrimido contra James”, it is evident that Borges seeks to salvage the less pragmatic and, historical, least repudiated in Papini’s work. He salvages Papini more for the Idealist aspect, taken from his Fantasy literature prior to aligning himself with Fascism. In Papini, Borges found the multiplication of self, as well as other motifs such as the confrontation between past and future, or a visit from someone<sup>95</sup> who turns out to be a different version of the person they are visiting – a situation that is similar to the metamorphosis of Dante’s persona in the *Divina Commedia*. Nevertheless, Borges criticizes some of Papini’s most famous

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<sup>95</sup> In fact, it is possible to find many variations taken from various stories, such as the visit from an otherworldly or fantastic character who reveals something to the protagonist, such as that the protagonist is the subject of the dream of another character, or that the character sprung to life from the protagonist’s dream, or that the protagonist is condemned to death when the dreamer wakes.

work for putting his great intelligence to work exploiting popular themes expressly to create Best-Sellers.<sup>96</sup>

It is, however, obvious that, before ever writing this prologue, Borges had read Papini a lot, having even included him in his *Antología de Literatura Fantástica* in collaboration with Bioy Casares and Silvina Ocampo in 1940. This came at a time when Borges had every intention of asserting himself as the leading figure in Fantasy literature not only in Argentina, but worldwide. The only Italian author which Borges judged worthy to include in that anthology was Papini,<sup>97</sup> probably the contemporary Italian author with the most influence on Borges. In Chapter 3 I will analyse how Papini seems to have influenced several of Borges' stories and how one in particular led to accusations of plagiarism.

The final aspect of Borges' Italian readings which should be explored in more depth as relates to authorship is Benedetto Croce and the concept of the Classical author, which will be discussed further in Chapter 3. It remains unclear when his reading of Croce began, but it is first mentioned in 1927, specifically, his writings on aesthetics. What is striking is the differing reception of Croce in the early days, before Borges acquired his distinctive style in later years. At that time, his opinion favoured Croce, as seen in *El idioma de los argentinos* where he states “todo sentidor de Croce estará conmigo” (62), but already in the collection of essays entitled *Discusión*, when Borges set out the foundation of what was to be his new style in later years, there is a profound distance, particularly in the essay “La postulación de la realidad”, where Borges contrasts

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<sup>96</sup> In the introduction to Giovanni Papini's book *Lo Specchio Che Fugge* compiled by Borges in Franco Maria Ricci publishings, 1975.

<sup>97</sup> This includes “L'ultima visita del gentiluomo malato” from the book *Il tragico quotidiano*.

the archetypes of the Classical writer and the Romantic writer. Borges wounds up Croce defending and identifying himself with the Classical writer, even going so far as to apply the Classical model of reality and tripartite method of plotting, and all of this just prior to writing what would be considered his greatest works. This interest in authorship and the figure of the Classical writer will bring us to the discussion of Borges' own authorship in Chapter 3.

### 1.9. Conclusions

So far scholarly literature on Borges has been placing great emphasis on Borges' strong bond with English literature, due to his family's ancestors and his explicit, constant romance with it from the 1940s onward, while critics have neglected his bond with Italian literature, which, in turn, seems to have contributed key elements worth studying in his most celebrated pieces of literature and his overall literary style.

As we have seen in this chapter, two main areas of influence can be detected in Borges, one, the context of direct contact with social and cultural elements (mainly through an idealization of the slums, or *arrabales*) from the Italian neighborhood of Palermo where he was raised, and, another, indirect taken from the gradual but, eventually, full immersion he had into Italian literature, especially with Dante, that would serve to radically transform his own production from the 1930's on.

We can find in his youth in the Italian neighborhood of Palermo an important source of his later literary motifs (the tiger, the dagger, the mirrors, the labyrinth, etc.) and imagination, and in Dante a vast resource for ideas which he assimilated, adopted, and adapted over time in his own work and with very personal interpretations.

The first stage of Borges' production is characterized by his quest to find a distinctive, personal style and a "voice"; trying to establish an eminent position for himself in the

Argentinean literary and cultural circles. During that period Borges was rather inconsistent, starting with fleeting forays into the Baroque, Avant-Gard and *Criollista* which were often interspersed. During all of these phases, he always took great pains to distance himself linguistically from *lunfardo* and any other Italian cultural elements in his work. During his more Regionalist period he only tended to romanticize or idealize the *cuchilleros* and gauchos, the heroes from the margins, and their culture, trying to find in them facets of Argentinean identity, but then too, he would try to prove their purity from foreign influences. He tried in vain to identify and build up the idea of Argentinean language originally absent of foreign (mainly Italian) impurities or contamination. At the same time, he defended the pure *criollo* origins of the tango and the essence of Argentinean literature in general and tried to create a mythology around Buenos Aires. His dedicated significant effort to building a mythical image and literature of Buenos Aires and strategically creating or consolidating an Argentinean literary tradition while also anthologising a national literature. In other words, he laboured to gain public respect and contribute to the decision on what was to be valued in Argentinean literature. However, such periodic and ever-changing style combined with such heterogeneous works reflect his uneasiness and his continuous search for a distinctive voice in the national and international literary arenas.

Alfonso Reyes, through his readings of Paul Groussac and Groussac's studies on Dante, was a key figure in introducing to Borges new perspectives and ways to read and value *The Divina Commedia* that would, in future, significantly contribute to the transformation of his style and even the type of literature he would choose to write from that moment on. Borges' type of work started to change radically as the references to Dante started to multiply exponentially and this seems to have very positively impacted his creative efforts. Borges' interest in relation to Dante continued to change and expand, yet many of the ideas and associations were already present

in his collection of essays, *Discusión*. It is no coincidence that this was his earliest book of essays to be included in his first compilation of complete works, as compared to others which were to be rejected for the rest of his life, and marked a new stage for him as a writer with a consistent, unified style. While the reading and study of Dante go together with the application of concepts and ideas of his very personal interpretations, this would not always be to the same degree. In fact, there are relatively identifiable periods of concentrated interest in Dante's work which are reflected in his own writing. In the first phase, towards the end of the 1920s and early 1930s and which was also the most inventive, one of the first aspects to catch his eye was the efficiency of Dante's style. Given that he too was seeking a literary voice, in his work he adopted the clarity and simplicity of synthetic, but powerful language which allowed him to perfectly lay out the nature of characters or situations in just a few lines. Beyond the style which Borges was to discover and study in *The Divina Commedia*, there was an inexhaustible source of ideas, resources and aspects to be admired which merited attention. He would find several of these useful and applicable in the 1940s and 1950s, resulting in the exact works that would bring him to worldwide fame, *Ficciones* and *El Aleph*. In other words, he spent the 1930s in search of theory while in the 1940s and 1950s he had taken full advantage of lessons learned from Dante. At the very time that he published those two crucial and celebrated books, Borges was at the height of his studies of Dante and we see the highest number of references to Dante as well as his first essays exclusively on Dante began to appear, later collected in *Nueve Ensayos Dantescos*, which discuss what he values in Dante.

The second-most *Dantesque* period also linked to Italian culture began in the early 1960s, around the time when he received the Formentor prize, the most desirable recognition he was to receive in his lifetime. At this time, he was writing a series of texts in praise of Dante as

well as publishing anthologies including numerous texts with an emphasis on, or otherwise inspired by Dante.

This was followed by a period almost against Dante, marked by rare references to Dante and highly in favour of Englishness. This coincided with his residence in the USA and close collaboration with an academic at Harvard as well as the publication of his only autobiography, written in English.

The last phase of the *Dantesque* for Borges was a talk on the writer in 1977, followed by the collection, revision, and re-writing of many of his essays on Dante originally written between 1940 and 1960. These essays were amended and expanded to make the book *Nueve Ensayos Dantescos* more organic and giving it the tone of a confession of lessons learnt from Dante as well as his admiration for particular elements. There are clearly many other Italian authors which Borges admired, or repudiated, at different points in his literary career. It is evident that Borges not only admired and took elements from these authors, but also at times re-established interest in certain authors or influenced their reception. Such was the case with Papini, who had largely fallen out of favour due to his ties to Fascism and Borges' attention restored a great deal of appreciation for particular elements of his work. The side of Papini which he rejected were the early works of fantasy. The aspects of Papini's work which he most admired were the notion of the double and the dynamic between dream and waking as well as fiction and reality which link Dante with the Idealism from Berkeley and Schopenhauer. The list of Italian authors which Borges read is so long that it deserves its own study.

To conclude, I would like to indicate that Chapter 3 will explore the stylistic and thematic elements of Dante which Borges admired and modeled himself on in greater depth as a sort of genealogy. Borges' continuous readings of Dante during most part of his life shows its

relevance in his works although demands an ever-increasing, serious study from different methodological perspectives yet to be explored, in order to better understand how the *Borgesian* corpus directly connects to Dante. Furthermore, this author seems to have been, by far, the most read and studied by Borges, and thus the most important and productive influence for him, along with a wide variety of symbols originating from his childhood in the Italianised Palermo.

## 2. Chapter 2 The Presence of Borges in Italy

After exploring the early impact of Italian popular culture, the immigrant social milieu as well as Borges' early encounters with Italian high culture and his Italian cultural background (mainly literary, linguistic and social) this chapter will explore the importance and impact Borges had in Italy.

The record of Borges' reception in Italy can be divided in three phases: from 1927 to 1949 — when the first references appeared, with frequent errata, and Borges' partial publications of some isolated works, which had very little impact; from 1949 to 1961 — the period in which Borges' works (mainly his prose) obtained, although in restricted cultural circles, increasingly good reception with systematic publications and respectable translations of his works; and after 1962 — a third period characterized by an effervescent increase in mediatisation and a proliferation of literary prizes, both favourable for his career in the long run. This media attention is a glaring symptom of a consumer society run rampant, but, in Borges' case, gave rise to notoriety and resulted in an unprecedented acceptance in Italy of a foreigner's work among a broad public, whose majority possibly didn't know his work before hand.

From 1949 on, Borges had an ever-growing positive reception in Italy and an unrivalled impact in Italian literature. A testimony of this is the remarkable number of the most relevant Italian literary prizes and decorations (as well as International prizes promoted by Italians) awarded to Borges from the 1960s on, as well as references by other writers and critics. Borges was presented more distinctions than any other writer before him. Yet, Borges did not always enjoy such standing in Italy. In an initial stage (from 1927 to 1949) the contextual conditions were unfavourable and Borges' production was not very appealing to the Italian public. Only after Borges reinvented himself and managed to produce enduring works like *Ficciones* and *El Aleph*,

will he start having incidence in Italy. Borges benefitted from the help of some important intellectuals that introduced him in specific cultural circles, starting to gradually cement a more solid relationship between him and Italian literature and culture.

Borges' unsurpassed success in Italy, and the gradual process of the exponential growth of his fame can only be understood through the light of the historical momentum in Italy during the three main phases of his reception and mediatisation. Borges' legacy in Italy would influence an entire generation of writers like no other Latin American writer, perhaps like no writer from any other part of the world, ever did so far. A detailed study of the presence of Borges (persona and works) in Italy will allow us to better understand the concerns and the new directions the Italian literary world took after acknowledging in Borges an interesting vein of creativity. The assimilation of this new source of inspiration instigated a remarkable productivity in Italian artists, including those who later became some of the most important Italian contemporary writers. The influence Borges had on younger generations will also help him to project a memorable image of himself among the general public. Also, it provides valuable insights into the process of Borges' international recognition — as Italy played a key role in his worldwide consecration.

### 2.1. An Initial, Not So Fortunate, Appearance in Italy

Contrary to what many studies on the reception of Borges' works in Europe assert, the first country, besides Argentina, in which some of his work started to be published and translated was not France, but Italy. Without belittling the obvious role of France as a cultural epicentre in diffusing ideas and works of relevance, the magnitude of the role of Italy in the European cultural puzzle, in this case directly related to Borges' internationalization, needs to be put in perspective. The divulgation in Italy of some of the still unknown Argentine authors was a natural consequence

of the massive migration of Italians to Argentina and the subsequent bidirectional cultural flow that followed.

The first mention of Borges that can be found in Italy is in the magazine *Fiera Letteraria* in 1927, precisely in the middle of the previously mentioned polemic debate proposing Madrid as a natural intellectual meridian for the Hispanic-American cultural life. This initiative issued from Madrid was contested by Argentina, and soon after, the release of an article in *Fiera Letteraria* defended the influence of the Italian culture over Argentina (González Boixo 168). The reaction to this article was not as immediate and violent as that against the Spaniards, but went logically in the same direction: acclaimed writers, such as Leopoldo Lugones, Alberto Gernuchoff, Alfonsina Storni and Arturo Marasso (the last two having Italian ancestors), denied the Italian influence over the Argentine culture in a survey in the same magazine (168). Their answers were not based in any logical or irrefutable proof, they were rather motivated by passionate nationalism and an attempt to vindicate and prove a new cultural autonomy and national identity. This controversy will triangulate back to Madrid in October 1, 1927, when the magazine *Gaceta Literaria* (the origin of the entire contentious discussion) published the article “El minuterero de Italia” by Francisco Ayala. The article treated with scorn the influence the Italians claimed over Argentina, as well as the Italian article itself, alleging that Italy’s influence was minimal in comparison to the presumed dominant influence of Spain over Argentina. Regardless, the mention of Borges in the middle of that debate was merely incidental.

The first international appearance of Borges’ works was in Italy (before any other foreign country) and pertained exclusively to poetry, whereas later, France would privilege his works in prose. According to Cesco Vian, at the beginning of the 1930’s, only some of Borges’ poetry had been introduced in Italy. Paolo Vita Finzi, an Italian writer and diplomat, who knew Borges

personally and played with him and Ernesto Sabato *panajedrez* (Vian 209) — a game invented by the painter Xul Solar — started translating many of Borges' poems in Italian.

Notwithstanding, Italian translations of Borges' poems were short-run publications that circulated in restricted circles and among those who read them, they seem to have had little to no impact. Indeed, there don't seem to exist any references or relevant critique in journals and magazines related to these first translations. At that time, the only mentions of Borges are in broad scope anthologies, often referring to irrelevant or inaccurate information, which rate reflects the little interest in him and his works. The vague comments, focused only on parts of his poetic works, the disheartening series of mistakes and the lack of rigor in the information provided are a clear indication of the lack of knowledge of the entirety of his writings. The biggest accomplishment attributed to Borges at the time is his role in directing a late vanguard movement in Argentina. However, of his essays (his incipient prosaic works) there are very little mentions or they are completely omitted.

Giacomo Prampolini's ambitious anthology *Storia universale della letteratura* was published in those years. Prampolini dedicates a full page to Borges, but it contains generic, vague and even inaccurate information. As Santos Unamuno observed ("*Borges*" 155), Borges' date of birth is advanced one year (1900 instead of 1899). Additionally, this anthology only takes in consideration, almost exclusively, Borges' poetry which at the time consisted in *Fervor de Buenos Aires* (1923), *Luna de Enfrente* (1925) and *Cuaderno San Martin* (1929). There is solely a quick mention of his three books of essays *Inquisiciones* (1925), *El tamaño de mi esperanza* (1926) y *El idioma de los argentinos* (1928). Curiously, *Historia universal de la infamia* (1935) is completely excluded from the anthology, either by omission, or because the first volumes of the anthology were ready for publication since 1933 and possibly were not updated to include Borges' most

recent publication. Further inaccuracies can be found in ulterior editions of *Storia universale della letteratura*: Umberto Cianciolo (Cianciolo 30) cites the 1961 edition of Prampolini's anthology, in which Borges' date of death is given as 1957, which is nearly 30 years before his actual demise (Prampolini 214, vol. VII).

In the early 1950's, Ugo Gallo, in the anthology *Storia della letteratura Spagnola* seems to have used Prampolini as a reference and consequently reproduced his mistakes. Furthermore, he changed Borges' name to *José Luis Borges* (Gallo 428). There are serious omissions in the list of Borges' works, as only *Fervor de Buenos Aires* (1923) and *Poemas* (1922–1943) are mentioned, giving the impression that these are his only works. There is no other mention of any of Borges' other works of poetry, his books of essays nor of his narrative works — *Historia Universal de la Infamia* (1935) and *El jardín de senderos que se bifurcan* (1941) — that would later, in 1944, become the first part of the famous book *Ficciones*.

Until the early 1950's, these mentions of Borges as well as the first translations of a part of his work (only poetry) set forward the image of an avant-garde poet and the undisputed leader of Ultraist Argentinian movement, (Prampolini 537–538) which completely disregards the *criollo* and regionalist aspect of his works. However, this did not have a long lasting impact in Borges' image in Italy, they simply set a precedent for Borges' presence in Italy. Indeed, the small and partial portion of Borges' works translated and available in Italy at the time as well as the fact that they had very limited circulation was to a great extent determined by historical reasons. From the 1930s — when some of Borges' poetical texts started to appear in translation — to the beginning of the 1950s, there was a time of transformational historical changes in Italy. Undeniably, these transformations had deep repercussions on the country's cultural life.

The years from 1922 to 1943 were referred to as the years of the *Ventennio nero*.<sup>98</sup> the seizure of power by the fascist Benito Mussolini, that officially took place on October 29, 1922; the assassination of socialist congressman Giacomo Matteotti (Malato 17); the turning of Italy into a totalitarian state until end of the Fascist regime on July 25, 1943. Those were years of censorship and political persecution in the Fascist state of Benito Mussolini. The expression of new ideas and the introduction of new works had to be done with extreme caution. In counterpart, important underground clandestine cultural life was established and literature became socially committed. The climate of intense restriction — where even the importing and exporting of common goods was abolished for certain periods (Calvo Montoro 179) — made the divulgation of new foreign authors difficult, if not impossible. Most of the material openly published had to be congenial with governmental policies and values, whereas the material circulating underground through the opposition was in many cases Marxist and generally politically engaged. The scattered translations of Borges' poems were far from corresponding to any of those two tendencies, thus significantly hindered the divulgation of his works.

In the post-war, during the period of reconstruction — thanks to the Marshall Plan and the economic help of the USA (Ginsborg 78–79; McCarthy 97–100) — the publishing industry, as many other sectors, were expanding considerably (Malato 201–211); and there was a gradual opening to a new culture based on consumption and industrialization (Asor Rosa 763–774, vol. II). These conditions will foster a major tendency of literary internationalization (Malato 234–237)

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<sup>98</sup> For the fascist period and the special characteristics of culture in that period, see Chapter 1, Volume IX of *Storia della Letteratura Italiana* from Enrico Malato, especially (Malato 15-31). For a more historical point of view see *Fascism: Past, Present and Future* by Walter Laqueur.

with the special incursion of American authors. The climax of the *avant-garde* movements had past (before and after the World War I) making way to neorealism (Malato 691–696; Asor Rosa 824-829, vol. II), denouncing the harsh social realities of war and the reconstruction. Neorealism found its more successful expression in cinema (Asor Rosa 807–836 vol. II). That period was the golden age in this industry with names such as Visconti, Rossellini and De Sica, among others (Astor Rosa 827, vol. II). The times were not yet mature for the type of aesthetic that Borges started to project in his new books, as exemplified in *El jardín de senderos que se bifurcan*. Borges' style was detached from political debates, or, at the very least, distanced from socially committed works.

Between the 1930's and 1940's many Latin American authors started to flow to Italy, as Giuseppe Bellini shows in his most recent essay *Recepción de la narrativa Hispanoamericana en Italia* (29-42) in great degree due to the waves of migration before and after the two Great Wars. This coincided with the appearance of many translators, mainly Italians who had lived in South America and had come back home. Among others, Ugo Imperatori (translated Manuel Gálvez in 1933); Carlo Bo, an important collaborator of Einaudi and friend of Calvino (translated Guiraldes in 1940, Rómulo Gallegos in 1946, and Jorge Icaza in 1949); Attilio Dabino (translated Quiroga in 1944 and Amorim in 1945). As a result, there was a continuous flow of translations and exposure of authors yet unknown in Italy. The majority of works translated coincided with the prevalent aesthetic at the moment (i.e. neorealism; *novelas de protesta* or works somehow reflecting a difficult social reality) while others would bring some exotic elements from a reality different from Italian context.

Overall, the poor reception of Borges' works in Italy, marked by indifference in the 1930s and 1940s, is due to the conversion of contextual and literary factors. Borges was labelled as an *avant-garde* poet and an Ultraist leader, which coincided with the works that were selected for

translation (mainly poetry), perhaps because this was a movement in recent past in Italy and thus easily identifiable and understood by the public. Moreover, the predilection for Borges' poetry in the initial translations of his works wasn't completely accidental. The choice was most likely motivated by the ongoing and inevitable influence of Benedetto Croce's ruling taste in Italian literature, which privileged poetry over other genres.<sup>99</sup> Additionally, the style of Latin-American narrative (whether it is realist, regionalist or exotic) that begins to interest the Italian public doesn't correspond to Borges' first three books of essays, which were not easily classifiable. Borges' first three books of prose exhibit contrasting, and even opposing, styles. These books aren't easily penetrable for the Italian public with a limited knowledge of Argentina. The style is often heavy, plentiful in barroquisms and the themes are at times very local to Argentina, riddled with *criollismo*, *argentinidad* and the concerns for national language and literature. Translations of these books will only appear several decades after those first translations including exclusively poetry. As previously mentioned, they only appear summarily mentioned in anthologies and this might be, in part, because they were rejected very early by the author himself. *Evaristo Carriego* and *Historia universal de la infamia* remain books difficult to categorize and besides were not well

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<sup>99</sup> Gianfranco Contini studies the strong influence of Croce in Italy for many decades in *La parte di Benedetto Croce nella cultura Italiana*, where he examines the impossibility of getting out of a specific esthetic privileging poetry over narrative. As Santos Unamuno says ("*Borges*" 156), the scant regard for the narrative genres of Croce and his intuitive conception of art as lyrical expression of language in Italy prevented a fruitful discussion on the problems in that period that were aired in other European countries, for example it slowed the spread of the pillars of the literary renewal of Kafka to Joyce and Proust, and also the reception of Borges will be affected.

received, especially the first one, in Argentina. Following his association with the magazine *Sur*, Borges practically abandons poetry and his essays (like *Discusión*) and narrative pieces (from *Historia Universal de la infamia* on) are openly cosmopolitan and touch a myriad of themes that appeal to a more general public. However, these new pieces will not be immediately accepted and understood from a perspective different from the imperative neorealist. It will take a few years for them to be well received in and outside of Argentina. In this sense Borges benefited from the influence of certain personalities that served as a bridge and anchoring in distinct cultural environments, such as Ibarra y Caillois in France, and Calvino in Italy. This resulted in an appropriate introduction of Borges' works, through proper channels and with an adequate support, in great measure contributing to the fertile environment that led to a change in Borges' reputation, starting with a positive reception of *El jardín de senderos que se bifurcan* and of the novel borgesian literature.

## 2.2. A Second and Prosperous Stage of Reception in Italy: Crossing Paths With Calvino

A second, much more successful stage of reception of Borges' works in Italy was marked by the privileged translation and divulgation of his prose. In the aftermath of the war, Italo Calvino and other personalities linked to the publishing house Einaudi would take advantage of the changes in the socio-cultural landscape and hold a fundamental role ensuring, in many different ways, the successful reception of Borges' works in prose, thus causing an expansive and contagious positive effect on Italian culture.

So far, most critics have insisted on the primacy and anticipation of French publishers to translate and publish Borges' works in prose before anyone else and to introduce them to the European public. Nevertheless, and even if the very first publications of Borges' translated prose came to light in France, there are two things to be noted regarding the Italian editions and

publications. Following the appearance of the first publications in France, Italy accelerated the rhythm of publications (in a sort of veiled race), translating and publishing in most of the cases many more of Borges' works before any other country (cf. Appendix 3). This also clearly reflected the greater interest and influence of Borges in Italy compared to other latitudes. Nevertheless the most marked difference between the two countries competing to first publish Borges' material is that while the first publications in France originated and were promoted expressly by Borges' friends in/from Argentina, Italian publications were produced by a group of enthusiast admirers of Borges, strongly convinced of the relevance of his works. This hustle of bi-national publications will end with the publication of Borges' complete works in an annotated edition in one of the most prestigious collections, namely *I Meridiani* (in 1984). This publication preceded by many years the French version of Borges' complete works edited by Jean-Pierre Bernès (in 1992) or the Argentine annotated edition of his complete works (truly complete, unlike precedent editions) which was finally ready in 2009. However, much of the tendencies in international critique and reception of Borges will arise to a great extent from the actions taken by the French publishing industry, as in modern times the cultural influence of France on the rest of the world has been stronger than any influence proceeding from Italian culture, and thus, is more easily exportable.

The first attempt to publish Borges' texts in France was by direct commission and at the expenses of the generous resources of a visionary intellectual figure close to Borges: Victoria Ocampo – director of the prestigious magazine *Sur* in which Borges always had an important role. During the World War II, when the publishing industry in France was practically idle, Victoria supported the publication of the French magazine *Lettres Françaises*, directed by Roger Caillois (friend of Victoria and collaborator of *Sur*). *Lettres Françaises* counted on the contribution of many exiled French intellectuals and the magazine was fully edited in Argentina (Olea 258). In

issue 14, published on October 1944, were included only two of Borges' short stories: "La lotería de Babilonia" and "La biblioteca de Babel", under a common title of *Assyriennes*. The first texts in that magazine were translated and accompanied by an introduction signed by Borges' Franco-Argentine friend Nestor Ibarra. A few years later in 1951 Roger Caillois, upon his return to France, would publish for the first time some of Borges' works of fiction in the new collection *Croix du Sud* of Gallimard (dedicated to Latin-American literature), which included the same introduction by Ibarra and texts translated both by him and Paul Verdevoye (260). Even though these publications did not capture much attention from the general public, they did seize Jean Paul Sartre's interest. Sartre, who was somewhat of a King Midas of the French cultural world, would outset Borges and notably contributes to his fame and acceptance, especially following the publication of eight of Borges' short texts in Sartre's famous magazine *Temps Modernes* in 1955.

The publication of an article in 1949 in the important and innovative magazine *Belfagor* (directed by Luigi Russo) started reverting the projected image of Borges as an avant-garde author during the modest diffusion of part of his poetry in the 1940's and 1950's In Italy. This article, by Enrique Luis Revol, appeared years before any of the large and famous publications of Borges' texts translated in French, either by Caillois or Sartre. Revol defines Borges as "forse il maggior prosatore in lingua spagnola oggi vivente" (Revol 425), and he suggests that "il critico può considerare l'opera lirica conclusa e completa" (425), given that Borges had not published any new piece of poetry since 1944. Three quarters of the article are dedicated to Borges' short-stories and Revol starts using critical descriptive tags such as "geometrica nitidezza" (429), "rigore inesorabile" (429), and "sorprendente rigore logico" (430), that later become common places in the critical terminology surrounding Borges' work. This inconspicuous event is a kind of seed that found fertile soil in the evolving historical, socio-economical and cultural context at the time.

Unlike what happened in the 1930s and 1940s, the public interest had start to grow, stemming from specific groups of intellectuals (Malato 201–211). The result being a flourishing and ever growing public interest and the impressive number of publications that followed.

Revol published that article a few years after the end of the war, when the peak of neorealism had past, although without completely disappearing,<sup>100</sup> and Italy was open to a period of renewal and experimentalism. This change in attitude reflected mainly in several periodic publications<sup>101</sup> supported by a re-invigoration of the economy that, among other things,

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<sup>100</sup> Let's not forget that there are important works amongst the ones previously mentioned, namely *Quaderni del carcere* by Antonio Gramsci, that renewed at different moments the enthusiasm for Realism and socially engaged literature. There were other magazines that also endorsed and encouraged that same perspective, such as *Rinascita* (the magazine of the Italian Communist Party), *Contemporaneo* and *Nuova Corrente*, to cite only a few.

<sup>101</sup> Belfagor is one amongst others of similar or greater importance, but with a similar desire of renewal, although from different perspectives. Some of the most important were: *Il Politecnico* (distinctly Neorealist, but open to other possibilities, especially in final publications), *Nuova Corrente* (initially Realist, until Gianni Scalià declared the Realist experience definitely concluded in 1959), *Botteghe Oscure* (apolitical and directed by Giorgio Bassani), *Nuovi Argomenti* (directed by Alberto Moravia and Pier Paolo Passolini), *Paragone* (founded by Roberto Longhi, and still ongoing), *Officina* (with an explicit Experimentalist and antinovecentista proposal), *Il Menabó* (the successor of Officina), etc. It is noteworthy that *Il Politecnico*, directed by Elio Vittorini, (later colleague and teacher of Italo Calvino at Einaudi) ends following a famous argument with the leader of the communist party,

transformed the traditional editorial industry in a mass production industry (Malato 201–211). Indeed, magazines were the ideal medium for literary experiments and cutting-edge ideas. Following the publication of *El jardín de los senderos que se bifurcan* Borges was highly prized in a critic describing him as the greatest living narrator in Spanish language and revering his novel style. Unavoidably, this has repercussions in the Italian cultural world, even though there were no translations of Borges' prose in Italian at that time. As such, the first publication of a translation of one of Borges's complete books comes at a very assenting moment as it coincides with the expansion of Italy's cultural horizons and the fomenting of new connections with foreign authors and cultures (Malato 234-237).

Even if the energetic assertions in Revol's article triggered the curiosity of some Italian intellectuals (among whom Italo Calvino), the access to Borges' texts in prose remained laborious, as none had yet been translated to Italian, the French version (initially from *Lettres Françaises* and later from Gallimard) being more within reach than the original in Spanish. Italo Calvino had much to do with the first publication of Borges in Italy and was equally closely involved in the decision of publishing Borges for Einaudi. Calvino had been gradually escalating the pyramidal structure

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Palmiro Togliatti, regarding the role of the writer in socially engaged literature, as well as the need, or lack, of idealization. Just as the project of *Il Politecnico* was coming to an end, Vittorini launches the collection *I Gettoni* with Einaudi as an experimental space for Italian writers, but allowing Calvino to include foreign non-Realist writers, whom were also experimental, and amongst the first invited was Borges. Later on Calvino and Vittorini co-founded another important experimental magazine, *Il Menabó*, in which he published his famous article "La sfida al labirinto," that was clearly influenced by Borges.

of Einaudi, proving to have a sharp critical vision and an editorial sense for new literary talents — in part thanks to the precious teachings from his mentor and friend Cesare Pavese, who had introduced him to Einaudi (Montoro 33). Consequently, Calvino was taking more responsibilities and holding an increasingly prominent role in decision making within the publishing label. Even if Borges' texts were published in a collection officially directed by the writer Elio Vittorini, they were clearly not in line with the type of literature that Vittorini normally chose or wrote, which had a rather realist tendency. According to Giulio Einaudi, “per I suoi Gettoni, Vittorini chiedeva sempre il parere di Calvino” (Cesari 81) and Calvino “solo si occupava prevalentemente delle cose che lo interessava quando trovava libri notevoli di qualsiasi genere li seganalava” (82). The suggestion came from Calvino, to whom Borges appeared almost as a revelation, during the period following the death of Pavese in 1950. In 1955, the collection *I Gettoni*, where Borges' first book of prose in Italian appears, was created to publish experimental or innovative works as Calvino himself describes in Einaudi's General Catalogue: “l'esigenza di una collana narrativa esclusivamente ‘esperimentale.’”<sup>102</sup> Calvino would later honor and recognize Borges' influence in his article “Scrittori esemplari, vi odio tutti” (published in *L'unità*, on 20 September 1984), which is partly a homage to him since the first time he read him thanks to Sergio Solmi. Solmi had

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<sup>102</sup> Luca Baranelli in *Italo Calvino e l'editoria* attributes to Calvino, according to his duties in the Einaudi publishing house and at the moment enthusiastic with *Gruppo 63*, the authorship of specific texts even if they were not signed. According to Baranelli, amongst other texts, Calvino wrote the presentations of the following collections: *I gettoni*, *Narratori stranieri tradotti*, *I coralli*, *Supercoralli*, *Narratori contemporanei*, *Nuova Atlantide* and *Piccola biblioteca scientifico letteraria*.

read the article in *Belfagor*, he was in contact with French publications and was spreading the word: Borges “c'era in giro uno scrittore straordinario che valeva la pena di leggere”. This was a perfect timing for such an acquaintance, as Calvino was going through a deep personal and creative crisis. Einaudi requested Franco Lucentini, writer and translator, to do the first translations of Borges’ prose to Italian, given – in the words of Cesco Vian (209) and Lucentini – his condition of outsider with perfect knowledge of both French (as he lived in Paris periodically) and Spanish. This was just the inception of the long romance between Italy and Borges at a time favourable to the introduction of an innovative literary proposal that represented a third option, different from neorealism and distanced from the *avant-garde* movements, which will later catch a second breath with the *Gruppo 63*.

Even if the main goal of this thesis is not to write the history of Borges’ influence on Calvino (achieved mainly by other critics), I would like to highlight a few aspects indicating that Calvino’s promotion of Borges was, since the beginning, closely tied to a personal agenda. Following the publication of some texts with many neo-realist elements, such as *Il sentiero dei nidi di ragno*, Calvino had a few frustrated attempts to write an impeccable book on Italian Resistance, an example of this being *Il bianco velero* (hardly criticized by Vittorini and Natalia Ginzburg). In general, Calvino was struggling to produce and he did not receive good feedback from people close to him regarding his drafts (Montoro 34). Faced with the inability to write such a flawless novel, Calvino undertook the compilation of a book of short stories that he had been writing about the partisan years. Calvino will then embark upon a period of exploration of different literary paths that would make him gradually, but inevitably, shift to a different direction from that explicitly inscribed in *Il Visconte Dimezzato*. Calvino will distance himself from the literature with an obvious and straightforward political engagement and/or apparent social commitment.

Moreover, he will later renounce the Communist party, radically changing his writings and role in the intellectual community, as Eugenio Bolongaro explains in detail in his thorough book *Italo Calvino and The Compass of Literature*. The Leftist critics denounced it as a detour from his preceding political compromises. Perhaps the texts that will bear significant contributions to Calvino's fame and recognition are those written under the strong influence of Borges. When he wrote his famous text "Il midollo del leone", a sort of personal declaration of poetics, he had already read the French version of *Ficciones* (and most likely other of Borges' texts) and was clearly engaged in a different path. Borges' fantastic literature remained logic, depending on the slightest details and authenticity, which inspired Calvino to find an alternative to the declining neorealism. Calvino initially found in *Le fiabe*<sup>103</sup> *Italiane* the perfect pretense to detach from reality and then in the *trilogía araldica*, where "l'irreale si articola nell'ampia misura di un racconto in cui l'impossibile obbedisce alla logica narrativa del possibile, o se si vuole del verisimile" (Malato 898) Marcovaldo employs in the first half a *fiabesco* tone and in the second half touches upon urban themes with tones that sometimes border on the absurd. In *La giornata d'uno scrutatore*, Calvino tells the story of a Communist militant in crisis coming in contact with the irrational. Calvino practiced various styles acquired not only from Borges, but also from other writers, given the voracity of his readings and his curiosity. In the wake of fiction works of diverse nature, comes

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<sup>103</sup> For Calvino, one of the most interesting aspects of the *fiaba*, the according to what he says in *Tre correnti del romanzo italiano* is "l'essenzialità, il modo in cui il senso d'una vita è contenuto in una sintesi di fatti, di momenti supremi" (74). This was an aspect very present in Borges, as we already mentioned, who had previously learned it from Dante: the possibility to pin or signify a life in a single moment, find the meaning of a whole life in a simple single gesture or moment.

a text considered as a public declaration of poetic manifest, “La sfida al labirinto”, in which Borges’ influence is undeniable even in the title. “Le cosmicomiche”, “Ti con zero” and “Palomar” are texts that succeeded “La sfida al labirinto” are considered to be the ones where Borges’ influence is the most predominant. Borges’ influence in Calvino’s works will endure in subsequent works in combination with important ludic elements namely from the French movement *Oulipo* (*Ouvroir de Littérature Potentielle*). Towards the end of his life, in later works such as *Perché leggere i classici*, Calvino includes Borges in his list of classics. Borges is also an integral element of Calvino’s last work (a literary biographical essay of sorts, perhaps a testament), which was a part of his lectures at Harvard, at the moment death surprised him, and is now in the book *Lezioni Americane*. All this bears testimony to the outstanding influence of Borges in Calvino’s life and writings; despite his somewhat contradicting declarations, and that indeed there was no greater influence in his literary trajectory. The gradual, yet crucial, importance of Borges in his new literature and aesthetics will prompt Calvino to become one of the main advertisers of Borges not only in Italy, but in Europe, promoting interest in other writers and having Einaudi as an epicenter.

Luciano Codignola, one of Borges’ first critics (1956), remarks already at this stage the idea of the world as a hoax, a labyrinth, the cosmic irony and the systematic destruction of the perception of time, ideas that would become unavoidable common places for the critics in and outside of Italy. Furthermore, Codignola sees in Borges a rehabilitator of anguish literature following in the footsteps of Poe and Kafka (Codignola 178), predecessors from which Borges (and Calvino) drew inspiration. Another fervent promoter of Borges in Italy was Francesco Tentori Montalto, who also collaborated periodically with Einaudi. In march 1957, Montalto published some of the short stories from *El Aleph* in the magazine *Tempo presente* and as of the Preface he declares his intention to contribute "al suo nome e alla sua fortuna in Italia"(16). Given the

favourable reception Borges' short stories had, Montalto published immediately after a complete translation of *El Aleph*. Montalto became a passionate of Borges that this translation of *El Aleph* will be but one of a long series of books he translated thereafter.<sup>104</sup> *El Aleph* and *Ficciones*, two fundamental books, will trigger a wave of positive critics and will be influential to many writers. The 1960s will bring upon a very important and critical step in the acceptance of Borges in Italy, which is characterized by an avalanche of literary prizes and recognition.

### 2.3. An Unprecedentedly Unusual Case of Positive Reception in Italy

Following the publication of Revol's article in 1949 the general panorama regarding the reception of Borges and his works in Italy had evolved in a positive manner that was accompanied by a frenetic competition to publish virtually all his writings beforehand and in better editions than in any other part of the world.<sup>105</sup>

The history of the introduction of foreign authors in Italy is far from being terse and homogenous. The interest in specific groups and the value attributed to diverse aspects are subject to change, conforming to the dynamic context of the time. In regard to the evolution Borges'

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<sup>104</sup> His translations were: *L'Aleph*, Feltrinelli, 1959; *Antologia personale*, Silva, 1962; *Altre inquisizioni*, Feltrinelli, 1963; *Elogio dell'ombra*, Einaudi, 1971; *Cronache di Bustos Domecq*, Einaudi, 1975; *L'artefice*, Rizzoli, 1982; *Conversazioni con Osvaldo Ferrari*, Bompiani, 1986; *Altre conversazioni con Osvaldo Ferrari*, Bompiani, 1989; *Dall'intimità*, Passigli, 1991 (also work of edition); and *Cos'è il buddismo*, TEN, 1995.

<sup>105</sup> It was in Argentina obviously, where he used to publish most his Works for the first time, (with some rare exceptions). There were, however, some annotated and wrote prologues collections that were published in Italy before than anywhere else in the world.

reception in Italy it is possible to delineate several points: what aspects of his works are most valued and praised at a given time; what characteristics of his works, if any, remain a common denominator in the eyes of his critics; the unfolding of his public image; and the correlation with different important historical events. An astonishing fact that sets Borges apart as a unique case in what concerns Italian critics is the generalized overwhelming positive reviews he received (cf. Appendix 4). Since the first presentations of Borges' works or articles in newspapers, the vast majority of reviews he received pointed invariably to praise. Such an unprecedented positive reception of a foreign author in Italy is worth our attention.

To explain such a phenomenon, we need to take in consideration a conjunction of contextual and literary aspects. At the time Borges' prose made its way into Italy, the context was becoming much more receptive to Borges' proposal. The most ardent momentum of the avant-garde movements was dissolving. In that climate, it was difficult to amaze or shock the audiences (like the Futurists did) with incendiary literary or artistic performances attacking the bourgeois lifestyle and values. It will take time for other movements to formulate a credible proposal bringing any type of novelty, like will happen — although less aggressively and in a freer way, without manifestos — with the *Gruppo 63*. Nevertheless, the initial postwar impetus of reconstruction will produce discussions about the literature of resistance, about realism and the use of dialects in literature, all the while leaving space, at least momentarily, to an awareness of the crisis, the complexity of the historical and artistic processes, and the difficulty in channelling or altering these processes voluntarily.<sup>106</sup> The concept of literature itself was a subject and a part of that crisis as

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<sup>106</sup> Even if later around 1968 and early 1970's there will be another recurrence of neorealist tendencies due to the historical moment.

the debate about its notion and function was once again reopened. It is during this period, with exact timing, that Borges had a historical incidence offering a third option to the hackneyed Neorealism and avant-gardes, in which some visionaries, like Calvino, saw an important and yet unexplored path. In the words of Stelio Cro: “Borges ha liberato la letteratura in un periodo in cui essa è seriamente minacciata, tra l’anarchia sperimentale e l’impegno ideologico”. This explains to great extent the positive reception Borges had, but not completely. Another crucial aspect that we have to take in consideration is the behind the scenes tenacious work of promotion of those who have started to adopt and assimilate important elements from Borges’ innovative literary proposal — and whom were also seeking to advance their own literary agenda or projects. Indeed, by supporting this new literary taste and style, its supporters will, as a corollary, promote their new standing in the literary world. Calvino’s interest in promoting Borges and his style was mentioned earlier in this chapter, as he was one of the most advantaged by the soaring of this new literary program, but there were many others whose implication and profits will be analyzed in the last section of this chapter.

One particularly effective way of promotion was the series of public recognitions and awards granted to Borges. As it will be analyzed in detail in the next section, this would result in an utterly visible and memorable phenomenon, where the recipient of the award as well as its granters or judges would stand out. All those aspects primarily contributed to making Borges an unparalleled successful case in Italian literature, as despite changes in contextual conditions, his success will prevail in a considerably constant way. In other words, Borges’ reception would always remain positive, what did vary was the intensity and frequency of positive reviews.

Roberto Paoli was the first one to track (although not thoroughly) the reception that Borges received in Italy.<sup>107</sup> Paoli distinguished three main groups that he documented according to the more or lesser favourable critics that they made: the *seguaci entusiasti*, in which we can see prominent figures like Italo Calvino, Leonardo Sciascia, Giorgio Manganelli, Giuseppe Pontiggia, Claudio Magris, Paolo Milano, among others; the *favorevoli perplessi o problematici*, that disclose some punctual unconformities or slight disagreements but and comprise Ceronetti, Mario Luzi, Umberto Eco, Rodolfo Wilcock, Alberto Moravia; and the *detrattori*, the smallest group of all, basically restricted to Giovanni Raboni, who, while expressing a negative overall opinion, still concedes some value to Borges. However, it is undisputable that Paoli himself responds to Raboni's attack: he assumes the position of defender by counterattacking the attacker. This reaction is not isolated, Raboni was faced by a fearless defense of Borges after his controversial article in *La Stampa* "Borges e Borgesismo: genio o maestro della trovata?" published on September 19, 1977.

Here we can mention some (out of many) of the most important personalities that made a critical assessment of Borges. These critiques will always have in common their approval, but they could greatly differ in what facets were considered valuable and singled-out.

The variety of opinions in Italy can be seen when important subject matters are discussed. For example, while in other countries (like France and the USA) Borges was mainly celebrated as

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<sup>107</sup> See *Percorsi di significato* (1977), "La presenza della cultura italiana nell'opera di Jorge Luis Borges" (1979), *Tre saggi su Borges* (1992) and *Presencia de Borges en la Literatura Italiana Contemporanea* (1994).

a cosmopolitan European writer established outside of Europe,<sup>108</sup> in Italy there were different and even opposed opinions concerning the very same subject. While some Italian critics, like Tentori Montalto<sup>109</sup> (*Altre* 8), praised Borges' cosmopolitanism and universal human values, others, like Mauro Lucentini<sup>110</sup> in *Il Mondo* on 2 May 1971, highlighted Borges' localism, mainly circumscribing Buenos Aires in his works or yet tried to stress the *porteño* character of Borges' works after the appearance of *El Aleph*, as did Mario Luzi<sup>111</sup> in *Il Giornale*, on 15 June 1986. To

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<sup>108</sup> Borges himself had given origin to such perspectives because he used to declare himself a European in exile. Alluding precisely to the constitutive multiculturalism of the Argentine people mainly composed of immigrants from Europe, but many times this type of comments were taken very literal as if he really thought to be more or exclusively European.

<sup>109</sup> He was not only a critic but translated many works from Borges and did the prologue of many of them. He translated *Elogio de la sombra*, *Cronicas de Bustos Domecq*, *Otras inquisiciones y ¿Qué es el Budismo?*. He also translated and commented or introduced *el Aleph*, for Feltrinelli, *El Hacedor* for Rizzoli, *Conversaciones con Oswaldo Ferrari* for Bompiani and translated and wrote literary criticism in *Dall'intimità* and in *Jorge Luis, Il piacere della letteratura*, including in both books texts from Borges. He also contributed to do the anthology *Le piú belle poesie di Jorge Luis Borges*.

<sup>110</sup> Brother of Franco Lucentini, who was also an enthusiastic critic of Borges and a translator of *Manual de Zoologia Fantástica*.

<sup>111</sup> Mario Luzi was a famous Italian writer who was nominated for the Nobel Prize in 1979 along with Jorge Luis Borges, Leonardo Sciascia and Italo Calvino. He said in many of his works and interviews that Borges had been one of the most influential writers for him. Daniel Clemente Del

resolve these discrepancies, other positions materialized, such as the one of Livio Bacchi Wilcock,<sup>112</sup> saying that his cosmopolitanism was an instrument needed to express an autochthon inspiration (in line with what Borges expressed in his essay “El escritor argentino y la tradición”). According to the critic Stelio Cro, given the natural multiculturalism in Argentina, all the best writers from Argentina tended to be somehow eclectic (Cro 58). Another view of this same issue would be to that of Angela Bianchini in *La Stampa* on 16 June 1986, claiming that the whole debate was illicit as:

Proprio nella sua eredità criolla stava l’ambivalenza verso la patria e l’Europa, verso gli Stati Uniti e Israele, verso il mondo germanico e quello spagnolo: la sua immensa straordinaria ricchezza insomma (12).

Nevertheless, regardless the topics and highlights of these analytical ambivalent positions among the different critics and intellectuals, they will all tend to be approving. Here are a few representative cases:

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Percio has studied such influence in “Máscaras de la lectura: Jorge Luis Borges en la obra de Mario Luzi”.

<sup>112</sup> Another remarkable translator, Hispanic Studies critic and commentator of Borges. Adopted son from Juan Rodolfo Wilcock, (friend of both Borges and Bioy, through Silvina Ocampo, Bioy’s wife). He was translator of Borges for Rizzoli publisher. His translations include *Historia de la Eternidad*, *Nueva Antología Personal*, *El informe Brodie*, *El libro de Arena*, *Poesía 1923-1976*, *Discusión*, *El Oro de los Tigres*, and he did translation contributions for Borges’ Complete Works in Italian for *Mondadori* by Domenico Porzio. He also translated works from Adolfo Bioy Casares.

Umberto Eco is much indebted to Borges in his famous medieval mystery *Il Nome della Rosa* and was clearly influenced by borgesian topics in many of his books of essays. In relation to effective procedures of building intrigue in detective novels, Eco said:

Molti dei racconti di Borges sembrano esemplificazioni perfette di quell'arte dell'inferenza che [Charles Sanders] Pierce chiamava abduzione o ipotesi, e che altro non è che la congettura. (*Sugli* 166)

Even if Eco had some differences and reserves regarding Borges, he accepted<sup>113</sup> to have been greatly influenced by him in many ways and many of the topics he will later develop will stem from a clearly borgesian precedent. As an example, we can remember Eco's analysis and discussion of *Il Nome della Rosa* in "Il ruolo del lettore", with its innovative ideas on interpretation and over-interpretation, the role of the reader and the death of the author, and direct inter-textual allusion to Borges in various aspects of that work. Even if Eco would later try to distance himself from Borges to avoid being further associated with him, the evidence of such influence<sup>114</sup> had already left its indelible mark. At the beginning, it was love at first sight:

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<sup>113</sup> See transcript of the conference "Sul concetto di influenza" that Eco had about Borges' influence on his own work. The transcript is at the end of *Relaciones Literarias entre Jorge Luis Borges y Umberto Eco* (edited by María Calvo Montoro and Rocco Capozzi) which is the most complete and ambitious multidisciplinary study about the relationship and intertextuality between Borges and Eco.

<sup>114</sup> See the chapter that Edna Aizemberg dedicates to the main influences of Borges over Eco in her book *Borges and his successors*.

I remember that I was 22 or 23 years old when *Ficciones* was published in Italian for the first time. [...] It made me crazy. I passed many nights reading it to my friends. I felt an immediate self-recognition in Borges. It was a first sight love.<sup>115</sup>

Leonardo Sciascia, one of the earliest critic commentators of Borges, in “Un grande teologo ateo” in *Corriere della Sera*, on 30 September 1979, considers him “il più grande teologo del nostro tempo. Un teologo ateo. Vale a dire il segno più alto della contraddizione in cui viviamo”, in a direct allusion to Borges’ assertion that every wise man is a theologian.

Stelio Cro wrote and defended his thesis on Borges in Venice. Cro was one of the first to study the stylistic bond between Borges and Calvino, highlighting, among other things, the impeccable clarity and concision, the rigorous use of language, the arbitrary use of the anecdote, history and his imagination. He simply considers Borges an universal writer, a contemporary classic that has assimilated the literary tradition to the point of saying “come in Virgilio c’è Omero e in Dante c’è Virgilio, in Borges c’è tutta la letteratura, da Omero a Joyce” (267) and “leggere a Borges è una delle avventure intellettuali più appassionanti”.

Mario Luzi also admired many aspects of Borges and his works and tended to give positive feedback in his objective critics, but in less passionate stands. In a critical review of *Elogio de la sombre* and *Informe Brodie*, Luzi refers to Borges’ works as an example of super-literature, as he is capable of going from complexity to simplicity. Luzi considers it foolish to think that Borges would limit himself to a logic linear world when in reality he excels in going from complexity to

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<sup>115</sup> In interview with Jorge Halperín in 1992.

simplicity and in expressing the labyrinth of human life. However, Luzi did not have any problem recognizing the great influence<sup>116</sup> of Borges had on him (Del Percio 71-99).

Francesco Tentori Montalto, a minor roman poet, but a respectable critic, cultural promoter and a remarkable translator (mainly for Feltrinelli and Einaudi; close to Calvino and Wilcock) held an important role in divulging many of Borges' important works in Italian, the most important of them being *El Aleph* in 1959. Apart from the many translations and introductions to Borges' works, one of the most effective ways of divulgation Montalto pursued, was his work as a patient anthologist. Among the various anthologies he compiled we can count some particularly important in which Borges seemed to hold a prominent position in Argentine and Latin American literature, namely: *Poesia ispano-americana del '900* (1957), *Narratori ispanoamericani del '900* (1960), *Poeti ispano-americani del Novecento* (1987) — for which he received the prize Monselice in translation — and other anthologies of Borges' works specifically, like *Antologia personale* (1962) and *Le più belle poesie di Jorge Luis Borges* (1994). Among the many virtues that he celebrates from Borges, he tried to counteract the generalized critiques (mainly from outside Italy) that his style was too cold and cerebral, or dehumanized. Tentori stressed his concern with deep human problems without the need to refer to any specific given social reality. In the prologue to *El Aleph*, Tentori stresses Borges' preoccupation with universal topics such as time, eternity, death, the unfolding capacity of personality, madness, pain and destiny (9). Also in the prologue to *Otras Inquisiciones* in Italian, he remarks:

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<sup>116</sup> Daniel Clemente Del Percio studies such influence in a comprehensive way in “Máscaras de la lectura: Jorge Luis Borges en la obra de Mario Luzi.”

La più profonda attenzione, nonostante l'apparente noncuranza per il reale e le fughe nei cieli dell'astrazione, non cessa di essere diretta, lo ripetiamo, all'uomo, centro e motore segreto del suo discorso" (8).

A similar laudatory position we can find in Guido Piovene in *La stampa*, on 29 September 1967, another assiduous critic that rejected the image of an exclusively intellectualized Borges and considers him "uno dei maggiori maestri della letteratura d'oggi" (3). One of his accomplishments was to revalue Borges as a poet, in his more lyrical, sensible and personal part. From his introduction to Borges' *Carme presunto e altre poesie* (1972) we read:

Ho voluto provare a leggerlo in maniera più semplice, come si attraversa un paesaggio; una lettura, potrei dire, ariostesca. Si incontra allora un Borges tutto fertile e mosso, tutto contatto con le cose...Sotto le architetture intellettuali di Borges vi è una germinazione lirica ininterrotta che butta i suoi riflessi anche dove la pagina sembra più calcolata. (7)

Paoli, one of the most fervent and serious Italian critics and divulgators of Borges, very lucidly warned that it was difficult to keep an objective eye when measuring the literary contribution of Borges to western and Italian literature in the middle of two decades of excessive glamour around his persona and that only time will help to decant his fame and value his work in its proper dimension (*Tre saggi* 9). However, it did not prevent him from continuously praising Borges, valuing many aspects of his works (that he studied for the most part of his life) and dedicating him many books<sup>117</sup> of essays and articles. Paoli, frantic and shaking, gave one of the

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<sup>117</sup> Three of his most important books are *Borges: Percorsi di significato* (1977), *Tre saggi su Borges* (1992) and *Borges e gli scrittori italiani* (1997).

introductory speeches (*L'Unità*, 5 October 1977) about Borges' achievements and works in a reception in the IILA facilities for the occasion of Borges' first visit to Italy in 1977 (when he first met him in person).

Giuliano Gramigna, who collaborated in *Il Corriere della Sera* in the cultural section (along with Calvino), found Borges' major value in the fact that:

I suoi racconti non inseguono visioni, simboli, allegorie, ma l'articolarsi di metafore ...nel loro significato retorico. La letteratura di Borges è una formidabile retorica che sfugge di continuo. (*Corriere della Sera* 15 June 1986)

Antonio Tabucchi, considering the presence of Spinoza in Borges' work, said to *La Repubblica*, on 15 June 1986, that it was: “una sorta di collettivo ectoplasma che accoglie tutto il genere umano”. Borges would be for him, among other things,<sup>118</sup> a fundamental model of brevity and conciseness of writing.

Domenico Porzio started out as an unconditional admirer of Borges and later was responsible of the critical edition in Italian of Borges' complete works. Porzio became one of Borges' good friends and ultimately his biographer, he even stayed for short periods in Borges' house during his visits to Argentina, especially when Borges and himself were compiling and editing his complete works in Italian for Mondadori in the prestigious collection *I Meridiani*. Many

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<sup>118</sup> For a more detailed analysis of the influence of Borges over Tabucchi see Roberto Paoli's *Presencia de Borges en la Literatura Contemporánea*.

Porzio's different texts, articles<sup>119</sup> and introductions about Borges as well as his biographical book *Jorge Luis Borges: Immagini e immaginazione*, can't be considered objective. They rather consist in a personal homage to his friend, including many opinions and comments that he could not (or was not supposed to) put in the complete works in *I Meridiani*. Porzio also wrote a theater script called *Il Vangelo secondo Borges*<sup>120</sup> and the premier was on the 2 Feb 1970.

As exemplified, the wide spectrum of aspects valued in Borges' works according to the different critics and writers reflects the richness of the process of reception. Borges is hardly deprived of uncomfortable or intractable elements of the culture fostering his work, camouflaging thus the process of adaptation to make him fit in a predetermined scale of values, or perspective.

Finally, before closing this section, it is important to briefly analyze the fortune of Borges in Italy in comparison to his reception in other countries. Here, the choice to discuss the case of France and the of the USA/England pair isn't arbitrary, as both cases represent major cultural epicentres: the first one where Borges' most famous prose was first published (as we mentioned before), and the second related to the language and culture to which Borges was exposed in his childhood and would resort to in the last stage of his life to voice the image of himself he wished to leave for posterity.

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<sup>119</sup> A common thing that he said to *La Stampa*, on the 22 November 1970 is that Borges was simply "il piú grande scrittore in lingua spagnola oggi vivente ed uno tra I massimi protagonisti della letteratura mondiale."

<sup>120</sup> 1972 We find news about such play in *La Stampa*, on the 21 September 1971 and the 2 June 1972.

Contrary to what happened in other countries, Italian critics did not exclusively adopt the cosmopolitan version of Borges. For instance, they did not strip him of his *argentinidad* and avoid publishing texts on more local topics (as those about *compadritos* or *gauchos*), thus overlooking that the first and more widely accepted of Borges' works were indeed *L'Aleph* and *Finzioni* (first published as *La Biblioteca di Babele*). In Italy the continuous cultural contact with Argentina and the many public events promoted by an exclusive circle of intellectuals favoured a more integral view of Borges' persona leading to, sooner or later, the publication of all his works in Italian. In many cases the speed of publication of Borges works would exceed the pace of most publications elsewhere. Suffices to say that, quite paradoxically, the publication of Borges' complete works in Italian was more thorough, more up to date and included more titles than his complete works in Spanish. Moreover, an annotated critical edition of Borges' complete works came to light in Italy many years before the Argentine annotated edition was completed.

The situation was very different in the Anglophone world, mainly in the USA, where his works were translated and published in a fragmented and rather chaotic manner<sup>121</sup> depriving Borges from his Argentine side and avoiding the works that represent it the most, often to adapt the image of Borges to the North American taste. Only in that way could Borges become one the most important and influential Latin American authors present in that country. In the words of Livon-Grosman:

Borges is viewed today, perhaps more than ever, as being "closer" to the English language than any other twentieth-century Latin American author, a

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<sup>121</sup> See Balderston "Borges: El Escritor Argentino y la Tradición, Occidental" (167-178).

cultural figure without national boundaries who, consequently, is perceived to be the least Argentine of all Argentine intellectuals (25).

This is due in great part to the public image that Borges himself meticulously crafted, favouring precisely his English descent and his hopeless love for the English language and literary tradition, debiting his literary style to them. As was discussed in section 5.8, this admission is inaccurate given Dante's substantial influence in Borges' style.

In the world of French literature Borges' Argentine identity was also being purposely disregarded and overlooked. Borges' publications in France were directly fostered by Argentine initiatives (as seen in section 6.2) and the process of camouflage of Borges' *argentinidad* was initiated by his own friends, in an effort to avoid the uncounted negative tags he had accumulated from the many detractors in his native Argentina. When the book *El Jardín de senderos que se bifurcan* (later a part of *Ficciones*) was denied the Municipal Prize<sup>122</sup> corresponding to 1939-1941, Borges' friends and closest intellectual community engaged in a unanimous first defence of the writer and his works.<sup>123</sup> According to Olea Franco, Ibarra cleverly used some of the negative

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<sup>122</sup> Roberto Giusti, a member of the jury of that contest in particular expressed that the book was rejected for the prize because it was "literature deshumanizada" and an "oscuro y arbitrario juego cerebral", "una obra...de decadencia" (See "Los premios nacionales de literatura" in *Nosotros*, July, issue 76, 115-116). The same type of negative critique had been present before at least since the 1930's as Olea shows (*Legado* 257-258). But those type of negative comments represent the prejudices of a cultural sector in that historical period.

<sup>123</sup> There was a special issue of the magazine *Sur* (July of the same year) dedicated to the defense under the title "Desagravio a Borges" in which a list of recognized intellectuals close to him wrote

aspects in the cultural context of Argentina (as the a lack of a national identity) taking advantage of them and making them appear as virtues in a cosmopolitan and universal context for the French public. The description his friend Ibarra portrays in the introduction of *Ficciones* started with: “Hispano-Anglo-Portugais d’origine, élevé en Suisse, fixé depuis longtemps à Buenos Aires ou il naquit en 1899, personne n’a moins patrie que Jorge Luis Borges” (Ibarra 9). As a result, some of the common places in reviews of Borges outside Argentina stress precisely that the perception of borgesian cosmopolitanism, universalism and rationalism are in great part attributable to that starting point of the French divulgation.

As Bellini shows,<sup>124</sup> the Italian interest for Hispanic-American literature went from being secondary in the 1950s to becoming extremely relevant in the following decade. Indeed, it was a constant source of renewal in creativity and in the collective imaginary. The contact with the “Other”, different yet holding many cultural points of contiguity, instigates reflection and improvement. In the case of Borges, the level of acceptance was so deep that for decades his works became an obligatory reference in academy and culture, to the point that, even without having read his works, many people would feel the need to show that they had at least some knowledge about him by mentioning some of the most common places from his critique. Citations or mentions of Borges could be found in the most unexpected and diverse places or texts — which was a strategy that Borges himself taught since Pierre Menard, showing that the meaning and message and

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different defensive brief texts or opinions, like Eduardo Mallea, Pedro Henríquez Ureña, Eduardo González Lanuza, Adolfo Bioy Casares, Ernesto Sábato, etc.

<sup>124</sup> Cf. In both, *Storia della letteratura ispano-americana, passim* and *Recepción de la narrativa Hispanoamericana en Italia* (33).

therefore the work changes, if the context changes. This type of odd or *sui generis* uses of Borges' works, out of what we might consider its place (regardless of what that place might be in the cultural panorama), is exemplified by the case of Giovanni Arpino, a sports reporter, who particularly enjoyed citing Borges in the in climax of his narration in sport articles or forecasts, especially those dedicated to soccer and boxing<sup>125</sup>. Borges was used directly or indirectly in advertisements, most of them for books or cultural products<sup>126</sup>; in different theatre plays<sup>127</sup> or in cinema, even in works of very iconic directors like Bernardo Bertolucci<sup>128</sup>.

Borges had entered in the most different (and sometimes awkward ways) in the Italian cultural life. It was as if Borges were alive. It was not coincidental that Italy was the country that most fervently endorsed his candidacy for the Nobel prize (as we will later discuss in detail in section 6.4), and compensated the damage in the moments of discouragement when he was denied

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<sup>125</sup> See *La Stampa*: "Omar come una favola" (22 September 1971), "Pugni come se piovesse" (29 August 1972), "Pugni fra Monzon e Griffith, affari d'oro per Montecarlo" (2 June 1973), "Campionato Salvaci tu" (2 October 1974).

<sup>126</sup> See for example *La Stampa*, 27 May 1961, p. 3 and 27 May 1962, p. 3.

<sup>127</sup> *Il Vangelo secondo Borges* written by Domenico Porzio has its premier in theater on the 2 Feb 1970. The first days of 1972 there was a hybrid show made out of cinema and poetry recitation, speech and acting created by Franco Enriquez in Torino. In 1985 Carlo Repetti presents "Borges autoritratto del mondo" in the *Treatro Duse* in Genova, directed by Marco Sciacaluga; it is a mixture of fiction and biography.

<sup>128</sup> "La Strategia del ragno" is a free adaptation of Borges' short story "Tema del traditore e dell'eroe". See *La Stampa*, 19 August 1970 and 28 March 1973.

it. The Italian public even forgave or excused Borges' inflammatory political declarations that would bring him many negative critiques (which indeed may have contributed to keeping the Nobel prize out of Borges' reach), despite the generalized opinion of his merit deserving it. Even in his weakest moments, in general (but not exclusively) related to political declarations that were always controversial, Borges' public image in Italy remained practically unhurt and essentially unaffected. According to Dolores Maison, the reactions in Italy towards Borges' controversial political declarations went from an indulgent forgiveness, due to the undeniable validity of his works, to a more post-structuralizing stand, affirming categorically that literature should be separated from politics and Borges' value should be found exclusively in his literary works. Others formulated more condescending opinions simply limiting themselves to say that it was pointless to ask from Borges what he could not give (Maison 214). But not all of Borges' political declarations or actions were unpopular: Borges tended to be excused for unpopular declarations<sup>129</sup> and much celebrated for those that were popular, as for example his humanitarian causes. It was the case of the petition initiated in the Argentine newspaper *Clarín* that Borges signed publicly claiming justice and a search for the political *desaparecidos* during the dictatorship years in Italy. In one of the articles about this petition Borges is mentioned as "una mossa a sorpresa che ha

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<sup>129</sup> He was surprisingly excused for receiving a medal from the dictator Pinochet, for positive comments he made about the dictators Franco in Spain and Videla in Argentina, and even for not adhering immediately against repression and forced disappearances in Argentina.

suscitato sensazione” (*L’unità*, 19 August 1980)<sup>130</sup>. Italian society showed once again great benevolence with Borges.

#### 2.4. Italian and International Literary Prizes Given to Borges by Italians.

In Argentina the positive reaction and the recognition of the innovative *El jardín de senderos que se bifurcan* (later a part of *Ficciones* and *El Aleph*) would not be immediate. Indeed, Borges struggled to be recognized by the community of intellectuals in his own country. Undoubtedly, the first hints of recognition came only once he was denied the Municipal Prize for *El jardín de senderos que se bifurcan* (as I mentioned in section 6.3), as a compensatory reaction to the negative criticism. Borges suffered from the incomprehension of the great majority of the Argentine critics, still advocating prevalently for a more realistic style. Many of the awards and titles Borges obtained in the late 1940’s and the 1950’s are to a great extent the result of cultural pressure from the community of intellectuals surrounding the *Sur* magazine (headed by Victoria Ocampo), relentless to obtain for Borges some of the recognition that his innovative works merited. After a firm series of defenses of his works through articles in the *Sur* magazine,<sup>131</sup> Borges receives in 1944 from the *Sociedad Argentina de Escritores* (SADE; directed by Ezequiel Martínez

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<sup>130</sup> See also, *La Stampa*, “Borges: L’Argentina riveli gli elenchi degli scomparsi” (12 April 1981, p.4).

<sup>131</sup> The most important would be a whole number of the magazine dedicated to it under the name “Desagravio a Borges”, that we have already mentioned in the section 5.2, but the resistance and polemic would continue over time. See also *The Making of Jorge Luis Borges as an Argentine cultural icon* by Mariana Casale.

Estrada, Ocampo's good friend and collaborator of *Sur*<sup>132</sup>) the *Gran premio de honor*, that was most likely installed especially for Borges, as another form of amend or compensation. Borges then became president of the same SADE for the period of 1950–1953. In 1955 he was hired as director of the National Library and was made member of the Argentine Academy of Letters. In both nominations Victoria Ocampo had a decisive influence, which again reflected the opposition from certain Argentine cultural sectors to Borges, a resistance that will start giving up gradually after a series of important international recognitions abroad.

A thorough analysis of the third and most important part of Borges' acceptance in Italy (characterized by a recurrent physical presence of the author in that country) requires considering the series of prizes and media attention he received. This not only completely modifies the perception of Borges in Italy and in the world, but also exponentially increases the public interest in his works and persona. There is also an important reciprocal relationship, in which the author remains sensitive to the reception he has and maintains his work in constant revision and re-elaboration.

In an era of mass consumption, as James English made clear in his *Economy of Prestige*, that awards and prizes are extremely important instruments of cultural exchange, where prestige and power are tightly related. It involves an individual and collective investment in art (questions of recognition and illusion, belief and make-believe, desire and refusal) and in the logics of

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<sup>132</sup> Actually all the presidents of the S.A.D.E. from 1938 to 1946 (including Enrique Banchs, Eduardo Mallea and Mtz. Estrada) will be part of the same group of friends and collaborators of the *Sur* magazine. And Borges himself will become president of the SADE in the period 1950–1953.

exchange in the market of what has come to be called “cultural capital<sup>133</sup>” (3). Prizes are the single best instruments for negotiating transactions between cultural, economic, social and political capitals. They are our most effective institutional agents of capital inter-conversion to come to terms with the complex kind of transactions that they facilitate. In these transactions art and money are by no means the only stakes, nor are artists, capitalists and consumers the only significant players (12). The complex interplay involves both the recipient (in this case the multi-awarded Borges) and the awarders in a highly ritualized theater of gestures and counter-gestures (5). The administrators, judges, sponsors, artists, and other individuals involved in the awarding of prize are thus themselves to be understood as agents of inter-conversion. Each of them represents not one particular and pure form of capital, but a specific set of quite complex interests regarding the rules and opportunities for capital inter-conversion (11). Prizes are obviously bound in varying degrees with the business end of art, with the actual funding of cultural production and the traffic in cultural products. As such, after having won some of the most strategic literary awards, Borges was transformed from a practically unknown author abroad into one of the most celebrated writers worldwide.

In this subchapter I will briefly analyze some of the most important Italian prizes (or International prizes that are somehow still related to Italy) given to Borges as well as some of the cultural agents (either institutional or individual) involved with them. Additionally, I will identify some of their major interests at stake, the games, mechanisms and stratagems by means of which these interests are asserted, and the ultimate role such cultural assertions play in maintaining or altering the social or cultural distribution of power, which is to say their relative positions in the

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<sup>133</sup> For theory on cultural capital see Pierre Bourdieu’s “The forms of capital” (81-93).

different social groups or classes. Of course, we should take in consideration that all those prizes will be accompanied by a consequent mediatisation, which will affect the perception and reception of the author among the general public. A cultural prize reflects a sustained willingness, even an intensified obligation, on the part of journalists and others to accept the reported equivalency between cultural prizes and cultural value, perhaps the only legitimate measure of a person's cultural worth in a capitalistic world of mass consumption. Writers and artists prominently display their prizes and awards (every interview, publicity feature, Who's Who listing, grant application, promotion file, and dust-jacket blurb) in their professional lives, right down to that final and obligatory exhibition in the obituary page. It is almost as though winning a prize is the only truly news worthy thing a cultural worker can do, the one thing that really counts in a lifetime of cultural accomplishments that can't be otherwise reported or measured (21).

#### 2.4.1. The Watershed of Formentor

Since the first edition of Borges' works in Italian Calvino holds the important role of a cultural broker in favour of Borges, which was the starting point of a fundamental work that will bring beneficial results for the two of them. During the 1950 Calvino had embarked in a gradual process of transformation that will culminate in a new conception of literature and style that was clearly expressed in "Il midollo del leone" and "La sfida al labirinto" — two essays marked by a notable borgesian influence. Becoming gradually attached to Borges, Calvino was interested more than ever to reach a wider acceptance of the fictional, yet rational, type of literature they were proposing. Visionary as he was, Calvino managed to get real attention from the world for both Borges and himself, being one of the minds behind a most important and ambitious literary recognition-making event ever organized, a prize that many would consider even more important although less politicized than the Nobel prize: the *Prix International des Éditeurs* at Formentor.

It all started in the framework of international colloquiums of poetry and novels organized by Camilo José Cela in 1959.<sup>134</sup> The event was very unproductive from a literary standpoint because it came to a dead end in a series of discussions between two main factions: the neo-naturalists/neo-realists (whom according to Carlos Barral were the majority of the Spaniards) and a heterogeneous faction constituted by writers seeking different expressive paths (Barral 248). In that very debate Calvino was perceived as a great negotiator, or in Barral's words a dialectical *vedette*," maybe due to the transitional phase in his own career from a realistic style to a more inventive and fictional style. But, in reality, his major achievement as a negotiator was deployed when he paved the way for the creation of an international prize fully organized by publishers. Barral himself accepted Calvino's prominent role in the conception and negotiations leading to the first form to the prize and setting the board of publishing houses<sup>135</sup> taking part in the project:

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<sup>134</sup> The colloquium for poetry was from May 18 to 25, and the one for novel from May 26 to 28. Calvino would attend only the second one. The participants of the novel colloquium along with Calvino were Marguerite Duras, Michel Butor, Alain Robbe-Grillet, Elio Vittorini, Alberto Moravia, Henry Green, Doris Lessing, Angus Wilson, Max Frisch, Heinrich Böll, and William Saroyan — among the foreigners — and the Spaniards were Camilo José Cela, Miguel Delibes, Rafael Sánchez Ferlosio, Carmen Martín Gaité, Juan Goytisolo, Jesús López Pacheco, Mercedes Salisachs, Elena Quiroga, José Luis Castillo Puche, Carmen Laforet, and etc.

<sup>135</sup> The group of publishers by country apart from Seix-Barral would be formed by Gallimard (France), Einaudi (Italy), Rowohlt (Germany), Weidenfeld & Nicolson (England), McClelland & Stewart (Canada), Meulenhoff (Holand), Arcadia (Denmark), Otava (Finland), Bonnier (Sweden), and Gyldendal (Norway).

“fueron providenciales la presencia de Calvino y la inminencia de un viaje de vacaciones de Giulio Einaudi ya envenenado ... por la idea”. Borges did a two-fold work of convincing both Barral and his boss, Einaudi, and organizing a meeting so they could sit together and set the initial arrangements for the prize; it will be the start of a solid friendship. In any case, Calvino might have perceived that Carlos Barral, co-director and founder of the Seix-Barral publishing house, was an editor in need of international links and resources. During times of restriction due to Franco’s hold on power, Barral had to turn to someone with enough contacts in the industry in order to oxygenate the damaged field in Spain and to make an event of high flights viable. In the initial negotiations between Barral and Einaudi dichotomous perspectives arose: while Barral was more interested in the financial viability of the event, Einaudi was more in favour of maximizing the international public prestige that could be derived from awarding such prize. This difference will remain unresolved, and will be projected later in the meetings of the general council of publishers, once it was formed. The British and North American publishers were more interested in enlarging the revenues and economic benefits, while the Italian and the French wanted to be discoverers of new values and gain fame for such discoveries. This tension impacted upon the actual final decision concerning the prize: the Anglophones, taking no risks, supported an already consecrated writer that constitutes a secure profitable candidate (Samuel Beckett) while the Italians would propose Borges. The person in charge of giving the speech was Moravia, although he wasn’t the most passionate person about Borges’ candidacy for the prize. Calvino, however, according to the direct witness Barral, “Era el jefe natural de la delegación italiana, heredero de un Cesare Pavese que había sido la mitad literaria de Einaudi hasta su suicidio en el cincuenta y uno” (Barral 37, III). Moravia gave the speech simply because he was a collaborator and friend of Einaudi — he will

have the opportunity instead to exercise his influence in the decision of next year's recipient (1962), conferring the prize to his friend Dacia Maraini (Barral, 38-39, III).

In terms of fame, Formentor's enormous impulse to its awarded writers could only be compared with the Nobel Prize. It radically changed the life of many of the parts implicated. As an example, Barral will roll high<sup>136</sup> at the international level in the world of publishing (Barral 256) and will have great importance promoting Latin American authors; Camilo José Cela (despite the opposition of an important sector of the critics pointing to the scarce literary value of his works) will receive the Nobel prize. Calvino would have undisputed notoriety and would acquire relevance in the international arena, which was now more receptive and approving of the same style of literature that he was producing. Unquestionably, this prize changed the life of Borges more than anybody else's. After receiving the Formentor prize the editions of his works translated in many languages started to appear all over the world (although most intensely in Western world). In Italy, concretely, if the critique of Borges had been based until then mainly on the merits and characteristics of his works, from this moment on there will be a much greater interest in his persona that will foment a strong mediatization (with an abundance of interviews) and initiate the process of mythicization. The main Italian newspapers will start spreading the news and projecting the image of Borges, an echo reverberating what Revol had expressed in 1949. Calvino magnified

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<sup>136</sup> Carlos Barral confesses:

La idea del premio, la conversación con Einaudi, el acuerdo de Victor Seix [...] me lanzaron a una para mí vertiginosa y objetivamente desproporcionada actividad de [...] editor de grandes vuelos que me introdujo, de golpe, en los intestinos de la gran edición europea (256).

this image by presenting Borges in the general catalogue of Einaudi: “L’argentino Borges è forse lo scrittore fantastico più allucinato e grottesco dopo Kafka” (*Catalogo Generale* 74).

In the field of critics, the Formentor prize will generate questioning regarding the implications and viability of Borges’ prose and its possible applications and assimilation in Italy. Varese touches the central focus directly: "In questo momento Borges pone agli scrittori italiani un problema: come e fino a che punto l'immaginazione, la cultura, possano e debbano entrare nel tessuto narrativo". (Varese, p. 555) This will make way to a new diversification of the critic and new approaches according further value to Borges’ works. As mentions Maurice Blanchot in the 1967 edition of *Ficciones*, the significance of Borges in a social context that is growing in complexity consists precisely in the representation of the world in crisis and of life as a crossroad or a labyrinth. According to Santos Unamuno (and Blanchot), Borges influences a change of era, helping to overcome modernism and initiating a period of post-modernism (*Borges e Italo* 7), characterized by a greater liberty and combination of different elements in art.

#### 2.4.2. The Aftermath of Formentor: Sequels and the Involvement of Politics

After awarding the Formentor prize, an event of such magnitude with direct international repercussions, the immediate reaction of the Italian government was to capture part of the world’s attention bringing that recognition to the level of politics. Italy was the first nation to confer a governmental honorary decoration,<sup>137</sup> and it will trigger a series of similar recognitions from many

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<sup>137</sup> According to the own website “Ordine al merito della Repubblica Italiana” from the Quirinale, the decoration intended to:

different countries. Only a few months after the Formentor prize, Italy gave him the *Ordine di Commendatore*, skipping two ranks (*Cavaliere* and *Ufficiale*), which following the order of decorations should be given first and have a minimum of three years between one and the other. There are only two other higher ranks of decorations above the one of *Commendatore*, and both will be given later to Borges, the one of *Grande Ufficiale* (1967) and *Cavaliere di Gran Croce* (1984). However, given the official character of this initial decoration, the details about whom suggested the candidate and the process of decision-making being subject to secrecy, we only know that it was approved by the senate and directly handed by Giovanni Gronchi (the Italian president at that time) in an official visit he made to Argentina in 1961. In this occasion, Borges gave one of the most praising speeches about Italy (*Textos recuperados* 61, vol 3), where he expresses that no matter what we do, we all (in the Western side of the world) belong to Rome and inevitable are Roman, and in a similar way Dante *is* literature. Even without the confirmation of an official record documenting the process of decision making, it is clear that this title was awarded as a direct shimmering effect from the Formentor prize and that it originated from the same group of Einaudi. Indeed, during the negotiations to set the criteria of participation for the different publishers, Giulio Einaudi had been pushing to involucrate the political sphere (to render the event more flamboyant). Such a reaction is indeed easily presupposed from the son of the recently former

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Ricompensare benemerenze acquisite verso la Nazione nel campo delle lettere, delle arti, della economia e nel disimpegno di pubbliche cariche e di attività svolte a fini sociali, filantropici ed umanitari, nonché per lunghi e segnalati servizi nelle carriere civili e militari.

<http://www.quirinale.it/qrnw/onorificenze/desc/omri.htm>

president of the Italian Republic (from 1948 –1955), Luigi Einaudi,<sup>138</sup> who is considered one of the fathers of the Italian Republic, with many obviously strong bonds with the national political life still. From that point on, many of the prizes given to Borges in Italy (as in other parts of the world) will tend to be politicized. Even if the prizes in question seem to come from organizations apparently detached from the political world, the prizes per se always have a political character or in the least a political consequence. The following year, in 1962, France will follow the example set by Italians and will give the French equivalent of the decoration received in Italy, the *Commandeur de l'Ordre des Lettres et des Arts*, and England will follow with a similar distinction in 1965.

The next Italian prize Borges was awarded, in 1965, emulated the previous ones, maintaining a strong interconnection between politics and culture. Borges was granted the gold medal at the IX Prize of Poetry of the city of Florence, presented and sponsored jointly by the city of Florence the Dante Alighieri Society (pledged to promoting the Italian language in the world) and was delivered in person by the Italian ambassador in Argentina. A year later, once the Senate authorized the decision, Borges is awarded the Madonnina International prize from Milan,<sup>139</sup> once again, delivered in official instances. In the meanwhile, the publications of Borges' works in Italian were proliferating at an accelerated rhythm. The time between the publication of the originals in

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<sup>138</sup> In a strict order, Luigi Einaudi was the second president of the Italian Republic, although in reality the first one, Enrico de Nicola stayed less than 5 months in charge. Before becoming president, Einaudi had reconstituted with Benedetto Croce the Partito Liberale Italiano after the war.

<sup>139</sup> According to the information given in the website from the own Italian senate.

Argentina and the release of the translated version in Italian was getting shorter and shorter with time. Likewise, more and more editors were quarrelling for primacy over new publications, since no one held exclusive rights. Concurrently, the image of Borges was being increasingly mediatised and mythicized, associating him with the figure of the blind and wise poet (such as Homer or Milton) and making him the quasi pinnacle of western literature. A momentous contribution to his image is attributable to, on the one hand, the autobiography Borges wrote in the beginning of the 70's with the help of a Harvard academic (thus appealing to an Anglophone and international public) and on the other hand, the impressive number of interviews (that due to his blindness would become for him another literary subgenre) and the many anthologies that depurate and expurgate his works, as will be analysed in greater detail in Chapter 3 of this thesis. What's more, while the media coverage for the first awards was modest, the notoriety of these events was gradually accredited reaching the point that in the 70's the bulk of the most important written and televised media followed his achievements and actions.

The second half of the 60's and beginning of the 70's was characterized by conflicting movements and important political events in many parts of the world, namely the student movements and the Red Brigades in Italy and the dictatorship, political disappearances and Peronism in Argentina. Both scenarios encouraged the emergence and resurging of politically engaged, of a realist character, actively contextual. All the same, Borges' good reception in Italy, both in terms of the publication of his works as well as the favourable critiques, did not cease and was merely slowed by the increase in the lapse of time separating the successive prizes he was awarded. In reality, once that period was concluded, the celebration, acknowledgement and mediatisation of Borges resumed in an even more flamboyant and extravagant fashion, but from this point on in Italy.

### 2.4.3. First visit to Italy: exuberant popularity with political controversy

At the time of his first documented visit to Italy, Borges was an unstoppable cultural phenomenon of tremendous proportions. Franco María Ricci, an editor and fervent promoter of Borges in Italia since the 70's (they had met in person in 1973) organized the visit. Borges had spent some years in the United States where he had imparted certain chairs, mainly in Harvard and Texas University in Austin and started to write his autobiography. His arrival to Italy and the official visits to different cities had prompted great expectations, not only in the public, but also in critics and devoted artists, amongst the most prominent Sciascia and Calvino. Borges was on a tight schedule from Milan and Rome. He met Alberto Moravia (whom he knew personally since Formentor) and Montale (recipient of the Nobel Prize in 1975), Costanzo Costantini who interviewed him in many occasions<sup>140</sup> and assisted the welcoming cocktail Ricci offered in Borges' honour at the luxurious fur coat shop of the Fendi sisters, brimming with "signore impelliciate e indiamantate" as in a New Year's Eve celebration, ready to meet this quasi mythic figure:

La folla era andata crescendo a ritmo frenetico. Alle 21 c'era il Tout Roma degli anni Settanta [...]vecchie maitresse della letteratura, del cinema e del teatro, stars, starlets, scrittori e sedicenti [...] Gli si accalcavano addosso, lo strattonavano, gli insufflavano i loro fiati viscidì sul viso e sugli occhi, gli infilavano fogli, libri e penne fra le mani tremanti per averne autografi, gli facevano stringere mani sudate e ignote, lo costringevano ad alzarsi e risedersi, risedersi e alzarsi, lo toccavano, lo

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<sup>140</sup> Costanzo Costantini interviewed Borges at all the occasions he was awarded a major Italian prize in Italy. Many (but not all) of those interviews were compiled in a more organic format as a book that is known by few *Borges: Colloqui esclusivi con il grande scrittore argentino*.

baciavano, si inchinavano ai suoi *piedi*, mentre le lampade dei fotoreporters e degli operatori radiotelevisivi esplodevano senza tregua in quell'aria maleodorante e irrespirabile (Costantini 22).

In other terms, the welcoming and high expectation toward Borges exceeded by far any scene from Fellini's *Dolce vita* or any other reception organized for a Hollywood star (Costantini 23). Withal, the overflowing enthusiasm would be tarnished by the infallible leftist reporters from *L'Unità* questioning on the 10 May 1977 the motives of Borges' acceptance of the Gran Cruz de la orden al mérito Bernardo O'Higgins, bestowed by none other than the dictator Pinochet (23), and questioning him about the controversial declarations supporting the dictatorship in Chile in his acceptance speech (4):

In and of itself a dictatorship doesn't seem reprehensible; one has to consider the particular circumstances. In it themselves empires don't seem to be wrong. The Roman Empire and the British Empire did a lot of good . . . For a long time I believed in democracy. Now I don't believe in it; at least not in my own country. Perhaps in other countries democracy can be justified; but in the Republic of Argentina I don't think we can trust it . . . Democracy [is] an abuse of statistics . . . No one supposes that a majority of people can have valid opinions about literature or about mathematics, but it is believed that everyone can have valid opinions about politics, which is more delicate than the other disciplines... Yes, it seems that to destroy liberty is bad. But liberty lends itself to so many abuses. There are certain liberties, which constitute a form of impertinence<sup>141</sup>.

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<sup>141</sup> The translation was taken from <http://bostonreview.net/kovacs-borges-on-the-right>

Many share the opinion that it was this type of uncomfortable declarations<sup>142</sup> from Borges, not only about Pinochet's regime in Chile, but also about Franco's in Spain and the dictatorships in Uruguay and Argentina, (L'Unità, 10 May 1977, 4) that kept the Nobel Prize at bay, despite the unconditional support of Italy to his candidacy. Even in those cases, reporters would excuse him, saying "no sabe nada de política". In another front, the central position Borges occupies in the current literary field was noted due to his "capacità d'invenzione letteraria e capacità di espressione della angoscia e dell'assurdo dell'epoca" (L'Unità, 10 May 1977, 3). All these contradictory opinions are in part due to the fact that Borges knew how to address Italians and influence their opinion. For instance, he claimed that his first visit to Italy was in 1977, although there are indications that he had previously visited the country in his youth, as we mentioned before. Borges declares that his visit to Italy resonates as a return, not because he admits to have visited the country before, but rather because Rome is a myth of universal imagination: "ora che sono tornato posso dire *civis romanus sum*" (Costantini 40). In any case, whenever he would find himself in a difficult position due to this type of questioning, Borges would excuse himself by naïvely saying that he's interest in politics was limited as was his knowledge of the subject.

At any rate, if these unpopular statements had tarnished Borges' image, his comments in favour of human rights and demanding "true justice" and the search for political missing persons,

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<sup>142</sup> For a concise overview of Borges' controversial political declarations in their original context refer to Antonio Astorga's article on the 8 May 2007 in ABC España in an interview with the Oxford academic Edwin Williamson, author of one of Borges' biographies cited in the first chapter of this thesis.

perhaps as an effort to polish his image, will unleash a wave of glorification that would give the lowdown.<sup>143</sup>

The editor Franco Maria Ricci<sup>144</sup> felt a profound admiration for Borges and had such a harmonious relationship with him that he would not hold back in compliments, prizes or ostentatious editions of his works (as I will further explain in chapter 3). In a few occasions, he had precedence in the publication of some short texts or unpublished texts, whose publication would be delayed in Spanish.<sup>145</sup> In 1974, Ricci published an extremely luxurious edition of the text “Il Congresso del Mondo” printed with characters made of gold.

#### 2.4.4. Balzan Prize

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<sup>143</sup> See *L'unità*, the article “Borges firma un appello per i *desaparecidos*”, on the 19 August 1980 (12).

<sup>144</sup> The first time they met in person it was at the occasion of the publication of one of Borges' works, *Libro del cielo e dell'inferno*, in Italian, by Ricci. He would also be responsible of the publication of *Brume-Dei-Eroi* and *Racconti brevi e straordinari*.

<sup>145</sup> As we will see in Chapter 3 in more detail. It is the case of a rare luxury edition, in black silk, of three books *Finimondo*, *Il libro delle visioni*, and *Babilonia* (1992, but including the unpublished text “Torre di Babele”, written by Borges). It is also the case of an important collection Borges considered “his” classics called *La biblioteca di Babele*. This collection tells us a lot about Borges (as we will also see in the next chapter), both by the content as well as the prologues, written by Borges himself. There was also a Spanish edition, but the idea and the project were initiated in Italian and by Ricci's suggestion.

Once the period of political instability, student movements and Red Brigades in Italy was surpassed, as was the military dictatorship in Argentina (once Alfonsín became president) a new era of prizes and recognitions begins for Borges with all the pomp and uproar Italy can muster, converging of efforts and personalities of great importance in the cultural and/or panorama. As previously mentioned, Italians had been uplifting Borges' candidacy for the Nobel Prize since the 60's, and when this prize was discerned to the Italian Eugenio Montale in 1975, the endeavour becomes more obstinate, as it is unlikely that the prize will be awarded to candidates supported by the same country to ensure some sort of rotation. Indeed, Borges would appear every year in the shortlist of contenders for the Nobel Prize, but despite all the efforts and promotions a part of the judges, above all the one's partisans to a leftist ideology resisted to give him their vote, given his conservative position and inappropriate statements in the past, ignoring Borges attempts to make amends and compensate for some of his mistakes. In certain cases, he gave to the same reporter and on the topic, a statement at the antipode of what he had given in the past. This is the case of Costantini, when he was a reporter with *il Messaggero*. Costantini interviewed him in 1977 on the occasion of Borges' visit to Italy, and years later interviewed him again regarding the same topic, his political views and opinions on dictatorships. In 1977 Borges admitted going to Chile to accept his prize from Pinochet's hands in all awareness, because he loved that country and was convinced that dictatorship was a political regimen appropriate, given the state of anarchy the country was previously in (Costantini 23). Borges expands his argumentation, by saying that in countries with a high degree of anarchy, such as Chile or Uruguay, it was favourable to have such a regime (36). Speaking of Argentina, he admitted preferring a dictatorship to Peronism (for which he expressed great enmity), while also adding declarations in support of Franco's regime in Spain. The interviewer conceded his disconcert that after such strong affirmations (51) as being individualist,

anti-democratic, anti-peronist and anti-fascist (52), Borges simply said not having a good understanding of politics. However, in 1981, after signing the afore mentioned petition for the political missing persons in 1980, Borges answers a question of the same nature by pronouncing his opposition to all form of dictatorship including those of Napoleon, Hitler, Stalin and his ridiculous epigones in Latin-America. He goes further by saying that he strongly believes it is the duty of every writer to opposed dictatorships as they foment oppression, servility, cruelty and stupidity and adds he hops this will close the subject (61).

Borges being denied the Nobel Prize provoked a new wave of awards, as if to compensate for the lack of that highly prestigious prize. Each year, at the time of the unveiling of the Nobel Prize recipients, there notes in regretting that once more, Borges wasn't awarded the Nobel. The Balzan Prize is one of the compensatory prizes created by Italians for Borges.

The Balzan prize was granted to Borges most likely due to this award's rhetoric. It is a civil prize (it is not directly awarded by the state, although, as we will see, it somewhat interferes with its delivery) and it is the most important prize in Italy. Since it's creation, the Balzan wanted to resemble the Nobel, or at least an antechamber of the Nobel — for instance, Mother Theresa of Calcutta is awarded the Balzan prize for peace, before being granted the Nobel Prize for Peace. More than the size of the money-prize associated with the Balzan prize (similar to that of the Nobel), the general committee of judges from different nationalities (mainly European), or the categories of prizes (also similar to the ones of the Nobel Prize)<sup>146</sup>, it wanted at all cost to place

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<sup>146</sup> Coinciden en las categorías de literatura, física, medicina, y paz, aunque la categoría de química está integrada a la que en Balzan llaman *scienze naturali*. La única que no está considerada es economía.

itself above the Nobel Prize as a “prize of prizes” or a meta-prize (L’Unità, 7 March 1981). As such, the first Balzan ever awarded was to the Nobel Foundation (and soon after Pope John XXIII and also the ONU), getting across the message that they award other awarders and international judges, thus taking precedence over the rival prize. Many contenders for the Nobel Prize that weren’t awarded received a Balzan Prize. Indeed, this was the case of Borges. His international popularity was ever-growing, the vast majority of critics in the 80’s were favourable (including in Argentina, where Borges was re-evaluated and re-nationalized) and he was making amends with the public, revisiting and correcting his most controversial statements. The only thing that was missing was the Nobel Prize. For all those reasons Italy discerns the Balzan Prize to Borges, stating the official message to consider him “non solo il maggiore esponente della letteratura ibero-americana, ma una delle personalità di più alto rilievo della cultura letteraria mondiale”. In the same message there is also a veiled criticism, to the Nobel Foundation:

La libertà di pensiero e di espressione strenuamente professata da Borges lo resero invisibile ad alcune culture dominanti degli ultimi anni, per cui il suo atteggiamento di assoluta indipendenza e libertà spirituali è stato costantemente travisato fino ad appannare la sua stupenda figura di creatore di intelligenza.  
*(Fondazione)*

This edition of the Balzan prize drew more attention and visibility than some other years for different reasons. The image of the said “mostro sacro, mito intoccabile o scrittore oggetto di un culto che rasenta il delirio collettivo”, or simply “uno de los escritores más aclamados del siglo” (Costantini 49, 54) will unite with one of the dearest and most charismatic presidents of the Italian republic, Sandro Pertini, who handed the Balzan Prize to Borges. There are various political motivations in the backstage of the Balzan Prize. Pertini wanted to establish cordial international

relations with Argentina, not only because of the natural cultural links between the two countries, but also because Argentina was going through a period of economic difficulties in its process of political aperture once the dictatorship was over, implying great opportunities of investment for its socio-commercial partner, Italy. There was also an interest in restoring the prestige associated with the Balzan Prize following a time of scandal, corruption and embezzlement, forcing the president of the prize to step down. Now the conditions were suitable to rehabilitate the illustriousness of that prize.

It goes without saying that Borges stole the spotlight among the Balzan awardees in the year he received the prize (*L'Unità*, 6 March 1981, 3). Great personalities, such as Sciascia, will be present for the occasion (*L'Unità*, 7 March 1981). Borges had a famous encounter and a long dialogue with Moravia in presence of the press (*Il Corriere della Sera*, 10 March 1981, 2), recorded by Antonio Debenedetti, and a former collaborator of Calvino in *Il Corriere della Sera*. It is noteworthy that some of the judges were from the Einaudi group, as was the case of Carlo Bo. Bo was an Hispanist, also a former collaborator of Calvino in *Il Corriere della Sera* and a member of the Italian council of Einaudi (who suggested and supported Borges' candidacy for the Formentor prize), was now at the head of the general committee of the Balzan Prize (*L'Unità* 7 March 1981, 2) and in charge of deciding of the winners. Bo being a recognized Hispanist had studied the works of Borges and could not resist the appeal of participating in the exaltation and in the diffuse network of influences and propaganda of Borges, its focal point being Einaudi. Even though Borges wasn't completely aware of the political whispering surrounding the Balzan Prize, he is lucid enough to know that there is an artificial component in it all: "La fama non significa niente. Nel mio caso la fama la sta fabbricando lei con l'aiuto del suo fotografo, come fanno tanti altri".

The ceremony was on March 5, 1981. In the backstage he is questioned about the Nobel Prize he was denied, to which he answers, in Italian: “il non avermelo dato è una prova della saggezza scandinava”, but later he admits wanting it, maybe only out of vanity (Costantini 38). When asked if he is pleased to receive the Balzan prize, he answers: “è una prova della saggezza italiana”, and follows with declaration about Aristotle and Dante, two writers he admired all his life. Borges broadly divulged (45) the book of essays about Dante that was on the verge of being published, again flattering the Italian public and perpetuation his romance with Italy.

#### 2.4.5. Novecento Prize

Italy awarded Borges with the most prestigious prizes available in country, fiercely supported his candidacy to international prizes granted by other countries, but, more importantly, Italy custom made prizes for Borges. A great clamour (both in and outside of Italy), surrounded the international prize Novecento, a prize created by the publishing house of the same name under the omen of Fondazione Mormino and Banco de Sicilia (Il Corriere della Sera the 24 and 25 March 1984). A fundamental figure directly associated with the prize committee was Domenico Porzio, as can be seen in the special volume *La Rosa d'Oro. Prima edizione del Premio Novecento assegnato a Jorge Luis Borges*, edited by Ferdinando Scianna. By then, Porzio had already concluded the Italian annotated edition of Borges' complete works and was halfway through the process of editing the Italian version of *Atlas*, a book of memories of Borges' international visits to locations of great meaning to him, including obviously Venice as one of his favourite places.

The Novecento prize itself, the program of selection of the following recipients of the prize and the declaration of the purpose of that prize were all crafted with Borges in mind. The prize was to be awarded each year to a personality recognized in the international cultural sphere and whose work “abbia contribuito ad accrescere il patrimonio di conoscenza, sapienza e bellezza

dell'umanità" (Scianna 12; Repubblica 24 March 1984, 3). The prize consisted of a massive gold sculpture, weighting roughly half a kilogram, according to the sketch of the British artist William Morris. The choice of the Rose symbolises the universal wisdom and knowledge, by discerning Borges this prize Humanity is literally entrusting in him the responsibility of being its guardian, given his condition of living Homer, arcane of a boundless universal erudition. This is reflected in the speech of delivery of the prize, on March 24<sup>th</sup>, 1984.

Preceding the delivery of the Novecento prize, Borges was presented a *honoris causa* doctorate by the University of Palermo and accomplished some pre-established activities in the city<sup>147</sup>.

From Palermo Borges goes to Venice, where he participates<sup>148</sup> in the congress "Il secondo rinascimento. La finanza e la scienza", organized by the Fondazione Cini (*Una vita* 114).

As a direct consequence of the constant presence of Borges in Italy that year, especially in Palermo, he will also be awarded the prestigious international prize Mondello, based in Palermo and organized by the *Fondazione Sicilia*, to two of Borges' dearest friends, an endearing Argentine

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<sup>147</sup> Borges gave a conference in the University of Palermo, where he received a *honoris causa* doctorate, after which he was presented a copy of the Italian encyclopedia and two different editions of his beloved Aristotle. He visited the *Capella Palatina* as well as Greek monuments and gave another conference on Dante in the *Libreria Novecento* (*La Repubblica* 24 March 1984). Among other things he stresses to be happy to be precisely in Palermo, as he is native from another Palermo, the one in Buenos Aires.

<sup>148</sup> The complete conference appears in the Italian version of "Sognare e scrivere" in the book *Una vita di poesia* (*Una vita* 221–225).

and Borges' long-time friend Adolfo Bioy Casares and a more recent Italian friend, Italo Calvino. The link between these figures was so evident and common knowledge that the press treats it as such: "Dall'Argentina all'ombra di Borges: I premi Mondello a Calvino e Bioy Casares" (La Stampa 15 September 1984, 2). The Mondello for best foreign work goes to Bioy for his *Il lato dell'ombra e altre storie*, whereas the prize for best Italian work is given to Calvino, precisely for one his works with a strong borgesian influence, *Palomar*.

There are some important aspects around the prize Mondello in 1984. The key figures in the decisions leading to the awarding of these prizes were Leonardo Sciascia and two of the most reputed borgesian "seguaci entusiasti" intellectuals, according to Roberto Paoli. The selection of the Mondello awardees isn't trivial; it reflects the forging of a literary triangulation, on the making for over two decades. It is difficult to determine with exactitude the date the direct relationship between Borges and Calvino began, but it is certain that it was initiated by the triangulation with Borges' close friends Bioy Casares and Silvina Ocampo (Bioy's wife and sister of Victoria Ocampo, of the magazine *Sur*). Calvino developed a profound friendship with Silvina and Wilcock, the later because he resided in Italy and was one of his collaborators at Einaudi. Silvina and Calvino had an interesting exchange of correspondence, although it is unpublished and exclusive to the Calvino family and the next of kin the Bioy-Ocampo family (at the moment in litigation for the rights). Only a very small part of those letters were made public. Some appear in the books of *I libri degli altri*, which reports correspondence, regarding the Einaudi publishing house that Calvino maintained with various writers and public figures. Others were included as a part of Calvino's correspondence in the volume *Lettere 1940-1985*, present in the same collection Borges' complete works would be published: *I Meridiani*.

Precisely in the compilation *I libri degli altri*, we can see how Calvino agreed and made all the needed arrangements for the publication of Silvina Ocampo's work in Italy, including the introduction that Calvino himself wrote to the book *Porfiria* in 1973. At the same time, Wilcock would act as a natural bridge between Borges and Calvino, as Wilcock's early career in Argentina brought him close to young Borges and later Wilcock will work with Calvino, with Bioy's and Silvina's friendship in common. Indeed, while Borges was in Venice receiving the Novecento prize and visiting the city, Calvino was on the other side of the Atlantic as a special guest at the *Feria del Libro internacional de Buenos Aires* held at the beginning of April and visiting his wife Chichita's family. Chichita was an Argentine translator through whom Calvino learned and acquired very a good Spanish and important connections in the Argentine literary world.<sup>149</sup> In particular, he will develop a friendship with Julio Cortázar, who, as Calvino, had also spent a large part of his life in Paris.

Calvino's involvement with Latin America, his influence in Hispanic literature and his active participation in some of the most prestigious Latin American literary contests (e.g. *Casa de las Américas*) haven't been thoroughly studied. Grasping the true impact of this writer in those latitudes and understanding of the connection between both literary traditions (in reference to Italo-Argentina) represents such an endeavour that an independent study necessary to properly address these questions. For now, I will only point out Calvino's invaluable contribution in the promotion and success of Borges in Italy and the symbiotic character of this relationship, as it was fruitful for

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<sup>149</sup> It is through his relationship with Chichita that he became interested and came in contact with some emblematic "platense" figures, such as Juan Carlos Onetti and Julio Cortazar, but above all, with Borges, who interested and influenced him the most (Ribatti 93).

both authors. Indeed, this relationship will contribute to strategically place Calvino in his country's literature and internationally as well. Calvino is remembered for his borgesian literature with a sci-fi edge more than for his works closer to Realism. As such, for famous anthologists like Harold Bloom, who discuss western canon themes, Borges and Calvino are featured almost in tandem, with a similar literary typology and shared characteristics.

After the *Feria del libro en Argentina* (for Calvino) and the Congress on European identity (for Borges), Borges and Calvino are reunited in one of the most relevant events in the life of both writers, a milestone and climax of the long process of recognition a nation can give a foreign author.

#### 2.4.6. The Last and Highest Italian Homages to Borges

Since the 60's, invariably every year there was at least a note in the press or the televised media commenting the fact that, once again, Borges, who had since always the weight of Italy supporting him, wasn't awarded the Nobel Prize. There would be comments about the candidates (especially the Italians), the judges in favour or against Borges. Above all, there was an atmosphere of visible unease, frustration and indignation about the Nobel prize being discerned to someone who deserved it less than Borges and that even Borges used to criticize or to belittle some times<sup>150</sup>.

Despite Borges' declarations of false modesty and his apparent despise for fame and prizes, he seemed to withstand it all with great ease. His acts would contradict his sayings, but never to the point of becoming vain, remaining faithful to his moderate and circumspect personality.

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<sup>150</sup> Borges criticized many of the writers that had won the Nobel Prize in different interviews. From the many persons that he criticized and did think they deserve the prize we can mention: Gabriela Mistral and Pablo Neruda. But he also confirmed the merit of some of them like Montale.

In 1984, Italy decided to confer to Borges a collection of the highest honours a civilian could ever receive in that nation. It is extremely surprising that these honours were awarded as block and also that no event of this magnitude had ever been organized for any Italian or foreigner. Italy was clearly discerning a compensatory “Nobel italiano per Borges” (La Stampa 13 Octobre 1984, 2). From October 12<sup>th</sup> to the 17<sup>th</sup> succeeded in a extremely tight schedule for someone Borges’ age (at the time 85 years old) a series of events and homages of all kinds and in different venues.

The first day, he was symbolically received in the morning by the Italian president Pertini in the *Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei* founded in 1603 by Federico Cesi. The *Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei* is the oldest science academy in the world - counting among his associates the illustrious Galileo Galilei - and is nowadays the highest Italian cultural institution. The *Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei* and the *Quirinale* (one of the three official residencies of the president of the Italian republic) only receive the most outstanding figures and both had a reception for Borges during that same trip.

The following day, October 13<sup>th</sup>, Borges receives in the *Aula Magna* of the *Università La Sapienza de Roma* from the hands of the rector Antonio Ruberti the *Laurea Honoris causa*: “sono emozionato e commosso, la mia gratitudine è immensa” answers Borges (Costantini 70).

On October 16<sup>th</sup>, president Pertini welcomes Borges at the *Quirinale* in a friendly and unceremonious tone. Following an initial overall affectionate welcome address, Pertini salutes him by saying: “L’attendo con grande gioia al Quirinale il 16 ottobre”. Borges is Pertini’s guest of honour for lunch. Later that day, the president of the *Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei*, Giuseppe Montalenti, welcomes Borges and gives the floor to the president of the International Committee of Contemporary Society Studies Riccardo Campa, who speaks about the importance of Borges’

work and inaugurates, in homage to Borges, the “Curso de altos estudios sobre la cultura española y latinoamericana en el marco de la cultura europea y occidental” (Costantini 70).

In the last day of Borges’ trip, Calvino greets Borges with a memorable speech (which will be discussed in further detail) in the headquarters of the *Ministero della Pubblica Istruzione*. That same day, he is received in the *Istituto dell’Enciclopedia Italiana*, where Vincenzo Cappelletti offered to him as a gift the *Enciclopedia Dantesca* having in mind that Borges previously declared that in case of a world flood or Armageddon, the *Divina Commedia* and the Italian Encyclopaedia would be the two first things that he would save. Immediately after Borges said that if by chance they were to send a copy of the newly completed Virgilian Encyclopaedia to his house in Buenos Aires, he would certainly not send it back. (Costantini 71).

In his speech<sup>151</sup> Calvino emphasizes, in a precise and concise manner, the story “Ormai trentennale” of Borges’ *fortuna* in Italy. There are two levels in Calvino’s speech: on one hand he brings out the lessons learned and aspects he personally adopted from Borges’ works and on the other hand the importance of Borges’ influence in Italy at an adequate historical moment. Calvino details Borges’ contributions at a personal and national levels, cleverly putting them in context in a lapse of time that Calvino himself initiates and concludes as a cultural agent. Calvino starts with the publication of the book translated by Franco Lucentini in 1955 (selected, commissioned and published by Calvino himself), presents the very moment he is giving that speech (reminiscing on Borges’ overall accomplishments and achievements), as the culmination

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<sup>151</sup> From here forth, the quotations presented are from the speech that appears initially as an article under “I gomitoli di Jorge Luis”, in *La Repubblica*, 16 October 1984, then as “Jorge Luis Borges”, in *Perché leggere i classici*, and finally in *Saggi* (1293, vol. 1).

of that historic moment in which Borges, the architect of it all, reaps the fruits of such a long journey. In other words, Borges is given the highest recognitions he can aspire to get in his lifetime (since the Nobel keeps eluding him). Borges is presented that day with a printed copy of his complete works, containing all the texts he has ever written (and were approved) until then (1984), surpassing by far any Argentinian edition, including the one Borges himself scrupulously edited, emended and reedited, but only cover a period until 1973. The editor of this edition was his *fedelissimo amico* Domenico Porzio, also close to Calvino. Moreover, this will be the first annotated edition of Borges' complete works (later surpassed by the French version of Jean Pierre Bernès and more recently that of Rolando Picazo in Spanish), setting a precedent and placing Borges in a fair perspective, giving a more global image of the writer (not just the Europeanized version), emphasizing not only his prose, but also yielding a special place to his essays and poetry.

Regarding the comprehensive relationship of Borges with Italy, Calvino states that his editorial success is inseparable from his literary success. This very success is the product of a conjunction of very unusual factors in first his unmatched tribute:

[...] tributi d' ammirazione da parte di scrittori italiani anche i più lontani da lui come poética”, but also the evident “influenza che egli ha avuto sulla creazione letteraria italiana” and his contribution "sul gusto e sull' idea stessa di letteratura”, that would have as a result a positive criticism from everyone who was making a real effort to understand the “approfonditi approcci [della] definizione critica del suo mondo (*Perché* 267).

The value of Borges in the Italian context (from the 50's on) is that: “con la sua scrittura, Borges mira a organizzare il caos che regna nel mondo, come aveva fatto Paul Valery”, that is to say, unlike the schools or prevalent aesthetic tendencies, the borgesian proposal seeks to better

express the chaos that rules life. According to Calvino, Borges' influence struck a cord: "possiamo dire che molti di coloro che hanno scritto in questi ultimi vent' anni, a partire dagli appartenenti alla mia generazione, ne sono stati profondamente marcati". Afterwards he correlates that explanation and the various motivations to a foreign literary corpus to cause such an effect to the fact those works contain a great literary and philosophical legacy, the main reason being that Borges first represented:

[...] un' idea di letteratura come mondo costruito e governato dall' intelletto. E' questa un' idea controcorrente rispetto al corso principale della letteratura mondiale del nostro secolo, che tende invece nel senso opposto, cioè vuol darci l' equivalente del coacervo magmatico dell' esistenza, nel linguaggio, nel tessuto degli eventi, nell' esplorazione dell' inconscio (*Perché* 268).

However, there are antecedents (both at the Italian and international levels) of this type of tendency that points to a revenge of the rational mind over chaos in the world. At the international level there's the example of Paul Valéry, a prose writer and a thinker. Calvino accentuates the traceability of an Italian vocation since *Duecento* that glimpses at signs of common directions, to explain:

[...] come scoprire Borges sia stato per noi veder realizzata una potenzialità vagheggiata da sempre: veder prendere forma un mondo a immagine e somiglianza degli spazi dell' intelletto, abitato da uno zodiaco di segni che rispondono a una geometria implacabile" (*Perché* 269).

This tendency is associated with a brief and clear manner of writing, a style Calvino adopted for himself (and that will be further examined in this thesis), and which also prevails in Italian tradition:

“Mi limiterò a dire che la vera vocazione della letteratura italiana, come quella che custodisce i suoi valori nel verso o nella frase in cui ogni parola è insostituibile, si riconosce più nello scrivere breve che nello scrivere lungo” (*Perché* 268).

At a personal level, Calvino exposes several aspects, out of all the borgesian lessons, that influenced him in a more profound way. He describes this influence as a process and identifies a sequence of steps. The starting point was Borges as the storyteller of *Ficciones* and *El Aleph* with his singular style, followed Borges the essayist closely linked to the narrator and finally the poet with several different foundations of narration, thought and construction of ideas. As so many others, Calvino was attracted by the idea of literature as a world built and ruled by the intellect. But above all, his association with Borges is due to concrete and practical reasons linked to the *arte dello scrivere*, one of the first elements capturing his attention being the economy of expression:

Egli riesce a condensare in testi sempre di pochissime pagine una quantità d' informazione enorme, [cioè], fatti narrati o impliciti, suggestioni poetiche, e soprattutto idee. Come questa densità si realizzi senza la minima congestione, nel periodare più cristallino e sobrio e arioso... un linguaggio tutto precisione e concretezza, la cui inventiva si manifesta nella varietà dei ritmi, delle movenze sintattiche, degli aggettivi sempre inaspettati e sorprendenti, questo è il miracolo stilistico, senza uguali nella lingua spagnola, di cui solo Borges ha il segreto (*Perché* 270).

Inevitably, Calvino reminds us of the time Borges would say similar things to Alfonso Reyes, while searching for a new style that little by little would lead him to penetrate the secrets

in Dante that now have reached and surprised Calvino. Indeed, Borges discovered the source, thus the opening line about the historic Italian vocation since the *Duecento* and it is not a coincidence that Calvino closes the speech with a direct mention to Dante. Calvino points out that it is precisely due to this style that Borges was capable of building the image of the narrator he is now know and appreciated for and it is the same fundamental component that he identifies in the Italian literary tradition. By saying this, Calvino conveniently places himself as the culmination of this literary lineage.

Another aspect that fascinates Calvino is the osmosis and permeability between reality and literature, between what is written and what is experienced. It is important to stress that for Borges only the written word encompasses an ontological fulfilment and that things exist in the world as long as they reflect to written things. As discussed in section 5.8 Borges unveiled this from Dante, mainly from the part about Francesca and Paolo who discover love only through literature — has he refers and argues in *Nueve Ensayos Dantescos*. Moreover, Borges will couple this realization with Schopenhauer's theory (that he read in his young age), which in turn has contiguous points with Macedonio Hernández, another of his teachers and a friend from his school years. In this sense, the writer is obligatory committing plagiarism, appropriating and interrelating with new and unsuspected texts that already exist as well has texts that only potentially exist. The meaning of a written text changes according to the context in which it is. This is precisely what allows Borges, according to Calvino, to go from an essayist to a narrator. Calvino uses the example of “Acercamiento a Almotasim”, a text pretending to be an essay refers retrospectively to another text that supposedly exists, but that, in reality, doesn't. It is said that for certain period of time the existence of the alleged text was taken for sure, as it was alluded to be published in the magazine *Sur* only in a section normally dedicated to other types of assays, thus creating expectation in the

readers. Borges plays with pre-established agreement of plausibility between the reader and the writer in agreement with specific literary genres. Borges blurs the line between reality and fiction, experience and dream. According to Calvino, there is a process of borgesian continuity that goes: “tra avvenimenti storici, epos, trasfigurazione poetica, fortuna dei motivi poetici, e loro influenza sull' immaginario collettivo”. The power of the written word is entangled to the living as its origin and end. For Borges what counts is the written word, it's what has the highest impact on the imagination, as an emblematic conceptual figure to be remembered and recognized in any of its conditions and apparitions, past or future.

The dilemma of the participation and contamination of literature with reality goes hand in hand with Borges' predilection for the structure of *mise en abyme* or reverberation. Calvino reports Borges' invents:

[...] una letteratura elevata al quadrato e nello stesso tempo una letteratura come estrazione della radice quadrata di se stessa ...ogni suo testo raddoppia o moltiplica il proprio spazio attraverso altri libri d' una biblioteca immaginaria o reale, letture classiche o erudite o semplicemente inventate (*Perché* 268).

In this game of speculation, reality and fiction, Borges also plays with time and space, extending to infinity, replicating it, diverging it at will; time of co-presence, of eternity, of recurrence, of a rhizomatic structure to conform "una rete crescente e vertiginosa di tempi divergenti, convergenti e paralleli". Calvino underscores the treatment of time, which overall encapsulates the plurality and multiplicity of time in art (that once again Borges takes from Dante) and analyses in the character of the count Ugolino. In an ambiguous sentence the author doesn't clarify whether or not the count will eat his own children. This ambiguity is voluntary and wanted

by the author, it represents the time of art, it is a requisite and a condition of its existence as the duplicity itself must exist and is present in the metaphor that also fascinates Borges:

Nel tempo reale, nella storia, ogni volta che un uomo si trova di fronte diverse alternative, opta per una ed elimina e perde le altre; non così nell' ambiguo tempo dell' arte, che assomiglia a quello della speranza e dell' oblio. Amleto, in un tale tempo, è sano di mente ed è pazzo. Nelle tenebre della Torre della Fame, Ugolino divora e non divora le salme dei figli amati, e questa imprecisione ondeggiante, quest' incertezza è la strana materia di cui egli è fatto (*Perché* 271).

Globally, with all these elements (and many more) Borges breaks the linearity of the type of discourse and structure of the art that intends (because it is also a construction, an impression of linearity the polymorphic and chaotic reality lacks) to be realistic. Borges surprises the reader with these elements, or better yet the apparently infinite source from which emanate those elements; the author is engaged and implicated in these abysmal structures. This is how Borges dichotomizes with the vanguard notion of explosive literature in constant transgression that didn't surprise anymore. Borges opens a Pandora's box from which each one takes what he wants and will best serve him in this postmodern era.

Many of the components that configure the type of literature with a borgesian edge will be reviewed, summarized or expanded in *Perché leggere i classici* where there is a section dedicated to and his famous *Lezioni Americane* (or *Six Memos for the Next Millennium* in English), a group of conferences Calvino gave during his chair in Harvard University, the same chair his mentor, Borges, occupied years earlier. However, Calvino will never see the realization of that project as death surprises him before its completion.

## 2.5. Conclusions

Italy was the first foreign country to import and translate some of Borges' texts in the 1930s, as a by-product of the relationship and rich cultural exchanges due to the Italian migratory flux toward Argentina. Yet, during that period Borges will go practically unnoticed. It's only in the 1950s that the conditions allowing a more positive reception of Borges' works start falling into place. The first complete edition of one of Borges' books will only appear once the peak of activity of Neorealism passed, in the midst of economic boom after the reconstruction. The economic recovery, greatly due to the Marshall plan, fostered consumerism and led to a related bonanza in the editorial world now addressed to the masses and open to foreign influences and tendencies. Borges represents a viable third option to Neorealism and the avant-garde movements that seem to be waning, despite their recurrent reverberation (such is the case of *Gruppo 63*). Once passed the period of great social protests (typical of the 1960's) there was a period known as the end of ideologies where we can see the crisis of what Sartre calls *la culture de l'engagement*, and the crisis of the role of the socially committed artist according to Gramsci's model of the organic intellectual. This is a time of questioning the stand of literature in the changing environment of a society dedicated to consumerism and materialism. Borges' works tending to avoid references to an immediate social context or compromise fitted well and were catalogued as postmodernist and unlike the schools or prevalent aesthetic tendencies, the borgesian proposal seeks to better express the chaos that rules life where literature is a world built and ruled by intellect, that can be used as a sort of revenge of the rational mind over chaos in the world. There was a symbiotic relationship between Borges and Italy, in which Borges is a source of inspiration and creativity in a period where Italy was at a standstill in that area, while Italy acts like a trampoline propelling Borges' international career and fame.

The growing unopposed appreciation for Borges is owed in great part to a defined group of intellectuals, critics and writers influenced by Borges, Calvino being the preeminent member promoting him at different levels: by introducing him to Einaudi publishing house and encouraging Borges' first Italian edition and recommending him for high impact awards recognized internationally. Calvino's influence generated a shock wave with repercussions upon an increasingly broad public, both in and out of Italy. The Borges phenomenon escalated and other figures from the literary world attempted an undertaking similar to Calvino's, taking the spotlight participating as judges in prestigious awards conferred to the Argentine writer.

His complete success in Italy (and also internationally) is also in great part debited to the bestowal of a series of important prizes (tendency started by Calvino in Formentor) and the beginning of the mediatisation of his persona. Borges considerably expands his notoriety far beyond the academic or intellectual reduced circles (which account for his initial exposure and divulgation), to an enlarged general public (with or without direct knowledge of his works) mainly thanks to the many prestigious literary prizes he received and his constant participation in oral interviews in mass media (including RAI). In Italy he is awarded more prizes (which are the new mechanisms of masification of culture) than any other foreigner in that country, which inevitably results in further exposure of his works and in the mythicization of his persona. Consequently, Borges will be cited in many different and contrasting contexts, ranging from high academic and cultural circles to sports articles. The fact that Borges is cited in unexpected, unorthodox and controversial ways is in itself a borgesian action, although taken to extremes. Interestingly, in interviews, the interviewers will play at being more borgesian than Borges. As a result, Borges becomes a highly renowned figure in Italy, mentioned and cited (more than read) many times out of context in the popular culture as well as the academic one, he was an obligatory point of

reference. Concomitantly, the borgesian proposal encouraged new literary propositions until the present day, whose dimensions and impact in Italy haven't been rigorously addressed.

But international fame does not mean homogenous criticism everywhere. Following the publication of *Ficciones* and *El Aleph*, the appreciation of Borges' prose in Italy and in other countries (such as France, Germany and the United States) projects a biased or partial image of the writer. Notwithstanding, the scope of Borges' published works in Italy was broader and included other genres than prose as well as major and minor works. Furthermore, the critics of these works were diversified, encompassing many different (sometimes opposing) points of view and emphasizing a variety of aspects of Borges' works, thus promoting a more unified image of the author. The rhythm at which Borges' works were being published in Italy superseded any other country (including Borges' native Argentina), the best example being that the publication of his annotated complete works in Italian preceded any publication of the sort in Spanish.

After being awarded the Formentor prize and the subsequent wave of international prizes that followed, also the initially ambivalent reception Borges' work had in Argentina began to change, inevitably becoming agreeable, recognizing in Borges an emblem representing from that moment on national literature. Thus after, through a process of re-appropriation, celebrating primarily Borges' texts dealing with local themes, efforts were channelled to reattribute him the *argentinidad* from which he had been deprived in the international literary landscape. Conversely, in Italy Borges benefited from a better and more favourable reception than in any other country. To Borges advantage, this created a domino effect in the rest of the world (mainly, but not exclusively, in the western world) and traveled back to Argentina enhancing his recognition in his home country.

### 3. Chapter 3: The Presence and Repercussions of Italian Literature and Language in Borges' Work

#### 3.1. Introductory comments to Chapter 3

The two previous chapters have focused on Borges' Italian background. First, I have emphasised the important contribution of Borges' Italianised neighbourhood and, crucially, his encounters with Italian classics during his transition towards a more mature style, which led to his fame as a great writer of the fictional genre (Chapter 1). Additionally, I have explored Borges' time spent in Italy (Chapter 2) and the influence Borges exerted on an entire generation of writers and literary critics in a historic moment of creative crisis, and how this contributed to the launch of Borges' international career (Chapter 2). In this third chapter I will concentrate on the impact Italian literature had in Borges' work, as well as the influence and the repercussions of the Italian literary world and its publishing industry on Borges' career, or the borgesian corpus.

The approach to this chapter is, to some extent, circular. I shall start with an analysis of one of the final images of Borges: the image that he consciously constructs for posterity and towards which he deliberately guides his readers, the one contained in his *Autobiographical Notes* (1970). The end of the road will consist on the analysis of another of his final images, one less studied and projected in *Nueve ensayos dantescos* (1982). *Autobiographical Notes* and *Nueve ensayos dantescos* are two profoundly interrelated sources that at the same time are very contrasting. Therefore, it is necessary to corroborate which of those sources is more representative of the totality of Borges' works and the reason why that is so.

Firstly, there is the only autobiography, which can be identified as such (despite the large amount of biographic elements in all his work), directing readers to a very particular reading or interpretation of his literary works. Besides, there is his authorized work, which is highly

anthologized and selective, revised multiple times, modified and redacted to coincide with the author's self-made image and a specific literary style. These two complementary forces, mutually influential, cannot be avoided for any further reading or interpretation from the critics about Borges' life and work. Yet the relationship between the two is far from linear or easily interpreted, tending rather to complicate and make implementing any preconceived structure problematic. It evades simple categorisation due to the tendency to fragmentation and contradiction and systematically defies established genres. All of this leads to multiple interpretations to the work, which reject boundaries or a singular, definitive interpretation and, instead, vary given the context of interpretation, the interpreter, as well as the version or revision of the text being analysed. At times, to reduce contradictions, one is forced to seek a third source to explain many such ambiguities, juxtapositions, and contradictions: the author himself. The publication of *Nueve Ensayos Dantescos* towards the end of Borges' life is one such example, clarifying or deciphering many important stylistic aspects that were constant in his most notable works and the sort of literary genres which Borges generally defended. In other words, *Nueve Ensayos Dantescos* is a fundamental complementary source for elements not included or explained in the authorised works or the autobiography alone.

*Autobiographical Notes* is a text of significant breadth when compared to many other fictional and non-fictional biographical texts, notes and footnotes that can be found in Borges' works. In contrast to other smaller texts<sup>152</sup>, although defying the conventions of biography and

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<sup>152</sup> One need only refer to iconic texts such as "Borges y yo" (1957), "el Otro"(1972), the poems "1964" (1966), "Yo" (1973), among other writings wherein there is not only (auto)biography, but also a fun house mirror distortion of the figure of Borges.

autobiography — as in other examples of Borges' work<sup>153</sup> — Borges' *Autobiographical Notes* includes both self-appraisal and a well-crafted vision of his persona and his work at the pinnacle of fame, which he achieved near the end of his life. My discussion of *Autobiographical Notes* will not only pertain to the elements that connect Borges to Italian literature and culture, but also aspects of authorship and authority present in the text which stand in contrast to other periods of his life. I shall compare certain traits of authorship within the autobiography to earlier creative works as well as those seen within *Nueve Ensayos Dantescos* at the very end of his life.

Furthermore, I will make a brief journey through the various phases of Borges' work, emphasizing the most important amongst them and revisiting the way Borges created ties with Italian authors and Italian literature while starting to craft his own authorship. Borges consciously sculpted himself to conform to the legacy and the public image that he wished to leave behind. One would think that this legacy-building might be consistent with an elderly Borges reconciling the life he had lived with the works that he had written, but, in reality, it is a process that began surprisingly early, taking the form of (among other things) a reactionary attitude toward the reception of his work. Over time, this led to an incessant Sisyphean labour of editing, re-editing, and the creation of paratexts, a sort of marginalia, that was continuous until the end of Borges' life. In order to probe the construction process for the most Italian aspects of Borges, I will examine various elements from the different anthologies, prologues, editions and re-editions and,

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<sup>153</sup> This, as well as other themes, will be discussed later. However, challenging genres is always at the fore in Borges' works. In particular, the biography, although written in the first person, was written under the direction of Thomas di Giovanni, which implies a certain degree of interference or participation.

particularly, the amendments and revisions that are indicative of the remodelling of his image. Of these anthologies and collections of works or prologues, I will review the ones that were written in collaboration with Italian editors, and dissect the different facets and important details within the general framework of Borges' literary legacy.

Given Borges' enduring interest in Dante, as already mentioned in Chapter 1, there is a brief section in this chapter which outlines *Dantesque* content appropriated by Borges or adopted into his work, but which differs from Chapter 1 in that it analyses stages in this process at different points in his career. This will be done through anthologies published towards the beginning or end of distinct creative phases. This brief exploration of the use of motifs and content from Dante over a larger period of time will provide context for the type of authority and authorship which Borges demonstrates in *Nueve Ensayos Dantescos* in later years.

Finally, I will conclude this chapter with an analysis of the most famous text linking Borges to the Italian world: *Nueve Ensayos Dantescos*. Published at the end of Borges' life, this text is not only a reflection of knowledge assembled though out his life, but, as I mentioned, also the assertion of his position in terms of concepts of authorship, literary authority, and canon. This is of significance particularly with respect to the vision of Dante, considered the greatest Classical author of universal literature (and of the classics in general) and how Borges positioned himself as a Classic and the heir of a Universalist literary tradition. These elements will be compared and contrasted with the previous dissection of the image Borges projected of his persona and his works in *Autobiographical Notes*.

The chapter has been organized in the manner described above for a variety of reasons. Here, I will outline my reasoning.

Firstly, I consider it is important to start from Borges' autobiographical text, as it represents the attributes he publicly or more loudly celebrated in his own work. Moreover, it provides a sort of guideline to the reading of the corpus of his work, which indeed coincides with the main lines of interpretation that borgesian critics have put forth thus far. One could argue that these patterns of analysis suggested by Borges himself may have limited the range of interpretive possibilities of his works. Perhaps the general lack of recognition or disinterest in the reciprocal connections between Borges' work and Italian literature and culture can be attributed to paths of interpretation laid in his autobiography.

It is important to bear in mind that Borges had demonstrated throughout his life a wide scope of interests that are reflected in his literary production, which passed through various distinct and contrasting creative phases as well. It is noteworthy that his autobiography celebrates a very concrete type of literature and a style chosen amongst many others, many of which he had truly adopted through his career (although he is reluctant to show the real sources) importantly the style that was most productive and led him to fame and worldwide recognition. At the same time, however, this period also corresponds to a definitive shift towards the Anglophone cultural milieu.

Once the poetic manifest underlying Borges' autobiography is discussed (and the type of literature, style and writer with which he wants to be identified for posterity is brought to light), it is also pertinent to compare, if only briefly, the characteristics of Borges' multiple creative phases in terms of the links established with Italian literature and culture. I am particularly interested in highlighting the way that Italian material is brought into his work as his interests and direction changed or evolved with time. Some of the authors and references that Borges would favour, as well as those he shied away from are intimately related to certain milestones in his career, his

interests at a given time, which also applied to Italian works and authors, and the type of works he produced.

In this regard, there are some exceptional cases of authors, as is the case of Dante, which would interest and accompany Borges for most part of his life, as opposed to being part of a fleeting interest corresponding to a phase of his life and work. Nevertheless, within Dante's work, mainly (although not exclusively) within the *Divina Commedia*, the aspects in which Borges shows interest also change with time or evolve. The anthologies, specifically the Italian anthologies compiled by Borges himself, are of importance in this journey. Likewise, prologues written by Borges also reveal his readings and interests through his creative phases. It also goes hand in hand with the interminable process of revision Borges undertakes of his own work, to which testify the many revised editions of his works and his complete (although incomplete) works. In each of Borges' creative phases, he embraces and discards different literary elements drawn from the Italian world and shown interest and some authors to the detriment of others. Of these, I will stress the elements that transpire in the more definitive image Borges projects of himself.

It is not trivial that I decide to take on a deeper analysis of *Nueve Ensayos Dantescos* at the end of the thesis. Although the contribution of Borges to the universe of dantesque critic is of limited relevance, it is nonetheless revealing of the crucial elements that he admires and adopts from the writer he considers to be the greatest in the Occident. Other aspects of interest in *Nueve Ensayos Dantescos* are his vision of the classics, as he aspires to become one, and the constant reconfiguration of tradition as a living and changing entity, importantly one that can be influenced. All these elements are directly related to his own construction and practice of authorship, however conscious and adapted to the distinct historic concept in which Borges lives.

### 3.2. Borges' autobiography: The self-made man

Given the complexity and extent of Borges' work, it seems logic and natural to start from what Borges himself avows and recognizes (at least for a given period) as his own contribution to literature, or, at any rate, what he wished to include as part of his legacy, his own (declared) perception of his journey and literary growth, and along it what ties he considers to have to the Italian world. The first step in accomplishing such task is an analysis of Borges' autobiography.

Since the critic's role is, above all, to analyse and evaluate an author and his work's worth with respect to the work of others, one must first, with a critical eye and not a passive one, look to what the author says about himself and the merits of his own work. This functions as a key-reading authorized by the author, but only as starting point. Nevertheless, such an endeavour is not exempt of risks of compromising the critic's objectivity, as the author leaves a distinct impression with the reader, and creates a certain spellbinding effect that may distort critical study and bias opinions. This is why it is of paramount importance for the critic to explore a variety of interpretive angles, which will allow the highest degree of objectivity, and identify or reveal the author's ploys and ruses, the reasons why he suggests a certain reading or interpretation of his own texts, the context (s) in which he places his own work, the games of seducing and persuasion laid in his work, and the possibilities of interpretation present in the way his work is constructed.

Instead of questioning a work from distinct and original angles, it seems that most critic falls along the lines of the same reading keys, in part predetermined by the skilful author, and followed by previous critics. As a result, there are scant works of innovative critique, and a great deal of repetition and of rehashing more of the same. This serves only to exhaust common points of interest and emphasising and reiterating *Borgesian* qualities and attributes that are ever-celebrated, without necessarily being characteristics present through all of his work.

Borges published his autobiography on September 19, 1970 in the well-known magazine *The New Yorker*<sup>154</sup> under the title *Autobiographical Notes*. However, there are many aspects of this publication that stand out at first glance and deserve to be mentioned from the beginning. In brief, it was written even if Borges had repeatedly criticised the genre on numerous occasions, it was not written in Spanish but in English and it was in collaboration with a Harvard academic. Before entering into an analysis of Borges' position on authorship, the literary genres he promoted, or the specific reading of his work, which he proposed, it is necessary to explore some anomalies, which may have impacted these aspects of the autobiography. In fact, none of these abnormalities or oddities are without their problems with respect to authorship, the subversion of the autobiographical genre, and the literary genre which he promoted, as well as the particular interpretation or perspective which he applied to his work in the autobiography. Each of these elements merits analysis.

First and foremost, the fact itself that Borges wrote his autobiography is meaningful, as this is a genre that he consistently criticized, above all for considering it distanced from the work of the author in question. For Borges the work has more weight than the author himself. In one of his many critics on the subject he said:

[...] en 1943 lo paradójico es una biografía de Miguel Angel [Michelangelo Buonarroti] que tolere alguna mención de las obras de Miguel Angel (OC 107, vol. II).

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<sup>154</sup> Issue of September 19, 1970.

In the first biographical text that he wrote, about the poet Evaristo Carriego, Borges opens the second chapter, “Una vida de Evaristo Carriego”, by stating, paradoxically, that it is impossible to write a biography.<sup>155</sup>

For Borges, among the many reasons that support the impossibility of writing a biography or autobiography, and that underlay his critic of the genre, are summarized by Lefere according to their nature: the philosophical argument (“La nadería del yo, y la autorreferencialidad del lenguaje”), the ethical argument (“la vanidad del egotismo”), and the esthetical argument (“el culto de la creación pura, contra cualquier forma de realismo”) (Lefere 181). As a matter of fact it was the only<sup>156</sup> autobiographical text of considerable size (published as a standalone work, and not

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<sup>155</sup> This statement is remarkably well-known and much cited: “Que un individuo quiera despertar en otro individuo recuerdos que no pertenecieron más que a un tercero, es una paradoja evidente. Ejecutar con despreocupación esa paradoja, es la inocente voluntad de toda biografía. Creo también que el haberlo conocido a Carriego no rectifica en este caso particular la dificultad del propósito. Poseo recuerdos de Carriego: recuerdos de recuerdos de otros recuerdos, cuyas mínimas desviaciones originales habrán oscuramente crecido, en cada nuevo ensayo”. Cf. (OC 222, Vol. 1)

<sup>156</sup> There were other brief autobiographies, two early on; one in an anthology of modern poetry published in 1926, another in *Martín Fierro*, a Nationalist periodical, in 1927. Three others were published shortly following his full-length official autobiography; one in Sara Facio and Alicia d’Amico’s book in 1973, another in *Diario de La Nación* also in 1973, and in an homage special edition to Borges on December 30, 1973. Last but not least, an interesting fictional biographical note composed in 1974 as an epilogue, which uses the device of being written 100 later in 2074 to create a strategic parody as the last collection of his complete works. For more about the use of

interweaved in works of fiction) that aims to directly and explicitly allude to Borges' own career and life, given that the autobiographical epigraph in the 1976 collection of his complete works was, in essence, a parody. Many other biographical texts, including both prose and poetry, are heavily fictionalised — whether within a fictitious narrative setting, or through a doubling or multiplication of his persona. In the autobiography, however, he alludes to his personal life and experiences directly, apparently without fictional elements, in the first person; or, at the very least, he attempts to create that effect. As Borges has definitively denounced the impossibility of the biographical genre in the past, it is vital to first analyze his plausible motives for writing an autobiography and the particular characteristics or effects that are achieved therein.

Another aspect which is important to highlight is that, despite the fact that Borges mostly writes in the Spanish language, *Autobiographical Notes* is one of a few, select texts written and published in English. Moreover, Borges prevented the publication of *Autobiographical Notes* in Spanish for several years. When a Spanish translation was finally published in 1974 in the daily *La Opinión*, it would be a poor, cut, highly-redacted version that, curiously, would not be replaced until 1999 by a complete translation in Spanish published by the Ateneo publishing house. Given the popularity of Borges' texts in Italy, and the eagerness of this country in attempting to publish Borges' work before any other European nation, the first translation of his autobiography was published in Italy in 1971. The fact that it was originally written in English is not coincidental, and

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biographical content in Borges' work, see also the celebrated book *Borges, Entre Autorretrato Y Automitografía* and the recent article “La biografía según Borges” (América, 2011, pp 83-98) by Robin Lefere. In relation to biographical content in Borges' work, see Alfredo Estenoz's book, *Los límites del texto* (2013).

it goes hand-in-hand with his collaboration with Norman Thomas di Giovanni. In his book, *The Lesson of the Master*, di Giovanni reveals crucial information about their time writing of the book together as well as other works by Borges, which he translated and the motivations behind its publication.

*Autobiographical Notes* is notable not only for its intentional original publication in only English, but also because it was written in concert with a Harvard academic,<sup>157</sup> di Giovanni. This collaboration was strategically scheduled, following a famous series of lectures<sup>158</sup>, which took place at Harvard and other universities<sup>159</sup> and a couple of successful translations, which they had created in close collaboration and had resulted not only in a great reception from the general public but a deepening relationship between the two.

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<sup>157</sup> It does not seem to be a passive dictation or edition by the maestro, as Borges himself declares, he was always very insecure and easily influenced. To understand the active role as the degree of di Giovanni's influence in Borges' autobiography, see the interview by Marcelo Damiani in *La Capital* of June 24, 2001 and the book by Giovanni, *La lección del maestro*.

<sup>158</sup> The Charles Eliot Norton lectures, now publish with the title *Borges: this craft of Verse*.

<sup>159</sup> The Formentor Prize (international publisher's award) in 1961 would ensure that his works were published simultaneously all around the world and he was invited to lecture at the University of Texas in the same year. Following the lectures at Harvard, between 1967–1968, he was a visiting professor at the University of Oklahoma in 1969, where he gave a conference that can be considered the starting point of his autobiography, with his translator, secretary, transcriptionist, and Harvard scholar di Giovanni.

Given that the autobiography was written in joint collaboration, it is necessary to analyze the level of participation or responsibility to understand the extent to which it can be taken as a solo or joint plan to build authority and stress certain type of authorship in order to have a calculated impact in the critics and general public of the autobiography.

According to di Giovanni himself in *The Lesson of the Master*, there were two important pragmatic motivations for its creation, despite Borges' past criticism of the genre. One was a question of publication; "[the autobiography] was written for an immediate editorial consideration that had nothing to do with a private inner compulsión" (142). The other motivation had to do with the reception of his work; "[the autobiography] would serve as a setting for the work" (143).

I will begin with an analysis of the publishing situation surrounding Borges' entry into the English publishing market. Unlike in other countries, where Borges had already been widely published both before and after the Formentor Prize, in the USA his work was stuck, it was not being published for legal reasons. The English-language publishing houses with the rights to his works printed only select texts in anthologies and would not cede or share rights to another publishing house. They would not even allow Borges to translate his work with the aid of di Giovanni. By the late 1960s, there were very few publications in English,<sup>160</sup> all following the Formentor Prize, and many were in anthologies rather than as complete works. *El Aleph*, Borges' most important work, remained un-translated. This stands in sharp contrast with what was

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<sup>160</sup> The books published up to 1970 in the USA were: *Labyrinths* in 1962 (which was not a complete translated book in itself, but an introductory collection of selected writings); *Ficciones* in 1962; *Dreamtigers* in 1964 (in Spanish, *El Hacedor*), *Other Inquisitions* in 1964; *Personal Anthology* in 1967; and *Book of Imaginary Beings* in 1969.

happening in Italy, which followed all Spanish publications closely. At the time the autobiography was being written, nearly all of Borges' books<sup>161</sup> had been translated and published in Italy (See Appendix 3), except for three early collections of essays which Borges himself had refused to publish. In the words of di Giovanni, "Borges was now increasingly eager to provide an English-speaking readership with some of his best older stories in the versions that we were then making<sup>162</sup> and that were receiving acclaim in the pages of *The New Yorker* magazine" (142). Di Giovanni advised Borges to write something new in order to circumvent his current publishing situation and, evidently in a culture where the cult of personality dominates the publishing networks, he opted to write a brief version of his life story to arouse the curiosity or interest of potential readership. This brings us in line with the second motivation leading to the production of the autobiography. The need for additional information about the author and his work was clear, as his audience knew next to nothing about him and either did not understand or misinterpreted his work: "the great excitement and interest which readers showed in his work were often accompanied by an equally great misunderstanding and bewilderment" (143). In this way, the autobiography was designed in such a way as to dictate a particular reading of Borges' work, at least for this new readership. "A simple history of his life — one that would serve as a setting for the work would help English-speaking readers grasp Borges' enigmatic tales..." (143). For all intents and purposes, this strategy would seem to have worked as the publication was a great success, Borges' fame in the USA

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<sup>161</sup> The first three books of poetry had not been published in their entirety, but Einaudi published them in anthology under the title *Carme presunto*, which included poems from 1923 to 1958.

<sup>162</sup> This refers to poems and short stories, which were published starting November 2, 1968 as "The Other Death", from the original "La otra muerte".

skyrocketed, the publishing issues seemed to be practically resolved and more English publications would be released on a regular basis. Shortly after this, he would begin to receive prizes and special honours<sup>163</sup> in the USA, as had been the case in other countries — above all Argentina and Italy.

Another confirmation that the autobiography was written with the intention of defining or dictating a specific interpretation of Borges' writing is the fact that, following its highly successful publication in *The New Yorker*, a definitive version would then be published as a book accompanied by some of Borges' most famous texts<sup>164</sup>, including *El Aleph*. In addition, the book includes a final section of brief commentaries and literary critique of each short story. This would appear to have been introduced or suggested by di Giovanni, as his name appears in the subtitle, "Commentaries: with Norman Thomas di Giovanni", and while this implies that Borges wrote this section in collaboration (or di Giovanni did it), the narratives are written in the first person: "when I wrote my story..."; "I placed it...as I could imagine" (263), serving to complicate the question of authorship. Another aspect worth noting is that the version of the autobiography published in this book is accompanied by the text "Borges y yo", which makes its reading more problematic and engages the reader in a game of Borges' doubles, divided between the historical Borges and the literary Borges. This would suggest that there are, at least, two paths for the interpretation of

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<sup>163</sup> In 1971, one year after the publication the autobiography, Borges would receive honorary doctorates from Columbia and Yale Universities, as well as another from Michigan University in 1972, and Harvard in 1981.

<sup>164</sup> It is clear that the majority are taken from the book *El Aleph* (7) and *Ficciones* (2), but they also include texts from *El Hacedor* (3) and *El informe Brodie* (2).

the book; one in the context of the autobiography (the historical “I”) and the other less restricted, subverting it.

It is, furthermore, important to examine the level to which di Giovanni was involved in the writing of the autobiography. Based on what di Giovanni has stated various times, there is an erroneous impression that he played a role equal to Borges in the writing of the text and that di Giovanni himself took on a creative role similar to that of Bioy Casares<sup>165</sup>, Borges’ best friend, or, even worse, that Borges was no more than a sort of *nom de plume* for di Giovanni:

Borges must have been one of the most guided people who ever lived...

Among his guides — to mention only a few — had been his mother, his friend Adolfo Bioy Casares, his housemaid Fanny Uveda, María Kodama, and, for several years, me (Di Giovanni 154).

These statements, however, seem to be vastly exaggerated, perhaps in order to make di Giovanni seem more important and give him greater credit. Di Giovanni takes great pains to make it clear that his role was much more than a “secretary functioning as [transcribing] machine” (146). In any case, as a secretary he displayed great proficiency and competence, not only as a translator but as an agent, promoting Borges’ work in strategical spheres and making important connections to increase his fame and propagate or spread his work. In some ways, di Giovanni took on a similar

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<sup>165</sup> On this matter di Giovanni states: “Asked on one occasion about how he operated with Bioy, Borges said: <<...we do not think of ourselves as two friends or even two writers; we just try to evolve a story. When somebody asks me, *Did that sentence come from your side of the table or the other?* I can’t tell him>>. He went on to say that he and I worked in the same spirit; and we did” (146-147). It is, obviously, impossible to prove the veracity of this statement.

role than Calvino's in Italy, although to a lesser extent, and develop Borges' place in Anglophone academic circles. Di Giovanni describes the working process in detail, not only for the translations but also for the writing of the autobiography. Since Borges was very fluent in English ("he spoke very fine English...Borges' English was better than that of his translations") (164), and was a very competent translator<sup>166</sup> himself, he was involved in the process of writing and translating, line for line: "we proceeded slowly, shaping our sentences aloud before anything was recorded on the page" (147). This demonstrates that Borges dictated all of the content of the autobiography, and even supervised the translation, but that he kept in mind di Giovanni's expertise in adapting it for an Anglophone publishing market. As di Giovanni puts it: "I did not know enough the Argentine to translate any of his stories on my own, so would only try my hand at it if he would help" (165); "I needed a full understanding not only of the text but also of Borges' intentions" (167). This served to ensure that the text would achieve a surprisingly high level of fidelity to the original:

When we finished, I saw that what we had achieved was truer to the original tone and meaning and complex intentions of the author than any other translation of his into English until then" (165).

Di Giovanni's greatest contribution to the autobiography was allowing Borges to focus on content that would let his personality shine and greatly emphasising Borges' Anglophone background and interest in Anglophone literature above all others. This is clear in the content, with a great deal of Anglophone elements and motifs taken from his anthologies and works written in the 1970s. Di Giovanni very clearly makes reference to (145) an entire itinerary of the Anglophone

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<sup>166</sup> Cf. Sergio Waisman and Marcelo Cohen. *Borges y La Traducción: La Irreverencia De La Periferia*.

world which becomes the focal point of Borges' autobiography. This would also determine the text's structure to support the following assertions: "the difficulty would be in helping to guide Borges away from the pitfalls of extemporaneous speech to a finished, structured piece of writing" (143); "before writing a word we talked over a scheme" (144). It was, however, Borges' decision to avoid talking about his private life entirely, especially about women, even his wife Elsa (145), and to write exclusively about his literary persona; Borges=literature. This led to the fabrication and distortion of facts in order to conform to the idealised image of this literary Borges. Di Giovanni indicates that he was aware of some historical inaccuracies (149–150), even without knowledge of contemporary Argentina, but that he chose to respect Borges' choice: "Borges had made the story up. I said nothing. It was funny, and if this was the way he wanted to tell it — that was fine with me. It was, as he said, his life" (149). Because of this, it is an autobiography lacking in dates, similar to Borges' biography of Carriego, which only deals with literary questions. All in all, although di Giovanni was an excellent translator and mediator for Borges' entry into the Anglophone world, he was working contrary to Borges' goals. On the one hand, di Giovanni was attempting to promote Borges for his individuality and literary genius, as a product of Romanticism, whereas Borges was trying to avoid that:

It was not until ten or twelve years later, when I was translating the book *Evaristo Carriego*, that I at last began to understand Borges' reservations...trying to write about a man's essence, or eternity, by means of a timeless description that would eschew any manner of a chronological account (151).

At the same time, it must be acknowledged that while di Giovanni at least partially contributed to slanting the autobiography towards Anglophone markets and individualism — characteristics that are apparent, although the text is much more complex. Borges consented to

this, although it would affect his literary production. This effect will later be explored further, in both his anthologies and other writing during this period, which show a greater use of Anglophone themes and references, while Italian motifs are also greatly affected, nearly disappearing. Additionally, this new tendency seems to have been embraced by Borges, at least temporarily, as there would not be later modifications to the autobiography, despite his usual obsession with revision to and changing his work to accentuate fragmentation or evolution.

However, the text cannot avoid being, to some extent, contradictory with respect to the rest of his work. It is peculiar that Borges would dictate or impose a specific reading of his work in such an open manner when one considers that he himself had promoted the liberation of the text from a singular context and pre-established interpretations. He was also a detractor<sup>167</sup> of socially-engaged literature<sup>168</sup> and limiting literary context to biography. Whatever the case may be, the autobiography would have a profound effect on his readership and literary critics in general, far beyond the North American academic circles to which it had been targeted. This strategy does not appear to have been a contingency, as di Giovanni asserts, to grant Borges entry into a specific public or to allow for a better, or more correct, reading of his work. The autobiography remains until now the main reason why Italian literary criticism has been very timidly developed around Borges' work, very few scholars have considered its relevance. Therefore, it is vital to identify the central values, even stereotypes that the autobiography has generated. These, in turn, affect the

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<sup>167</sup> Although Borges had made early inroads into this literary genre, one must not forget poetic juvenilia such as "Rusia" and "Salmos rojos", among others.

<sup>168</sup> Evidence of this can be found in the following statement: "Eso de la literatura comprometida me suena lo mismo que equitación protestante". *American Hispanist*, Vol. 11, num. 12, Nov. 19.

overall body of work even when such exaggerated characteristics of his personal history and Anglophone roots directly contradict the spirit of his complete works.

Many questions remain for English-language literary critics, as well. It is debatable whether Borges wrote the biography in order to position himself in the Anglophone literary world, which was dominant culturally and canonically, or whether it was mainly due to his customary eagerness to generate controversy. He seemingly preferred to leave his work ambiguous and fragmentary, never permitting a simplistic reading and always seeking to thwart pre-established rules in some way. In my opinion, all of these interests were motivating factors. Or, perhaps, it has to do with his many private jokes or, more importantly, his genuine, although not always acknowledged, Anglophilia, which remained silent at other points in his life. In addition to this effort to promote his public image through his autobiography and accentuate his Anglophilia, which appears to be a very natural consequence of having been raised and educated in an English milieu, Borges stresses other aspects of his work.

Borges similarly shows a great deal of interest in highlighting his universalism and multiculturalism (within which there is still a certain hierarchy<sup>169</sup>) in the autobiography, and his

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<sup>169</sup> See also information in Appendix 5 about the list of authors and works mentioned in the autobiography, separated by language. The numbers of English and North American works read that are mentioned vastly exceed those of other literary traditions. There is a tendency to mention authors who write in majority-languages of Europe, above all German and French. Importance is given to Greek and Roman classics. Italian writers are barely mentioned. In fact, if the information in Appendices 2 and 5 are compared, it is clear that while Italian writers credited comprise 11.03%

role as a man of letters by excellence, an erudite, and a bridge between the traditions of the past and the present. Borges also gives the impression of being an abstract thinker, an amateur philosopher of sorts, and partial to cerebral and philosophical games, among other things. Nevertheless, and above all, it would seem that Borges' life and work are all of a piece.

Borges also presents himself as the heir of noble traditions, both historic and literary, and neither of which can be distanced from the local and international historical context. Borges celebrates his family lineage, both paternal and maternal (in relation to the achievements pertaining to the conformation of Argentina) and internationally he consciously portrays himself as an intellectual, highly Europeanized, the cultural receptacle of the Occident. Borges appears as the touchstone of literary traditions, the crux of convergence of various literary traditions, which obviously exceed his own local region and bind together Orient and Occident, Classic and Contemporary. Borges was interested in showcasing his knowledge that embodies epochs and languages from diametrically opposite poles. It is precisely this trait that connects Borges to Italian culture and more specifically, to Rome, which will be further-discussed later.

In addition to this hyper-connectivity, or apparent universalism, there is a continued interest in transcending and blurring the distinctions between literary genres, including the very autobiography, which promotes the notion that his life and work are porous, permeable materials<sup>170</sup>. In fact, most of the important critics of the present-day whose work focuses on the

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of the 1800 writers in total whereas the Italian writers credited in the autobiography comprise only 3%. In contrast, there is an inverse proportion of English writers credited in the complete works.

<sup>170</sup> Borges' autobiography, in the title itself, *Autobiographical Notes*, as well as the manner in which it is divided (I. Family and Childhood; II. Europe; III. Buenos Aires; IV. Maturity; and V.

biographical and/or autobiographical elements in Borges' work (such as Alfredo Alonso Estenoz<sup>171</sup>, Robin Lefere<sup>172</sup> and Sylvia Molloy<sup>173</sup>), concur that this construction of a public image by means of autobiography is an attempt to build up a lasting, consistent, mythic public image. This attempt to promote his mythical persona is paralleled to an equal effort to keep it consistent in his whole works conferring some organicity within a voluntary tendency to fragmentary agglomeration not deprived of oppositions and contradictions. Borges made an effort to make it

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Crowded Years), gives the impression of conformity to the characteristics of the genre, as suggested by Philippe Lejeune's definition, "le récit rétrospectif en prose qu'une personne réelle fait de sa propre existence, lorsqu'elle met l'accent sur sa vie individuelle, en particulier sur l'histoire de sa personnalité" (Lejeune 14). This contributes to what Lejeune calls the autobiographical pact, "il faut que l'auteur passe avec ses lecteurs un pacte, un contrat, qu'il leur raconte sa vie en détail, et rien que sa vie", but, in reality, nowhere in the book is there a revelation as one would expect in such a confessional, intimate genre, such as personal experiences, disappointments, stories or misadventures.

<sup>171</sup> Alfredo Estenoz analyses, above all, the way that Borges constructs authorship as well as authority through this process, not only in the autobiography but in the biographical material included his fictional works which blur the lines between fiction and history. See also from Alonso Estenoz *Los Límites Del Texto: Autoría y Autoridad en Borges*.

<sup>172</sup> Lefere focuses in the way that Borges created his own myth textually and otherwise in his work and in his autobiography.

<sup>173</sup> See also from Sylvia Molloy *Acto De Presencia: La Escritura Autobiográfica En Hispanoamérica*.

converge in both his complete authorized works and his autobiography but as a mix of biographical and fictional elements,<sup>174</sup> even if his writing remains profoundly fragmentary and with elements that are either difficult to reconcile, contradictory, or even problematic. Whether as a desired result, or as an indirect consequence, Borges manages to cleverly and elusively emphasise the figure of his literary genius, the product of Romanticism, even if his writings constantly critique such practice. In general, the majority of these characteristics coincide completely with many of the clichés, which surround Borges and the type of literature with which he is generally associated; both by the public at large and, to a great extent, specialists. Paradoxically, according to Scarano, the biographical information Borges provides is only that which relates directly to his literary work (*Modelli* 134). Borges gives the impression of suppressing his real persona and dignifying the work and literature instead by reducing to a minimum any intimate revelations or information regarding

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<sup>174</sup> One of the best examples of this is the short text “Borges y yo”. Biographical details are fictionalised mainly in the following manners. According to Sacarano, through systematic omission or dissimulation of information, giving rise to an image or impression that does not conform to reality:

Nelle Note l’io raccontato è personaggio di una sola delle numerose e intrecciate storie di cui una vita si compone...la fictio sta proprio nel presentare quell’unica storia come la storia del personaggio” (134) “sembra di rispondere all’intento [...] di cancellare una parte di sé, e di fare così del non-detto un non-vissuto” (152).

According to Lefere, Borges also adds elements to existing versions of events described (154–155).

his personal life, which the reader would expect in the genre of autobiography. Instead, there is a clear preference to glorify all that pertains to the literary side of his life and career<sup>175</sup>. To Borges, it was the work and not the character of the author that was worthy of recounting (Lefere 149). All that the reader needs to know about Borges is his literary side, as even his “me”, which is to say his image, is essentially a literary construct.

Importantly, in *Autobiographical Notes*, Borges is willing to sacrifice the veracity of certain parts of his story and interchange them with elements that are fictionalised and better suit the image he wished to project. These elements are generated either through the systematic omission and dissimulation<sup>176</sup> of information in order to promote an image that does not match reality (Scarano *Modelli* 134), or the addition of elements that were not part of the original events (Lefere 154–155). Literature is the true origin of Borges’ public and mythical image. One example is the time that he contracted septicaemia, a highly symbolic event, which is associated with the

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<sup>175</sup> The lack of real introspection is clear. Robin Lefere states that Borges limits himself to literary history, describing his life as author; what he focused on in his reading, his teachers, influences and friends, his publications, his conferences, his literary pilgrimages, ... etc. (148). There is little to no information that would usually be included in an autobiography, such as personal life; there is no mention of his recent marriage, suicide attempt, and relationship with his father, mother, or sister, among many other such themes.

<sup>176</sup> Scarano says: Nelle Notes l’io raccontato è personaggio di una sola delle numerose e intrecciate storie di cui una vita si compone...la fictio sta proprio nel presentare quell’unica storia come la storia del personaggio” (*Modelli* 134). Later he adds: “sembra di rispondere all’intento [...] di cancellare una parte di sé, e di fare così del non-detto un non-vissuto” (152).

supposed beginning of his narrative phase.<sup>177</sup> In a spark of genius he writes “Pierre Menard, autor del Quijote” one of his most famous short stories, ahead of his times, which would revolutionise the traditional concept of authorship and the three-way relationship between author/text/reader. This text would instate or, perhaps, anticipate fundamental literary critical theories about authorship and readership in later decades by such great theorists as Foucault, Barthes, and Derridá, among others. It is important to note that there are many different versions of this same episode of septicaemia that reach back to one original version (regardless of which the original might be) as recounted in his literary work (in the tale “Sur”, 1953). This version of the episode of septicaemia would also arise later in many interviews, but with the addition of new details, come of which reaching mythical proportions (Lefere 153–157). Borges is fashioning a mythical Borges based on his literary work, wherein his genius is accentuated and he tries to reconcile the autobiographical image he is projecting with the image generated by his literary work rather than with reality. It is truly his literary persona that established the public image he has fostered, as well as his own mythology. Borges’ autobiography is an affirmation: “I am my literature” or rather “I am literature”<sup>178</sup> (24). This places literature on the same level as reality. Literature holds a poietic and generative potential equal to reality.

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<sup>177</sup> He was terrified of losing his creative abilities and asked his mother to read his work; he cried with joy when he knew that his work was coherent. This allowed him to write in a new style, abandoning poetry for a long time in favor of prose.

<sup>178</sup> There are statements to the same effect in various texts, including the autobiography: “Si tuviera que señalar el hecho capital de mi vida, diría la biblioteca de mi padre. En realidad, creo no haber salido nunca de esa biblioteca”(24). This is no different than what Borges used to say in interviews

In fact, given that *Autobiographical Notes* deals solely with biographical elements relating directly to his literary work in lieu of any personal disclosures by the author, it would not be unreasonable to analyse it in much the same way as a poetic manifesto, or an *ars poetica*, wherein the writer sets out a proclamation: this I believe, thus, this I am (or I think I am, or I want to be). What might tie the author to Italian literature or culture may be considered either in direct dependence or in conjunction with this poetic manifesto. If the autobiography can be read as an affirmation of the literary self; that is to say, an affirmation of what the author believes or denies in literature at a particular point in his life, thus, the authors and works mentioned in this autobiography become important building blocks of this literary self. These references to specific authors and works are important, as in any of his literary works, but in this particular case are strategically placed in relation to questions of authorship and the literary genre which he promotes. In this way, the veracity of biographical details (or lack thereof) becomes less important, as many of such elements are fictionalised or tend towards mysticism of the author. This Borges, who is laid out simultaneously as author, narrator, reader and critic, mirrors his own literary creations. A literary position is implied in Borges' autobiography and, indeed, it can be read as such, although there is no direct declaration but, rather, a symbolic one, which allows the reader to decipher the meaning and importance of Italian elements therein. Nevertheless, it cannot be forgotten that Borges is the master of reflections and labyrinths that confuse and misdirect; nothing is linear or straightforward, many aspects can be voluntarily disorienting, misleading and contradictory.

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“I always knew. Erasing the line between fiction and real life. I always thought of myself as a writer, even before I wrote a book...I knew that my destiny or my fate was a literary one” (Burgin 21).

One of the major challenges in interpreting Borges' autobiography is that it is impossible to read it as though it is (contextually) precise, and one can't trust the veracity of all information that appears to be historical or experiential, despite this biographical information has been accepted in critical circles as factual. This autobiography informs all interpretation of Borges' work, when the autobiography itself must be seen as a literary work rather than a historical document. The autobiography is tailored to an existing literary corpus and conforms itself to the values or affectations of said literature, such as Universality, Intellectualism, Interculturality, and Anglophilia, although this in particular would fluctuate more. Furthermore, this conforms to an image both constructed by and obfuscated by the author. In many details, it is difficult to unravel the content of this text, to separate historical or biographical fact from the embroidery of fiction, because Borges himself attempts to confuse the reader or make the reader complicit. Any Italian content, both in terms of language and literature, is particularly marked by fictional invention. This makes it crucial to examine the text more closely from a variety of viewpoints and analytical structures in order to untangle such attempts to confound the reader.

I shall begin by breaking down the autobiographical elements that are directly linked to, or that intentionally distance the author from, the Italian world. Although, Borges begins by describing the Palermo neighbourhood of his youth, this description is entirely devoid of Italian influence. There is no mention of *lunfardo*, nor of the majority-Italian populace. In point of fact, Borges affirms a general disinterest in the "shabby northern outskirts of town" where his neighbourhood of Palermo was located (*Autobiographical* 203). He declares that he, as well as his family, "did [their] best — [their] successful best — to ignore it" (204). The person who, in turn, would attest to Borges' interest in the neighbourhood and its "literary possibilities" (204) was, rather, Evaristo Carriego. Borges wrote about this minor poet, "a nearly invisible popular poet"

(233), mostly as a friend and neighbour since his poetry was not good, apparently. Obviously, Borges admits to no influence by Carriego, instead he distorts the story to say that his father taught him the magic of words and language through poetry and then introduced him to literature: “It was he who revealed the power poetry to me—the fact that words are not only a means of communication, but also magic symbols and music” (206–207). According to this, Borges’ father led him into this new world by means of his vast library of English texts. A similar process is applied to the tango, in which Borges strips the dance of any Italian influence. Firstly, he suppresses all Italian references, avoiding any mention of the indisputable contribution of Italian immigrants, who may, in fact, have originated the genre, according to many critics. He ignores the extensive use of *lunfardo* in tango music, thus quietly purifying or de-bastardising the genre. This is due, in great part, to Borges’ stance, at this stage of his life, in favour of the fantastic. To this end, just as in his previous *criollista-nacionalista* stage wherein he defended a purified national identity, Borges now takes a new stance. Here, such nationalist opinions are less zealous, although they tend to be stated more conclusively, radically and controversially than in the past; perhaps, this comes out of a desire to remain an authority on questions of national identity and national literary tradition.

By order of appearance, the first allusion to Italian language and literature in the autobiography follows a brief critical analysis<sup>179</sup> (or, more accurately, subjective value judgement)

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<sup>179</sup> Additionally, in the autobiography he makes proclamations regarding the relative virtues and flaws of various (European) languages, declaring English the best. “

French, rather paradoxically, has a fine literature despite its fondness for schools and movements, but the language itself is, I think, rather ugly. Things tend to sound trivial when they

of the major European languages, which he knows and reads. Out of this evaluation the clear victor is English, both modern and ancient language: “AngloSaxon was as intimate an experience to me as looking at a sunset or falling in love.” (253). Similarly, English literature is the most admired: “I had always thought of English literature as the richest in the world” (252). And yet, the first commentary by Borges about Italian language, specifically in reference to Dante, bears close analysis:

As for Italian, I have read and reread the *Divina Commedia* in more than a dozen different editions. I've also read Ariosto, Tasso, Croce, and Gentile, but I am quite unable to speak Italian or to follow an Italian play or film. (217)

In this declaration, there are clear inconsistencies, which reveal the fiction of Borges' persona and readings, which sacrifice veracity in favour of self-creation. He claims to be incapable of speaking or understanding Italian despite evidently having read Dante and related critiques in multiple Italian editions; an improbable achievement. It is completely incongruous that someone who brags of having read one of the most complex works of Italian literature in various original editions would proclaim that he has no comprehension of the language. This can only be a joke. Borges had not only read Dante, but in the text he mentions him alongside two of the greatest

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are said in French.” (217). According to him, Spanish words “are far too long and cumbersome” (217). However he felt he had to “cope” with Spanish, despite being “only too aware of his shortcomings” (217). The apparent taste for German and Scandinavian languages is linked to his genealogy or approach to English, since, “After all, what are the English? Just a pack of German agricultural laborers.” (206). This English supremacy is not only a question of esthetics or personal taste, (135), it is also a paean to its literary traditions, authors and works (134).

contemporary literary critics and philosophers, both of whom were neo-Idealists, Croce<sup>180</sup> and Gentile<sup>181</sup>. Both are well-recognised experts of the first order on Dante, proponents of the same lines of thought as Francesco De Sanctis. These choices are not coincidental, they are not only some of his favourites among the vast quantity of critique on Dante that Borges had read, but also specific to a field of critical study of Dante referred to as Neo-Idealist, and which were of a particular interest to Borges. Among critical and philosophical differences and aesthetic or expressive debates which distanced Gentile from Croce, who were, at one time, close friends, Borges was more interested in the aspects relating to the discussion of the “autor classico vs. autor romántico” in the context of critique of Dante. References to Dante, Gentile, and Croce in the autobiography explain nothing of this background, and any mention of the three may seem

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<sup>180</sup> In total, Borges makes 28 direct references to Croce in his writing. Borges seems to have read most, if not all of Croce as per various references. Of particular note is the synthetic biography in the periodical *El Hogar*, entitled “Benedetto Croce”, 27 November, 1936.

<sup>181</sup> It is hard to know which of the works by Gentile Borges had read or knew of. What we know for sure is that he was familiar with his work on Dante, many of which were contained in *Studi su Dante*, and the many critiques or attacks which Gentile made on Croce, above all in *La filosofia dell'arte*. These match certain concepts or elements present in Borges' critique of Croce in the essay “La postulación de la realidad” in the book *Discusión*, first appearing under the title “La penúltima versión de la realidad” in the periodical *Síntesis* (No. 2, year 15, Buenos Aires, August 1928). Also in 1928, Gentile is mentioned in relation to *Enciclopedia Italiana di scienze, lettere e arti* which differ from those written in Spanish which are plagued by the “confuso ideal de acumulación de noticias”, Gentile seeks to “exponer de forma orgánica el conocimiento humano”.

altogether coincidental, but few elements in Borges' work are by chance, instead, backed by a purpose or reasoning. Given how few references there are to Italian culture up to this point, the importance of Dante to Borges' conception of literature is undeniable. Later references will clarify the role of Dante and Italian literature not only in Borges' work, but also, in his broader worldview.

Continuing in the same sequence of text, there is a brief passage, which reveals all. Precisely at a moment when Borges is discussing his predilection for English literature and desire to study the origin of said literary tradition, he states the following:

... I knew that at home, on a certain top shelf, I had copies of Sweet's *Anglo-Saxon Reader* and the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*. [...] All at once, we fell in love with a sentence in which Rome (Romeburh) was mentioned. [...] And so we had set out on a long adventure. I had always thought of English literature as the richest in the world; the discovery now of a secret chamber at the very threshold of that literature came to me as an additional gift. Personally, I knew that the adventure would be an endless one... (*Autobiographical* 252)

This descriptive passage is very visual, tracing an apparent textual genealogy in Borges' personal library, which purports to be as proudly Anglophile as that of his childhood and that he had inherited. The books, which he holds dearest, are English, while higher up and, therefore less easily accessible, are Anglo-Saxon books. Then, hiding directly behind them, there is a "secret chamber" (252), which encompasses Rome. This particular image is easily imagined as a sort of tree, wherein the fruit of English literature is closest and judged to be the richest, while looking along the branches will reveal the Anglo-Saxon origins and, closer to the trunk, all cultures lead to Rome. This vision of a secret chamber conforms to *El Aleph* and posits an origin to everything. Borges, with his marked Universalism, set himself apart as the expert in tracing an entire

multicultural philosophy. It is inevitable that the origin of Western civilisation be traced here in this *secret chamber*. Borges seeks to divine a universal culture in his library, which converges on the mythical image of the author himself as the vessel of limitless knowledge, encompassing the entirety of human understanding, culture and civilisation. In this cultural-historical overview, it is not just Rome which gives form to all culture and knowledge, but input from a variety of peoples. This is a central notion in the autobiography; when interpreted as a literary credo, Rome is placed as the symbolic centre of the rich literary and cultural tradition, which Borges has received.<sup>182</sup> Although Borges promotes the simple façade of Anglophilia, in the end this image posits the author as a mapmaker or wanderer on many paths within the vastness of human culture (despite a seemingly inevitable emphasis on Western culture). There is an impression that he walks all the paths of human understanding through human civilisation and, as a result, the definitive public image, which develops neatly, side-steps any reference to contemporaries as their historical or cultural value is not clearly established. He also avoids references to popular culture, except to distort them or turn them on their head in a clever way. There is an elitist undertone to Borges' work, which expunges populist elements. Regardless, it is hard to imagine Rome as the confluence

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<sup>182</sup> This point is better explained in the already mentioned Italian version, published shortly before he received the International publishers' Formentor Prize. Upon examining "Los elementos [que] integran lo que hemos convenido en llamar la cultura del Occidente" one encounters "dos muy diversos: el pensamiento griego y la fe cristiana" and "esa confluencia, que es el acontecimiento central de la historia humana, es obra de Roma" (Textos recobrados 66, vol. 3). As, in Rome, the dialectical passion of Greece and the Hebraic moral passion are reconciled and combined.

of Western civilisation without Dante, as embodied in the artistic pinnacle of his great masterpiece<sup>183</sup>. Continuing in sequence, there is a later symbolic reference to Dante:

A couple of hours each day, riding back and forth on the tram, I made my way through *The Divina Commedia*, helped as far as "Purgatory" by John Aitken Carlyle's prose translation and then ascending the rest of the way on my own (242).

Not only in this autobiography, but also in additional interviews, Borges claimed to have just read Dante for the first time at this moment. Although he claimed to have discovered Dante later in life, there are many documents that contradict this assertion. Just in the time before Borges commenced work as a librarian at the Miguel Cané Library, he had already published eight separate texts<sup>184</sup>, which made direct reference to Dante or the *Divina Commedia* between the late 1920s

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<sup>183</sup> According to the original Italian text, *Divina Commedia* is the “monumento estético de esa unión de las dos direcciones del espíritu y por lo tanto Dante es de forma indiscutible no sólo el “primer poeta de Italia”, sino “el primer poeta del mundo”, which is to say that Dante is “el poeta arquetípico de Italia y, por ende, de todo Occidente” (Textos Recobrados 66, Vol. III).

<sup>184</sup> 1.- “Las coplas acriolladas”, *Nosotros*, Buenos Aires, January-February 1926, later re-published in *El tamaño de mi esperanza* (1926). 2.- “La duración del Infierno”, *Síntesis*, Buenos Aires, May 1929, later re-published in *Discusión* (1932). 3.- Preface to the book *El cementerio marino* (1931), and easily found in *Prologo de Prólogos* (1975). 4.- “La poesía gauchesca,” in *Discusión* (1932). 5.- “Las pesadillas y Franz Kafka,” *La Prensa*, 2-VI-1935, Buenos Aires, later re-published in *Textos recobrados 1931–1955* (2001). 6.- Essay “Historia de la eternidad,” 1936 in the titular book. 7.- “James Joyce,” in the periodical *El Hogar*, 5 November 1937 and revised in *Textos cautivos*. 8.- “Insel Almanach auf das Jahr”, in *El Hogar*, 11 June 1937.

and 1937. Nor does it seem that the translation by Aitken Carlyle was the first version that Borges read, as mentioned in Chapter 1. Later in this chapter, the process of how dantesque components are incorporated into Borges' work after these first readings will be discussed further. As such, the aforementioned inaccuracies or lack of truth cannot be interpreted literally, but rather as symbols in a new story. The image, which the author creates, of ascension to the greatest work of all literature (at least, in Borges' opinion) and the encounter along the way, which might as well be Charon's boat, is very suggestive. The final destination: the library, sum of human knowledge. In Borges' work, libraries are the symbol of all knowledge and the repository of the entire universe and all its possibilities. In the *Divina Commedia* Dante follows a path toward a total revelation or total knowledge. In fact, the statement, "and then ascending the rest of the way on my own" (242) is reminiscent of the moment in the *Divina Commedia* when Dante says his farewells to Virgil and continues alone on his ascension to Heaven, synonymous with absolute knowledge. In this way, Borges adds to his mythical image, as he has done on numerous occasions over the course of his career as Lefere asserts in his book *Borges, Entre autorretrato y automitografía*.

This simultaneous encounter with Dante and the Italian language carries several implications. On the one hand, it seems a clear indication of the close link between Borges' own work and the literary style that it represents. It also seems clear that this specific work is the most influential out of Italian literature, despite passing mention to Tasso and Ariosto, whom he admired to a lesser degree. At the same time, there is a clear rift with, or even disgust for, any manifestation of Italian popular culture from Borges' own neighbourhood and city. That which is deemed to be valuable is Dante and Italian Classical literature. The message of the autobiography is that there is nothing to be gained from Argentine-Italian popular culture, which is articulated through the notable absence of said culture and conscious deletion of any related content. Further cementing

the link to Rome and to Dante as archetypes in our culture, after Borges mentions the continuation of his lone ascension, he includes a phrase that links him back to his surroundings in Argentina and other literary references:

I remember in this way rereading the six volumes of Gibbon's *Decline and Fall* and the many volumes of Vicente Fidel López' *History of the Argentine Republic*. I read Leon Bloy, Claudel, Groussac and Bernard Shaw (*Autobiographical* 242).

It would seem that the intent of the earlier passage is subverted here. Now in the library, the atavistic connection or synthesis of the universe is found; the paradisiacal fount of knowledge is provided and, having received this great understanding from its Roman source, he falls back to Earth, arriving in contemporary Argentina. All of the authors mentioned henceforth are linked to Dante in one way or another, or demonstrate dantesque elements identified by Borges' work.<sup>185</sup>

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<sup>185</sup> As stated by Paul Claudel about Dante, see also one of the first texts wherein Borges mentions Dante, in the Preface to *El cementerio Marino*, as well as the discourse on the *Divina Commedia* in 1977, compiled in the book *Siete noches* and in the Prologue to *Nueve Ensayos Dantescos*. See also Leon Bloy's Prologue in the collection *Biblioteca de Babel* created expressly by Franco Maria Ricci for the prestigious publisher FMR. For other texts alluding to Dante, see "Kafka y sus precursores", Prologue to *Mystical Works* by Emanuel Swedenborg and the Prologue to the book *Jorge Luis Borges selecciona lo mejor de Paul Groussac*. See also Paul Groussac's discourse on the *Divina Commedia* in 1977, compiled in the book *Siete noches*; the essays "Groussac", "Paul Groussac", "Palermo de Buenos Aires", "Las pesadillas y Franz Kafka", "Alfonso Reyes"; and the book *Jorge Luis Borges selecciona lo mejor de Paul Groussac*, compiling his writings on Dante.

Another element of note in the autobiography is the very absence of references to characteristics of Dante's writing or, indeed, anything that Borges might have learned from him. This lacuna appears forced; seeming to hide or befuddle the obvious allusions. As was already proposed in Chapter 1, one of the first features in Dante which Borges admired was his prose: a style that is pristine, concise and concrete. Nevertheless, it is very apparent that Borges does not give credit to Dante in his autobiography, despite this style having been an intense area of study and a style which he gradually adopted and perfected over the course of decades. As is clear from the earliest mentions of Dante, linking Borges to an interest in *Dantesque* style, Borges' definitive adoption of this style in his work took place in the 1960s and corresponds to great praise of Dante, whereas, in the late 1960s, when Borges came into contact with di Giovanni, Borges began to distance himself from Dante, among others. At the very least, this began a phase of shrouding anything which undermined his Anglophilia; which Borges was determined to bring to the fore-front. Borges not only avoids mentioning his close ties to Dante's style, but also attempts to distract attention from this by derailing such themes relating to Dante. In fact, Borges attributes his adoption of this style of prose to others from his circle of friends, namely Alfonso Reyes and Adolfo Bioy Casares. In the same autobiography, he says of Reyes: "I think of Reyes as the finest Spanish prose stylist of this century, and in my writing I learned a great deal about simplicity and directness from him" (*Autobiographical* 237). And, of Bioy Casares "Opposing my taste for the pathetic, the sententious, and the baroque, Bioy made me feel that quietness and restraint are more

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See also Bernard Shaw's essay "Nota sobre (hacia) Bernard Shaw", "La duración del infierno" "El escritor argentino y la tradición"; Prologue to de *Mystical Works* de Emanuel Swedenborg, among others. Bernard Shaw also wrote dantesque works.

desirable” (246). Borges affirms that these writers led him to a writing style that is clear, synthetic, and meaningful; a style, which according to him, he did not begin to integrate into his own work until 1954: “Around 1954, I began writing short prose pieces” (253). As mentioned as early as in Chapter One and which will later be explored further, Borges began to admire, study, and adopt this style much sooner than 1954. In fact, this process of stylistic recognition and appropriation gained momentum in the late 1920s, when Borges had not yet met Bioy, and when he was in correspondence and, later, personal contact with Alfonso Reyes. This was a period of study for Borges, with respect to a clear and efficient style present in Dante and which in Spanish-language prose was only apparent in Paul Groussac. He brought this style back into fashion a few years before returning to Argentina, but tracing its origins would bring him to Dante himself via the study of the *Dantesque* in Paul Groussac. Reyes and Borges dedicated much time to the enriching discussion of Dante’s style, which would prove directly beneficial to both writers as they adopted his style in a period of creative crisis. The first allusions which Borges makes to Reyes regarding this style praising its clarity and efficacy take place shortly before establishing a close, personal friendship during his time as an ambassador beginning in 1927, as seen in his reviews for the novels from 1926 “Pausa” and “Reloj de Sol”, still without mentioning Dante as the model or the origin of this style. From 1929 onwards, however, following the death of Paul Groussac and in subsequent essays in homage to him submitted to various magazines, there are unequivocal signs that Borges was immersed in the study of Dante’s style, beginning to recognise Groussac as the first writer to apply this style in Spanish. Borges conducted an extensive stylistic study and discussion with Reyes over a long series of visits to each other, and with the consistent participation of the stylistic critic Amado Alonso. From that time, direct and indirect references to

Dante on various themes multiplied in Borges' writing, not only in reference to style but which would over time come to fruition in his initial forays into writing fiction.

While the reading of Dante is still alluded to by Borges in the autobiography, it is only to establish his own genius; he brags of having taught himself to read Italian using a bilingual edition of the *Divina Commedia*. Paradoxically, in this same text he claims that he never gained an oral understanding of Italian nor spoke it. In this way, Dante is reduced to a supporting role in the myth of Borges himself. The allusions to Reyes, Bioy and Groussac are there in the autobiography, but Borges never mentioned that they all converge in Dante as devoted admirers and imitators of that same pristine Italian writing style, as we mentioned before.

Similarly, not only does Borges make no reference to Calvino, but also distorts events to credit Néstor Ibarra and Roger Caillois for his international success. They are credited both for introducing him to the French literary scene and his worldwide recognition, implying that they were influential in winning the Formentor Prize (directly or indirectly). "I suspect that their pioneer work paved the way for my sharing with Samuel Beckett the Formentor Prize in 1961" (*Autobiographical* 254). It remains unclear the extent to which Borges was aware of Calvino's role in the creation of the Formentor Prize and his first time giving out the award, alongside Beckett with the backing of English-language publishing houses. Only the analysis of correspondence between Borges, Silvina Ocampo and Calvino could clarify this. However, those letters by Calvino are closely guarded by Calvino's family, just as those few by Borges (dictated due to his blindness) are kept by his widow Maria Kodama and those letters by Ocampo are currently in litigation between relatives.

The only Italian authors Borges mentions reading are Classical, there are no contemporaries. Even Dante is not alluded to a great deal, and generally in combination with other

authors: “I intend now to begin a new book, a series of personal - not scholarly - essays on Dante, Ariosto, and medieval northern subjects (258), and:

I traveled up and down Argentina and Uruguay, lecturing on Swedenborg, Blake, the Persian and Chinese mystics, Buddhism, gauchesco poetry, Martin Buber, the Kabbalah, the Arabian Nights, T. E. Lawrence, medieval Germanic poetry, the Icelandic sagas, Heine, Dante, expressionism, and Cervantes (245).

Nevertheless, it is important to revisit each step in Borges’ literary production to better contrast the image that he attempts to create in the autobiography in combination with the major connections to Italian literature that existed at different points in his career.

To conclude, it bears noting that Borges was always writing or editing his work with consideration for its critical reception, as observed in the revisionism analysed in this chapter. The final reference which Borges makes to Dante examines the many commentators who see Dante in the character of the bad writer, Daneri, who wishes to capture the world in his writing in the encyclopedic manner of Dante. In the autobiography Borges states:

Critics, going even further, have detected Beatrice Portinari in Beatriz Viterbo, Dante in Daneri, and the descent into hell in the descent into the cellar. I am, of course, duly grateful for these unlooked-for gifts (264).

It is not surprising, however, that even in this respect Borges does everything possible to distance *El Aleph* from Dante, one of the most *Dantesque* works of fiction Borges ever wrote. In this essay and in many interviews he denied having thought of Dante when he wrote the story, setting it aside as coincidence. The 1940s were, nevertheless, one of the periods when he studied Dante most closely and the first version of *El Aleph* was published in the magazine *Sur* in September of 1945 while the first version published as a novel came out in 1949, at a time when

Borges had not only read Dante in various editions but also various languages, as proven by the 1937 review “Insel Almanach auf das Jahr” as well as the first, isolated essays on Dante appearing in different publications and would, near the end of his life, be revised, modified, and re-published in *Nueve Ensayos Dantescos*. When *El Aleph* was first published Borges had already accumulated 17 different texts which made direct or indirect reference to Dante Alighieri (see Appendix 1).

### 3.3. Borges as Anthologist, Stylist, and Revisionist

Very little study has been made of Borges’ work as an anthologist, and only recently. This is despite having been one of the most active, important, and prolific anthologists in contemporary Latin America, working with the others’ writing, but also the entire corpus of his own fragmentary work could be seen as its own sort of anthology, in constant mutation.

The anthologies, compiled or written by Borges either alone or in cooperation with another authors, serve to reveal his interests at a given time. Even a brief overview of some of his various anthologies, produced continually over the course of most of his life, permits us to explore the ways that Borges chooses to position himself strategically within different literary fields or genres. There is a close relationship between these anthologies and Borges’ own literary work; above all in the best-known masterpieces that make up his official published corpus. Borges’ work is malleable, mobile, and subject to endless revision and refinement. It is especially interesting when the changes in his interests radically alter his position *vis-à-vis* a particular author, sometimes going so far as to move an author from a position of esteem to one of disdain or harsh critique. We see something similar within Borges’ work; he attempts to remove elements from his earlier work in later editions. It is not my intent to enumerate the entirety of Italian authors referenced in Borges’ work (see Appendices 2 and 2.1), either as a direct mention or as an indirect allusion to others’ work. Instead, my focus is in the most evident cases and the most paradoxical. My research leaves,

at the moment, for the future the task of studying every reference in greater detail. This thesis is meant to establish a precedent for the study of Italian influence, or the murmur of Italian voices behind Borges' work. The structure I have established is based on a historical research into Borges' writing as well as in specific periods of work, the type of texts referenced in his work, and later alterations to said works to either hide, add to, or suppress references in his own works or anthologies. The differentiation or separation of this analysis into different parts, one based on anthologies, another based on the process of revision in Borges' work, and another in the gradual conformation and implementation of his most distinctive style under the influence of Dante, is artificial in order to facilitate a better understanding of complex processes that occur simultaneously and complementarily of course.

#### 3.4. Borges' early works as an anthologist

Borges' career as an anthologist has yet to be critically analysed, perhaps because of the tendency to view the anthologist as a mere compiler of texts based on taste, whim, or externally imposed criteria; the anthologist's role is minimalised. And yet, as Antonio Cajero has stated (9), the role and function of the anthologist is of great importance, given the strategic position as the intermediary between critic and creator. The anthologist must take an aesthetic stance, not only as a reader-receptor, but as an author-creator above all. As a receptor, personal taste, values and affinities or interests are made manifest in the anthology. So too, as creator, in many cases, the anthology serves to set out an agenda, to promote one's own work, and to promote oneself as an authority on the material, with a greater understanding and skill; all to the end of being better received within the creative domain. The anthologist also takes on the plural role of negotiating the aesthetic canon, sustaining the tastes of an era, determining a new course in aesthetics and ideology, and promoting counterculture subversives who are creating a new cultural space (9).

The anthology serves a discursive function. To select a series of texts implies a sort of judgement or evaluation not only of the texts that are sought out and compiled, but also of those rejected. This suggests, in turn, a literary stance; an attempt to differentiate or separate works, authors, or literary groups. By not including texts, they are marked out by the anthologist's indifference, which robs them of worth. To this can be added another important function of the anthologist, as suggested by Barbara Benedict, which is to dictate, exert influence upon or interfere with the content of the readings<sup>186</sup> and the way that certain texts are interpreted (3).

Borges published numerous anthologies,<sup>187</sup> so there is a vast amount of literary territory to cover. In this segment, I shall analyse only a few of such anthologies, principally those that best reflect specific creative phases and ideological changes, as well as those that relate in some way to Italian literature, publications, or culture. Such comments on specific anthologies will be contextualised by other material that will explain specific creative developments, the immediate impact of the anthologies, and Borges' own texts that are directly related.

Borges began to work as an anthologist at an early point in his professional life, at a point when he had yet to produce many texts after his first stint in Europe. Borges was a very introverted young man, but he by and large predated the young new poets of the Spanish *Ultraísta* movement. According to Williamson, what attracted Borges to writing was what little was known to the

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<sup>186</sup> To go into greater detail about the formative role of anthologies in readership and education, as well as their influence and politico-cultural representation in national or regional literature, see the article by Silvana Serrani in Portuguese "Antologia: escrita compilada, discurso e capital simbólico" (270-287).

<sup>187</sup> By 1982 there were already more than 30.

movement about English, French, and German literature. The anthologies, published in *Ultraísta* periodicals, such as *Grecia* and *Cervantes*, won Borges a respected position within the movement for expounding a profound understanding of many literary traditions in a variety of languages. The briefest anthologies were published in *Grecia* in 1920: “Lírica expresionista: síntesis”, “La lírica inglesa actual”, and “Lírica austriaca de hoy”. In 1921, this continued in the magazine *Cervantes*, “Antología expresionista”, and, in *Cosmopolis*, “La lírica argentina contemporánea” although the latter was more Modernist than *Ultraísta*. Spanish *Ultraísmo* was, in the beginning, influenced by Italian Futurism and would incite controversial practices, public outrage, and public protests. These efforts would go largely unobserved by the public at large; Borges took part in some of these without much zeal. Once he had returned to Argentina, Borges made a greater effort to distinguish himself from Futurism as much as possible, in part, to imbue his artistic movement with greater originality.

The first anthology book, which he undertook as co-editor with Vicente Huidobro and Alberto Hidalgo, was published in 1926 and entitled *Índice de la Nueva Poesía Americana*.<sup>2</sup> These three are indisputable authorities of the South American *Vanguardia*, and had already gained certain notoriety in those three countries, which led the avant-garde movement: *Ultraísmo* in Argentina, *Simplismo* in Peru, and *Creacionismo* in Chile. Both Huidobro and Borges, having spent time in Europe, were to maintain close ties with colleagues in the European *avant-garde* and, as such, would attain not only local appreciation but, to some extent, European recognition<sup>188</sup>.

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<sup>188</sup> In the case of Borges, this would lead to his first mentions in European anthologies as a leader of the *Vanguardista* movement in the Americas. As previously mentioned in Chapter 2, the first such European anthologies to grant him this recognition were Italian.

Borges' most active phase as a *Vanguardista* was in the early 1920s. He returned from Spain in 1921 after spending time with Spanish *Ultraístas*. This literary movement had a great deal of influence in Argentina, inspiring a generation of young writers in great number. Borges created a few literary periodicals, such as *Prisma* and *Proa*, which were clearly linked to *Vanguardismo* and would actively contribute to others such as *Grecia* (Spain) as well as *Nosotros* and *Martín Fierro* (Argentina). The list of authors to be included in that first anthology was divided by country, with the Argentine segment entirely populated by personal friends, many of whom were *Vanguardistas*, and these authors dominated to a much greater extent than in any other periodical already mentioned<sup>189</sup>. This would also be reflected in one of Borges' own anthologies. To put it simply, this anthology served to promote and legitimise *Vanguardismo*. The title itself, *Indice de la Nueva Poesía Americana*, explicitly sets out a new generation of writers seeking to supplant a former style deemed out dated, and unseat stagnant literary giants such as Lugones. Fernández Bravo asserts that this work, as in other anthologies by Borges, can be seen as a challenge to the National literary canon, as embodied not only by Lugones but also the monumental eight-volume

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<sup>189</sup> Borges' personal friends published in this anthology include Francisco Luis Bernárdez, Norah Lange y Macedonio Fernández, as well as writers who had helped him in the creation of *Prisma* such as Norah Lange, Eduardo González Lanuza, and his cousin Guillermo Juan Borges. A few from the clique established in his other publication, *Proa*, also included are González Lanuza, Macedonio Fernández, Alfredo Brandan Caraffa, Norah Lange (although the 'h' is omitted). Lastly, from *Martín Fierro* we see Nicolás Olivari, Eduardo González Lanuza, Jacobo Fijman, Eduardo Keller Sarmiento, Leopoldo Marechal, Ricardo E. Molinari, Roberto A. Ortelli, and less prevalently Macedonio Fernández, Ricardo Güiraldes, y Sergio Piñero.

*Historia de la Literatura argentina (1917–1922)* by Ricardo Rojas. There is a real zeal for challenging the current literary establishment and publishing system in favour of a movement to “importar nuevos libros y autores, ponerlos en circulación y reorganizar el sistema literario intentando desarmar y rearmar genealogías” (132). This new generation of writers sought to question the station of prestige that many earlier authors and literary works held within the context of a National literature.

And yet, at the time when the anthology was published in 1926, Borges had already largely distanced himself from the *Vanguardista* movement that he had founded. Borges experimented with a variety of other writing styles, wavering from the heavy, disjointed style of *Criollismo-nacionalista* to later enter into a creative block that would cause him to abandon poetry altogether for many years. In a short text, “Cubismo, expresionismo, Futurismo”, by Herwath Walden, translated in 1924 and published in Borges’ publication, *Proa*, it is stated that these movements, although valid, demonstrated their own exhaustive limits. It begins, “todo formular estético es desdichado, pues cambia formas modeladas en fórmulas”, and concludes “toda fórmula es baladí” (*Textos Recobrados* 199–200, vol. 1). Thus, already in 1926, at the time that the anthology was published by Borges, he was announcing his break from *Vanguardismo* and seeking out new creative avenues. This was made clear during the visit to Filippo Tomasso Marinetti in Argentina that same year, when he proclaimed:

...don Felipe Tomás Marinetti fue la mayor medida profiláctica contra la cursilería ambiente, creo que fue el jabón de bicloruro y la más eficaz piedra pómez de esos pavorosos años de principios de nuestro siglo. ¡Qué tiempo más desanimado y desanimador! En ese anteayer, no había atardeceres, había crepúsculos; no había sol, había el dorado Apolo; no había muchachas, había púberes canéforas que

ofrendan el acanto; no había caña dulce, había el ajeno de Verlaine; no había poetas, había Diaz Romero y Lugones. La muerte era la gran coquetería de los literatos y todo escritor que se respetaba, se hacía el Pedro Miguel Obligado (no quiero emplear malas palabras) y el medio muerto.

En Italia, donde padecían al otro Bartolomé Galíndez, D'Annunzio y donde la cursilería es casi tan barata como en nuestro barrio de Flores (barrio en que viven García y Mellid, Visillac y el ya mencionado Galíndez), debe haber sido horrenda la cosa. Marinetti, con su vehemencia de sifón de soda en acción, ejerció una actividad saludabilísima y que todos debemos agradecerle...[pero] sus libros valen muy poco. Son simulacros italianizados de Whitman, de Kipling, tal vez de Jules Romains. Cualquiera de esos tres lo sobra (*Textos Recobrados* 403–404, vol. 1).

In this comment, he criticises not only the aesthetics of the previous generation as antiquated, but also asserts that the only value of *Vanguardismo* was to disrupt that old system.<sup>190</sup>

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<sup>190</sup> On the flyleaf of *Proa*, Borges' publication, it states: "Nuestro país estaba en manos de una generación cuyo crepúsculo se disimulaba desesperadamente desde las bambalinas de una reputación demasiado fatigada", marking the new generation as literary revolutionaries, albeit lacking in organization or means to do so: "la primer etapa se ha caracterizado por una acentuada anarquía en la acción y por una forma brusca y casi espasmódica de protestar y libertarnos del ambiente", but Borges attempted through his magazine to justify and lead this movement:

"Queremos que Proa inicie la segunda etapa...solucionar todos los conflictos que separaban entre sí a las principales revistas y formar un frente

Borges predicts no long-term creative potential in *Vanguardismo*. As such, the *Índice de la nueva poesía americana* marks the end of a stage in Borges' creative life which had brought him a great deal of recognition, and notoriety, as an authority in the new Argentine literature. From this point, Borges would remain at a distance from *Vanguardistas*, whom he generally viewed as washed up, and would adopt a critical, almost satirical, position against many<sup>191</sup>.

Between *Índice de la Nueva Poesía Americana* and the second published anthology, the critics<sup>192</sup> coincide that a period that follows for Borges is one of uncertainty in which he does not embrace a cause, current or defined style. This phase is rather characterized for being undefined and intermittent, as Borges' style varies and his interests are scattered. Furthermore, as Borges'

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único...Proa quiere ser el primer exponente de la unión de los jóvenes...Proa quiere ser esa tribuna amplia y sin barreras ” (Proa 3–5, num. I, vol. I).

<sup>191</sup> In the concise article in the divulgation magazine *El Hogar* on March 4, 1938, Borges writes a derisive critic of Marinetti and his new proposal that woman pain their nails and lips green, white and red, to use the term electrifying instead of chic, and place where one drinks instead of bar, as means to cleanse the Italian language of foreign influences. This can be seen not only as a critic of Marinetti, but also as an auto criticism, as Borges himself was promoting the polishing of Argentine Spanish by removing foreign influences such as the ones derived from Italian, *lunfardo* or *cocoliche* (Textos Cautivos 212).

<sup>192</sup> Olea Franco, *El otro Borges, El primer Borges*; Sarlo, *Borges, un escritor en las orillas*; Annick Louis, *Jorge Luis Borges: obras y maniobras*; Carlos García, *El joven Borges poeta*; Graciela Montaldo, “Borges: una vanguardia criolla” in *Historia Social de la literatura argentina*, vol. VII, amongst others.

situation worsens it also gives rise to a creative and existential crisis<sup>193</sup>. The element that shows continuity with previous phases is the desire of influencing the culture, literature and national life as well as the fight for recognition in Argentina. During the *Vanguardista* period, while Borges had strong links to Europe, he conducted the Spanish *Ultraísta* movement, re-contextualizing it to Argentina, whereas in this new phase he takes a diametrically opposed stand embracing national themes and causes, not only cutting ties with Spain, but in certain instances confronting it. Borges fully engages in the debate of national identity and language, as discussed in Chapter 1, with the firm intention of consolidating his position in national literature. Borges' intention of creating nationalist mythic texts can be seen since *Cuadernos de San Martín*, in texts such as “Fundación mítica de Buenos Aires”, but he also delves in the theme of the origin of tango and discussion regarding *Criollismo*.

The gradual distancing from *criollismo* appears to be due to a variety of circumstances: the artificiality of the *criollista* position in itself, and the influence and presence of Alfonso Reyes and the discovery of Dante. At any rate, Borges' style changes radically and transforms into to what is known today. This change will have two main consequences: the beginning of a period of revisionism of his works, as he no longer identifies himself with them, and it allows him to develop his prose and the works that will make him renowned.

### 3.5. Crafting his own new style and literary path

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<sup>193</sup> In the 1930s, Borger suffers from the death of his father and it is thought that he has attempted suicide. See Carlos García “Los suicidios de Borges” in *El joven Borges poeta*.

Dante's clear, concise style is characterised by precise word-use, capable of creating powerful imagery, investing a scene with evocative potency and building scenes and characters filled with lively realism, all with a surprising economy of language. As already mentioned in Chapter One, Borges' first encounter with Dante came in the latter part of the 1920s, at the very time that Borges was seeking his own voice and a definitive, efficient style for his writing which, until that moment, was stylistically erratic or fluctuating; reproducing or fueled by certain literary tendencies, both local and abroad, such as *Vanguardia*, *Criollism*, and *Gorngorism*. Paradoxically, this ideal style was, at first, not attributed to Dante, instead to the fervent students of Dante such as Alfonso Reyes y Paul Groussac.

In his literary biography of Borges, Emir Rodríguez Monegal confirms that “Reyes había dominado el arte de ser sucinto” and that “había perfeccionado una prosa sutil, poética y extremadamente condensada” (Rodríguez Monegal 197). Borges' appreciation of this style is first seen in some of his reviews of Reyes' work, prior to his arrival in Buenos Aires as an ambassador in 1927. At that point they already had some mutual connections from a fleeting, first meeting in Spain in the early 1920s (García 37-38). This is seen in the reviews<sup>194</sup> “*Pausa*, de Alfonso Reyes” and “Alfonso Reyes: *Reloj de sol*”. It is difficult to isolate the precise moment when Borges first saw or began to admire this sort of writing because he states in his review of *Pausa* that he was not conscious of making efforts to “razonar una admiración” for Reyes' work so much as “una intimidad gradual de lecturas”. Of all the possible poetic contrivances identified by Borges in the

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<sup>194</sup> “*Pausa*, de Alfonso Reyes” was published in *Valoraciones* in January, 1927, and in June of the same year “Alfonso Reyes: *Reloj de sol*” was published in *Síntesis* and later re-published with changes in *El idioma de los Argentinos* in 1928.

review, Reyes receives the highest praise: “es héroe de la maestría que se recata, del pudor sobre la pasión, de la alegría secreta” (*Textos Recobrados* 288, vol. 1). In “Alfonso Reyes: *Reloj de sol*”, he goes much further, and is more precise in praise of Reyes:

Gratísimo libro de Reyes [...] sin una palabra mas alta que la otra”, en el que hace apología de la anécdota y de la que es maestro, pues considera que “Reyes ha reformado la anécdota [...], su prudente revolución [se debe entre otras cosas a que] Reyes nos presenta un mundito y hace como si lo dejara vivir. Su eficacia novelística es mucha. Cinco, seis renglones, y la definición de los personajes está lograda (*El idioma* 38-40).

At the end of the essay, he admits that he does not know exactly where Reyes’ style originated; “este hombre tan sagaz, tan inteligente de los delicados errores y de los delicados aciertos de todo escrito”, and Borges expresses doubt that even Reyes knows: “Releo el afabilísimo *Reloj de Sol*, y una curiosidad clandestina...me hace preguntar”, “indecible o no, mi indiscreción es demasiado íntima para ser satisfecha por otros que Alfonso Reyes, y ese, quién sabe. A lo mejor él mismo lo ignora (Hay negocios demasiado íntimos para ser y definitivos para ser tarea de nuestro pecho)” (41). From this moment of uncertainty in 1926 and 1927, Borges would follow up with a series of essays from 1929 to 1932, described briefly in Chapter 1, which dealt with different ideas related to questions of style and referred to Dante directly, many included in the book *Discusión*. What Borges stressed about Reyes’ style in those reviews coincides perfectly with what Reyes commends and highlights from Dante’s works in those first essays about style in *Discusión*. This strongly suggests that by sharing important lessons from Dante with Borges, Alfonso Reyes helped him discover new and revelatory aspects of Dante’s works, different from what he had seen or

interpreted in the *Divina Commedia* thus far. Until now, few critics<sup>195</sup> have examined Reyes' important influence on Borges during the formative years of his definitive style, and no one has made a study of his essential stylistic elements, nor their true origins. Even though we may not have access to the conversations between Borges and Reyes which took place at least once a week in Reyes' house in Buenos Aires, due to the lack of documentation or written evidence of literary discussions, we can still ascribe some of their most identifiable effects or results. There are, in fact, other ways to substantiate the form of these stylistic debates and those who participated directly and were influenced by them.

Among the first reviews Borges wrote of Reyes, there is admiration for the style but no apparent knowledge of its origin and the essays contained in *Discusión* were attributed to an

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<sup>195</sup> I was able to uncover only two critics of note who emphasise the importance of Reyes' stylistic influence on Borges, Emir Rodríguez Monegal in his famous literary biography and Amelia Barili in her book *Jorges Luis Borges y Alfonso Reyes: la cuestión de la identidad del escritor latinoamericano*. Monegal indicates that Reyes had “una influencia liberadora” which helped him to develop his style, but the critic does not explain how or develop on that theme, citing a serious accident Borges suffered in 1938 as a breaking point in his literary work and a radical change of style: “tras el accidente Borges paso a ser un escritor diferente, creado ahora por sí mismo” (131). This is a very naïve critical position. Barili, similarly, does not touch on the question of style either, suggesting only that Borges adopted some elements from Reyes to reconcile the existing Regionalism required to write and the need to reach a wider Western literary tradition. This is summarised in Borges' famous article “El Escritor Argentino y la tradición” in 1955, later published in int 1957 edition of *Discusión*.

homage following the death of Paul Groussac in June of 1929. Upon his death, Borges wrote an essay in posthumous homage just days later, published in the famous *Nosotros* magazine and later, with some revisions, in *Discusión* in 1932. This eulogy states that the greatest virtue of Groussac's work is the high level of "legibilidad, la condición que se llama readableness en inglés. En español es virtud rarísima. [...]"

Fuera de Groussac, solo [lo] he comprobado en Alfonso Reyes" (OC 407, vol. 1). Another focus of Borges within the same essay is "inmortalidad literaria", since "no hay muerte de escritor sin el inmediato planteo de... indagar – o profetizar- qué parte quedará de su obra [lo cual] postula la existencia posible de hechos intelectuales eternos, fuera de la persona, fuera de la persona o circunstancias que los produjeron" (408). Borges predicts the future immortality of the author: "Groussac... no puede no quedar... Su mera inmortalidad sudamericana corresponderá a la inglesa de Samuel Johnson". This text makes clear not only the stylistic link between Groussac and Reyes, but also two recurring elements in *Dantesque* essays after publishing *Discusión* among others previously mentioned in Chapter 1, such as the concept of eternity and the Classics. In later writing, Borges would emphasise this connection. In the prologue which he wrote to the book *Jorge Luis Borges selecciona lo mejor de Paul Groussac*, he states that while Modernists were preoccupied with revitalising Spanish-language poetry, "la tarea fundamental de Groussac fue la renovación de la prosa. Alfonso Reyes me confió que la lectura de sus libros le había enseñado de qué modo había que escribir" and that "aconsejaba la economía verbal y la probidad" (VII), most evident in French than in Spanish. Following a brief mention of Gibbon and the myth of Rome, Borges closes the prologue by asserting that Groussac's greatest accomplishment was his style, adding "Groussac puede seguir enseñándonos que el sentimiento y el pensamiento son esenciales, no los excesos o la imprudencia de la palabra" (IX). A little later, Borges repeats this facet of Groussac as an

innovator of Spanish prose and Alfonso Reyes as his follower, “el más ilustre de sus muchos lectores”.<sup>196</sup>

It remains to explain the bond between Groussac and Dante, which is not always clear, and which certainly extends over all his writings of that time, not only those expressly written about Groussac, and how they relate to peaks in phases<sup>197</sup> of the *Dantesque* in Borges, as previously mentioned.

Dante was one of the authors whom Groussac most admired, as evident in his famous essay, “La Gloria de Dante”, in the book *Crítica literaria*, certainly one of Borges’

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<sup>196</sup> In Borges’ autobiography, just as in his posthumous essay on Reyes published in 1955 (*Textos Recobrados* 286-288, vol. 2), he praises him as the most important writer and innovator in Spanish prose. The essay, entitled “Alfonso Reyes” was published in the tri-monthly issue of October-December of 1955. In this essay he states that “Reyes es el primer hombre de letras de nuestra América...el primer escritor y el primer lector”, and closes the essay with a vague association between Reyes and Dante.

<sup>197</sup> Other than the essay “Paul Groussac” included among other essays in *Discusión* dealing with questions of style, which would be the basis of his first works of fiction, Borges also dedicated a poem to Groussac, entitled “Poema de los dones”, in the book *El Hacedor*, in 1960. This was the same year as the publication of “Italia” and “Mi primer encuentro con Dante”, and soon followed by his winning the Formentor Prize. Other essays on Groussac came in the early 1980s when Borges was preparing *Nueve Ensayos Dantescos* for publication, such as the prologue to *Jorge Luis Borges selecciona lo mejor de Paul Groussac* in 1981, and the prologue to the 1985 re-publishing of *Crítica literaria* by Paul Groussac.

favourites.<sup>198</sup> It is no coincidence that Borges wrote the prologue to this book two times, one in an anthology the other by itself.<sup>199</sup> In the prologue to *Crítica Literaria*, Groussac launches a scathing attack on “pensamiento vulgar y pésimo estilo” in Argentina. This extends to Argentinean literature, “debo acusar en la producción intelectual argentina la continua trasgresión a los principios de sano gusto y conciencia artística que constituyen, en mi sentir, la condición vital de la obra literaria” which, as he explains, “se difraza bajo los relumbrones de una sonora y hueca fraseología” (Groussac VIII). Because of this, one of the foci or preoccupations in the discussion of the book is the style, mostly in relation to the three Classical pillars: Cervantes, Dante, and Shakespeare, among other themes. The essay “La Gloria de Dante” was inspired by the six-hundredth anniversary of Dante’s death, a celebration of great weight and significance in the most Italian country outside of Italy

...en la Argentina, donde la presencia de una colonia enorme que, en número y fuerza activa supera sola todas las demás juntas del continente, no representa sino una parte de la influencia que aquí ejerce la raza itálica, por la fusión de sus elementos con los nativos. Sin embargo no es exagerado decir que no existe en el mundo un centro de cultura

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<sup>198</sup> Borges stated: “De las obras de Groussac, algunos preferirán la biografía de Liniers; otros, *Mendoza y Garay*; yo elegiría *Crítica literaria*, *El viaje intelectual* y *Del Plata al Niágara*” (*JLB Selecciona IX*), of which the first is considered the stylistic theory which informed all those that followed in practice, much in the same way that Borges’ *Discusión* informed the famous fiction which followed.

<sup>199</sup> Prologue to *Jorge Luis Borges selecciona lo mejor de Paul Groussac* in 1981, and the republication of *Crítica literaria* by Paul Groussac in 1985.

[...] donde el magno suceso intelectual no haya repercutido, y , hoy por hoy, no aparezca la divisa Pro Dante como el santo y seña de la civilización! (Groussac 48-49)

With recourse to an astonishing encyclopedic knowledge, he constructs a timeline for the reception of Dante over the course of history, placing Romanticism as the age which defined his current, unassailable position. He then goes over the key elements of the history of Dante's publishing, which privileged certain works above others, and explores Dante's ability to mix diverse literary genres. Later, he reviews the different aspects of Dante's work which were of interest to critics in different periods, through the Enlightenment, and later Romanticism, already identified as a strategic point when Dante was recognised and gained new value, especially for *The Divina Commedia*. This emerging study of Dante brings us to the most important point, the aspect of Dante which he considers most noteworthy: his style. It is only from the appreciation of Dante's style and aesthetic in the Romantic<sup>200</sup> period, the proliferation of publishers and good translations (especially that of Antoine Riverol), as well as its acceptance into the highest spheres of academia<sup>201</sup> and culture, that Dante's work came to its position at the height of Universalist

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<sup>200</sup> Not until "hasta muy avanzado el siglo XVIII, mientras la crítica literaria y las academias que asume la misión de dirigir el gusto público, desconocían a porfía el tesoro poético [...], la potencia secreta e inaudita encerrada en *the Divina Commedia*" (Groussac 55).

<sup>201</sup> Groussac emphasises the important role not only of the King of epigrammists, Rivarol, but also Alfieri and, later, Leopardi to the reevaluation of *The Divina Commedia*. He identifies another large undercurrent or tendency to exalt the Nationalist element in Dante among critics such as Foscolo, Manzoni, Mazzini and even Carducci. Groussac, however, finds this unsubstantiated and unfounded.

literature now. There are three aspects which Groussac sets apart in Dante, all of which Borges would absorb, among others that he would later discover, and which would remain the most notable of all. The first is evidently the efficacy and evocative power of his writing, due to careful use of language, and he considers that “nadie lo ha igualado –ni el mismo Victor Hugo- en la intensidad vibrante con que irradia su pensamiento al mundo fantástico por él evocado y poblado de sombras o abstracciones simbólicas, a que su genio presta tanta vida y realidad” (64). Obviously, he confesses that this is where he learned his own style, “los que fuimos alguna vez aprendices del arte en que Dante queda el maestro sin par” (64). He particularly admires “Purgatory”, as Borges would too, due to its clear stylistic quality and poetry and, according to him, without the special effects or over-dramatics of “Inferno”. Another crucial aspect of the originality of *The Divina Commedia* is the use of “I” which Dante handily uses to amplify his presence within and outside the text and which affect not only the structure of the text but also the style. “el primer rasgo de su estructura –acaso el más original y moderno- que desde luego la coloca aparte de todos los grandes poemas de cualquier literatura [es] el giro exclusivamente personal del relato –caracterizado por el empleo invariable del pronombre y verbo en primera persona” (60) over the entire course of the book. As Groussac notes, previous Classical works tended to be essentially impersonal, while Dante mirrors himself on all fronts as author, character, historical figure, critic, and reader. Because of this, he considered Dante “el coloso de la poesía unipersonal”, and this characteristic was tied to the concrete, clear, and efficient style of his prose.

Esta presencia constante y activa del poeta en las escenas desarrolladas por su potente fantasía, les confiere un extraordinario vigor de realidad, que en todas ellas se integra y refuerza, logrando a trechos vida y relieve alucinatorios, por la

virtud soberana de la imaginación creadora y la eficacia incomparablemente concreta y densa del estilo (Groussac 60).

This is linked to another focus point mentioned only in passing in the essay, the notion of the Classical author and the manner in which such a vaunted position required the disciplined “sanción del tiempo para lograr todo su destino”, which is to say, “es añosa por definición, pues solo así se llama cuando ha recibido la prolongada consagración del sufragio público [...] para alcanzar toda su altura y completar su desarrollo” (66). Lastly, another element which is praised in “la obra magna” is its extremely ambitious scope, which includes almost everything, “además de un simbólico viaje [es] una suma teológica, una enciclopedia de la ciencia medieval, una colección fragmentaria [...] de crónicas locales [y] una serie de episodios dramáticos y cuadros de conmovedora y esplendente poesía” (63).

Just as there are many aspects of Dante in Groussac’s critique, all of these ideas are also present and debated within Borges’ first experimental work on style, *Discusión*, as mentioned in Chapter One. Although there are few ways to prove the ties between the authors and back to Dante, there are elements of apparent esteem which Borges continued to integrate in his own literary work. I am referring to the stylistic studies by Amado Alonso which confirm the triad of Groussac, Reyes, and Borges along the common traits in their style and learned from Dante’s work.

Alonso was one of the pioneers of Stylistics, and the most famous one working in Spanish, a protégé of Menéndez Pidal and student of Croce and the Harvard professor Karl Vossler. Although he met Reyes first at the beginning of the twentieth century, he became a friend to both since he moved to Buenos Aires from 1927 to 1942 and there founded *La Revista de Filología Hispánica*, staying in contact with both writers. Alonso was definitely an active participant in their

conversations on style and a fundamental<sup>202</sup> influence, allowing Borges and Reyes to get benefit from aspects of Dante's style. It is hard to pinpoint the dates when the three essays on the style of each writer, since they were published posthumously in the book *Materia y Forma en Poesía*. Only the essay on Groussac can be traced, given that it was previously published in a book of homage by the periodical *Síntesis* immediately following his death, in August of 1929. My focus will be some of the stylistic characteristics common to the three writers, according to Alonso, and with special emphasis on the mastery of their clear, precise, efficient style as well as their shared encyclopedic, erudite, and Universalist style.

Alonso's essay, "Paul Groussac estilista", closely matches Borges' own essay of the same period, "Paul Groussac", which identify the greatest inheritance from Groussac is his writing style. Alonso states that Groussac's definition of style is his own credo and defines his writing: "estilo: el cual consiste para nosotros en rehuir la redundancia, los adjetivos parásitos y las frases hechas, esforzándonos por ceñir el objeto con el vocablo expresivo y el giro personal" (Alonso 339). He asserts that the virtue of Groussac's style lies in the avoidance of vices (304) and the attempt to avoid, or ridicule "la prosa clasicista con que todo escritor vestía su pensamientos" (341). He states: "no se trata de combinar vocablos espejados o de halagar al oído con una sucesión acertada

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<sup>202</sup> See the posthumous tribute Alfonso Reyes does to Amado Alonso in *La Nueva Revista de Filología Hispánica* in the first semester of 1953. After mentioning his close friendship with Alonso during both periods when he lived in Buenos Aires as a diplomat, he states: "A lo largo de los años, se robustecieron los lazos que nos unían. Mucho nos enseñó, y mucho más hubiera podido enseñarnos. Su crítica literaria –inspirada en la doctrina estilística, pero no asfixiada por ella- se aplica a los clásicos y a los modernos..." ("Amado" 1-2)

de sonos” (354) and “con una prosa momificada en España [...] llena de floripondios, de tumores metafóricos en América... los adjetivos no se amotinan alrededor de un sustantivo con la vana esperanza de explicarlo en vocerío, sino que en cada ocasión habla el más pertinente” and has “la obligación de seleccionar” (343). “Rechazaba toda palabra que no se acomodara de forma perfecta en el texto lo cual lo hacía ser un eterno revisionista de sus textos y poseía un riquísimo vocabulario” (343). Alonso indicates that Groussac perfectly embodies the art of “arquitecturar el pensamiento” with a “limpio manejo de prosa” and building “párrafos disciplinados” (). Alonso places emphasis on the manner in which he “ciñe las palabras a su pensamiento sin salirse de la corrección gramatical y de una minuciosa labor de selección” (347), as well as the artistic force of the highest order (349) which create rich imagery and are integrated with vital interests. Economy of language and mind (350), in addition to intellectual and communicative efficacy through simplicity, make Groussac’s style even more perfect, according to Alonso. “estilo excelente, magnífico y sus admiradores me tienen en su compañía... la prosa de Groussac es magistral como arte de ceñirse a lo razonador y discursivo... es perfecta” (353). Furthermore, Alonso already suggests in this essay that the inheritors of Groussac’s prosaic style are Reyes and Borges. He states: “en vez de aquella lourde *épée a deux mains espagnole* que era nuestra lengua, hoy tienen en sus manos nuestros mejores escritores jóvenes – lo mismo en México que en España y Argentina...” (341). It is, therefore, not coincidental that this essay on Groussac is followed by essays on Reyes and on Borges, respectively.

Lastly, another trait which Alonso attributes to Groussac’s writing is the collaboration between the writer and the reader in the creation of a work of art, just as the listener contributes to speech (342). This does not prevent Groussac from attaining the greatest virtuosity in his style, calculating his discursive choices like a chessmaster planning out a series of actions (346). Borges

would take up this theme and explore it in many variations in his work, allowing him to keep the story open to many interpretations by the reader while also allowing the author to create an architecture that has predicted the majority of interpretations possible.

In the essay “Alfonso Reyes”, Alonso also repeats much of what he has written about Groussace, but in a more structured way. He places emphasis on his erudition and the just balance to his thinking and language both in his essays and fiction. “Reyes critica, comenta y nos cuenta, y siempre es exacto en el juicio, en la emoción y en el recuerdo”(364). The style of each is essentially the same, “su prosa, tensa y medida, pensada en voz mesurada, transparente en el pensamiento de línea pura, y rezumando jugos vitales de emoción y de estimación; la fantasía sujeta a la arquitectura estimativa y emocional; si es preciso el autor toma la parte del lector”. Aside from this essay, there is a famous letter which Alonso wrote to Reyes, giving him a lesson on stylistic theory in general, feeding Reyes’ insatiable curiosity in all areas. Although it does not embark on generalisations, the letter refers to Dante as one of the greatest examples of dynamism and the embodiment of his time (84).

Alonso’s essay, “Borges, narrador”, also echoes much of what was discussed with respect to Groussac and Reyes. It can be deduced that the article was written at some point after *Historia Universal de la Infamia* in 1935, which is cited as the first time Borges applied the refined style he had recently learned, but before *Jardín de senderos que se bifurcan* in 1941 and also before Alonso finally left to teach at Harvard. In other words, Alonso detected a profound shift in Borges’ style, even before he published his masterpieces; a style which had been tested and polished. Apart from his “escrupulosa erudición” and the way he toyed with genres and literary conventions, a trait Groussac admired in Dante, Alonso notes in Borges a “privilegiado nivel estilístico” (368) with “una voluntad de precisión y concisión” and, in turn, a “predominio intelectualista de la literatura

de Borges” (369). This was not always the case, Alonso also notes the “cuidadosa justeza y perfección” in Borges’ expression which differs from his earlier work.

El salto con que este libro aventaja a sus hermanos anteriores está en la prosa. Una prosa magistral en un sentido cualitativamente literario y no por lucidas triquiñuelas de pluscuamperfectos y de gorgoritos léxico. De las tres clases de escritores, los que lo piensan antes de escribir, los que piensan mientras escriben y los que no lo piensan ni piensan, Borges es de los primeros. El pensamiento adquiere siempre una forma rigurosa y las palabras van a tiro hecho. Economía y condensación. Borges llega a tener aquí estilo de calidad. Las palabras y las frases le nacen dispuestas de tal modo que aparecen repletas de sentido [...] la bala certera da en el objeto nombrado y las palabras sueltan nutridas perdigonadas estimativas y emocionales (Alonso 372).

Alonso compares Borges’ new style to his previous *Gongorist* leanings, but also with respect to his *Ultraista* period. Among the qualities of Borges’ new writing, Alonso also notes a “poder plástico en la presentación de las personas y sus ademanes”, and the manner in which “se instala endopáticamente en los personajes [...]”, “todos sus personajes, por más meteóricos que sean, son personas” (374). Lastly, Alonso also makes mention of the multifaceted use of autobiographical forms (374), just as Groussac admired in Dante.

It is clear that there is a series of stylistic elements and other characteristics of Borges’ writing also present in Reyes and in Groussac which, in turn, resulted from various stages studying style in *The Divina Commedia* and led to new, liberal hybrids of form which were extremely productive. These stylistic manifestations grew and evolved over different periods of Borges’ works, supplemented by new theories, in different essays from *La Historia de la eternidad* or the various essays on Dante which were published towards the end of the 1940s and would later take

new form in *Nueve Ensayos Dantescos*. This final work can be considered Borges' great stylistic credo on Dante.

### 3.6. Borges' constant revisionism

With regards to Borges' revisions of his own works, it can be said that the corpus of his work can be considered as a grand anthological collection, as Annick Louis (*Jorge Luis Borges: Obra Y Maniobras*) and Rafael Olea Franco ("Borges, Precursor de Borges: la constitución de las obras completas como una antología"<sup>203</sup>) contest. While distancing himself from *Criollismo* and *Vanguardismo*, Borges' first reaction was to reject the books of essays that he had published at the time (*Tamaño de mi esperanza*, *Inquisiciones*, and *El idioma de los Argentinos*), and the final expression of this rejection is that he will mutilate his works by initiating a very early and paradoxical process of selection of his *Obras Completas* with publisher Emecé since 1953. There is also extensive reediting and modifications to the poetry published thus far.

According to Louis, Borges' public image and his works are inseparable and sensitive to the reception they meet, especially in terms of fame and prestige<sup>204</sup>). This reception is the motor behind the modifications and adjustments, which in turn makes it extremely difficult to follow the chronology of Borges' works, as it becomes the equivalent of discussing the chronology of the edits and alterations to these same works. In a game of smoke and mirrors Borges allows for some

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<sup>203</sup> In *Márgenes del Canon* by Antonio Cajero.

<sup>204</sup> In complete agreement with Annick Louis in an interview for the periodical *Clarín*: "Borges siempre fue muy consciente del peso de su figura, así como de los mecanismos de acceso a la fama, por eso en diferentes momentos seleccionó lo que él quería mostrar como su obra". In the article "Borges no borra ni reescribe, hace montaje", *Clarín*, Argentina, August 31, 2015.

information to become more, or less, accessible by cancelling and recuperating works that appear in his authorized complete works.

Therefore it is important to keep in mind the textual uprooting and recycling (concepts put forth by Annick Louis) present in the works of Borges and that also have the objective of generating multiplicity. It becomes thus fundamental to any study of the very same works to take into account the genealogy of the texts that might not always coincide with a chronological order. This is skilfully exemplified in “Pierre Menard, autor del Quijote”: if a text is rewritten, it becomes another text, the same is true for republications. Borges uses many times fragments of a text that he will cut and paste in different places, creating a sort of patchwork. Borges’ literature works with areas of indetermination. In the uprooting of texts he leaves clues, marks, and trails to what they were.

To a large extent, the 1920s were a period of fluctuation between two contrasting literary positions, as discussed in Chapter One: *Vanguardista* and *Criollista*. At that point he was not preoccupied with displaying his Anglophilia at all. On the contrary, Borges was flaunting his roots, knowledge, and positioned himself as the direct embodiment of the Argentine literary tradition, seeking for his place as a key figure of that very same tradition. As such, it is not a coincidence that he wrote at this time his first, and very concise, autobiographical note in an anthology (not to be confounded with the book *Autobiographical Notes* from 1970), namely the *Antología de la poesía moderna* (1900–1925), in which he emphasizes his “pura raigambre criolla” (Lefere 145). The consonance between the content of this anthology and what Borges highlights in his autobiography is hardly noticeable. The characteristic that comes out is his “localismo” and he also advances his birth date by a year (1900) in an effort to associate himself with the literary tendencies of the new century, rather than to give his real birth date (1899) and risk being associated with the rundown

literary models of the 1800s. Contrastingly, in the years in which Borges enjoyed worldwide recognition and fame he showed a lot more interest in emphasizing that he was born at the turn of the century<sup>205</sup> to integrate the Classical and Universalist traditions. These details illustrate a change in affiliation, preferring the universal to the local and a proud display of his Anglophilia, all of which corresponds to a new literary project and a change in the conception of literature.

Through this process of revisionism, books and poems undergo many changes, mainly the elimination of Baroque or expansive traits, and also references to popular culture (vocabulary such as *usté*, *propiedá*, etc.) as well as *lunfardismos*. Yet despite these efforts, with the intent to erase or linguistically purge all *lunfardismos* in a region defined by immigrants' foreign words and expressions (above all, Italian), even Borges could not eliminate them all, until later editions.

A concrete example of this operation, specific to Italianised material is a famous poem entitled "El general Quiroga va en coche al muere" from the book *Luna de enfrente* (1925). The poem was originally written for the first edition of the book, when Borges had started using *criollista* elements, in addition to the use of the nationalistic material used in the poem. However, such a selection presupposes the use of popular and *criollo* words and expressions of extended use, all the while avoiding foreign words and *lunfardo*. The first version of the poem reads:

El madrejón desnudo ya sin una *sé* de agua

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<sup>205</sup> In *Conversaciones con Fernando Sorrentino* he says:

Nací el 24 de agosto del año 1899. Esto me agrada porque me gusta mucho el siglo XIX; aunque podríamos usar como argumento en contra del siglo XIX el hecho de haber producido en siglo XX, que me parece algo menos admirable" (Sorrentino 11).

y la luna atorrando por el frío del alba  
 y el campo muerto de hambre, pobre como una araña (OC 122, 137, 147 ,  
 vol. 1)

The word *sé* (instead of “sed”) is obviously a common *Criollismo* or even colloquialism of the kind that Borges starts to intercalate in his writing. Nevertheless, the *Lunfardo* verb *atorrar* (not included in *el Diccionario de la Real Academia de la Lengua Española*) remains open to debate, as the president of the Academia Porteña del Lunfardo Oscar Conde attests<sup>206</sup>. It can mean to sleep, of unknown etymology, or perhaps from the Sicilian *atturrari*, which means to toast, or the Italian *attorniare*, which is a synonym of *circondare* or *frequentare*, less obvious Italianisms which Borges would not have known and could only be from its common use in Buenos Aires. But in the final version of the same poem we can observe some changes:

El madrejón desnudo ya sin una sed de agua  
 y la luna perdida en el frío del alba  
 y el campo muerto de hambre, pobre como una araña”  
 (OC 122, vol. 1; Sacarano *Concordanze* 102)

We can see that “*sé*” was replaced with “*sed*”, and “*perdida en*”, is replacing “*atorrando por*”. The term “*atorrar*” was in common use among the lower classes and was included in the first edition of the first *Lunfardo* dictionary by Antonio Dellepiane in 1894. Borges only used this verb in some early works and its use was later suppressed in all of his work. His friend Bioy Casares used it, as well as a variety of other *Lunfardismos*, in many works without any apparent effort to

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<sup>206</sup> Según varias declaraciones y su propio Diccionario Etimológico Del Lunfardo. Buenos Aires: Taurus, 2004. Print.

eliminate them later. In fact, the first collaborations between Borges and Bioy are filled with *Lunfardismos*, as Otilia da Veiga (32), a researcher from the Academia del Lunfardo, has attested, many of them of Italian origin or derivation. In this case, however, Borges was protected by writing in collaboration and under the pseudonyms Honorio Bustos Domecq and Benito Suárez Lynch. In another book which includes *Dos fantasías memorables*, and including “El testigo” and “El signo”, and in the novella *Un modelo para la muerte*, published in 1942 under pseudonym, there are numerous Italian *Lunfardismos*. These include, but are not limited to *manya/manyatina* (from the verb *mangiare*, to eat), *lungo* (large or tall), *minga* (from Milanese no), *milanesa* (lie), *pesto* (beating, taken from the verb *pestare*, meaning crush), and *serata* (late or night). There is also wordplay which use Italian suffixes or expressions to modify, like *Locatelli*, an Italian nickname to say *loco* or *loca* or “*que le garúe Finocchietto*” which is a version of “*que lo garúe finito*”, an expression to say goodbye on less than good terms, among others.

Perhaps it is easier to visualise the transition and changes in style in his writing by analysing the texts associated with the famous story “Hombre de la esquina Rosada”, which underwent various stages of development in diverse styles and creative periods along with the author. In his most embryonic phase, in 1927, there was a text called “Leyenda Policial”<sup>207</sup> and whose title would later be changed to “Hombres pelearon” in 1928 in the book *El idioma de los argentinos*. Borges used very few *Lunfardismos*, such as *guapo*, *batuque*, *taita*, *boliche*, *barra*, and *tallar*. But those that were used were carefully selected, never of Italian origin except for the verb *atorrar*, also used in this text in relation to the moon. Just as in the poem, this was eliminated in the later, definitive version of the story. “Hombres pelearon” was accompanied by the story “Sentirse en muerte”,

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<sup>207</sup> Published in the periodical *Martín Fierro* February 26, 1927.

which prepares the site of the fight with a degree of lyricism, long descriptions, and constructions that are needlessly complex<sup>208</sup> and recall his Gongorist phase. In contrast, the story “Hombres pelearon”, which exists in tandem and is grouped along with it under the title “Dos esquinas”, uses short sentences or coordinated expressions rather than complex ones, accompanied by the use of a lower-class language but still without the oral style of *malevos* or *guapos*. There are only a few timid forays into oral style, such as *usté*, which only appears once, *pa’*, again only appearing once, or the nickname “El Mentao”.

The lengthier version to follow, entitled “Hombres de las orillas” was published in the daily paper *Crítica* on September 16, 1933. In addition to many changes to the story, he also adopts a language closer to that of his *Criollista* or Localist phase, such as *laos* rather than *lados*, *güen* for *buen*, *dende* for *desde*, *naidés* for *nadie*, *juera* for *fuera*, *trujo* for *trajo*, as well as cutting final consonants, such as *soledá*, *amistá*, *usté*, *autoridá*, *aporriao*, *colorao*, *estao*, and *finao*, among others. This serves to emphasise the oral style, making the narrator one of the *orilleros* who also takes part in the plot. The version called “Hombres de las orillas” is very similar to “Hombre de la esquina Rosada”, other than reducing many of the excessive colloquialisms and orally-styled

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<sup>208</sup> For example, to say “un lugar desconocido”, he would say “localidad no visitada por mi costumbre, y cuya distancia de la que después recorrí, ya me desfamiliarizó esa jornada” (129) or, rather than “caminé sin rumbo fijo” he would say “procuré una máxima latitud de probabilidades para no cansar la expectativa con la obligatoria antevisión de una sola de ellas. Realicé en la mala medida de lo posible, eso que llaman caminar al azar; acepté, sin otro consciente prejuicio que el de soslayar las avenidas o calles anchas, las mas oscuras intimaciones de la casualidad” (130).

expressions<sup>209</sup>. Additionally, given that the intent was to create an impression of the oral through direct and indirect discourse, precisely to create authenticity with respect to the language on the streets, Borges had to return to *Lunfardismos*. Nevertheless, it must be noted that despite the setting on the banks of the Italian Palermo<sup>210</sup> neighbourhood, Borges is derogatory towards Italian immigrants in the story. When Francisco Real “Corralero” enters the alley, “la esquina rosada”, to challenge Rosendo Juárez “el Pegador”, he must go through the roof and his audience seems to be set into levels. The first level is the group of Italians, described as a curious throng, but undignified and cowardly:

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<sup>209</sup> I mention only a few of the alterations. While in “Hombres de las orillas” oral expressions are clear, such as *pal cuchillo*, *inoraba*, *chapas de cin y güeltitas*, etc. In “Hombre de la esquina rosada” these expression are revised to *para el cuchillo*, *ignoraba*, *chapas de cinc*, and *vueltitas*. Intentional errors in spelling which do not contribute to an oral style are also corrected: *Barquinasos / fustaso / y ese era .../ ese jué / antebrazo* in “Hombres de las orillas” become *Barquinazos/ fustazo /y ése era... / ése jué / antebrazo*.

<sup>210</sup> Starting from the “Dos esquinas” version which includes “Sentirse en muerte” and “Hombres pelearon” in *El idioma de los argentinos*, Palermo is described in a lyrical, positive manner: “unos barrios de cuyo nombre siempre quiero acordarme y que dictan reverencia a mi pecho. No quiero significar así el barrio mío, el preciso ámbito de la infancia, sino sus todavía misteriosas inmediaciones: confín que he poseído entero en palabras y poco en realidad, vecino y mitológico a un tiempo”. This is reminiscent of the description of Palermo in his autobiography due to similar elements, but there with negative connotations.

Siguió como si tal cosa, adelante. Siguió siempre más alto que cualquiera de los que iba despartando, siempre como sin ver. Los primeros –puro italianaje mirón- se abrieron como abanico, apurados. La cosa no duró. En el montón siguiente ya estaba el Inglés esperándolo (OC 629, vol. 1).

The second layer, of more value, was English and would wind up being his opponent. Given this image of Italians in the story, it is no surprise that the numerous *Lunfardismos* do not include ones of Italian origin or meaning; the story is performing the same task as his earlier phase as a *Criollista* writer, dedicated to the purification of the Argentinean identity, personified in the “arrabales” and “compadritos”, to the “*criollo*” language. The most important Argentinean national works linked to identity were associated with “gauchos”, but Borges complemented this with a mythical version of Buenos Aires, including the suburban ghettos at the borders of the pampa, gaucho territory par excellence, as well as the metropolis; Buenos Aires would itself wind up dictating the politics, structure, and, to a large extent, the identity of the country in the twentieth century. Of the *Lunfardismos* in the story, such as *tallar*, *quilombo*, *mentas*, *barra*, *crenchas*, *chinas*, *yuyo*, *guapo*, *ñudo*, *guacha*, and *fiyingo*, among others, only two are Italian: *corso* (from *corso*) and *biaba* (from *biava* in various Italian dialects or smashed together).

After “Hombre de la esquina rosada”, in his later years Borges wrote a sequel to the story, this time making Rosendo Juárez the protagonist and narrator of the story and entitling it “Historia de Rosendo Juárez”, published alone in 1969 and collected in *El informe de Brodie* in 1970. The style of this story is completely distinct, the expression of the famous, mature Borges, with short, clear sentences and with almost no *Lunfardismos* except those of common usage in Buenos Aires, with few of Italian origin (only using *yuyos*, *quilombo*, and *guapo*), and without expressions common in his *Criollista* phase; instead of *güen*, *dende*, *naiques*, *usté*, *autoridá*, *colorao*, *estao*, and

*finao* we see the correct spellings of *buen, desde, nadie, usted, autoridad, colorado, estado* and *finado*.

Nevertheless, despite of the extreme care and workmanship that characterises Borges relationship with his work, we can still find other Italian *Lunfardismos* as they are intertwined with the colloquialisms of Argentina and very difficult to exclude. Sometimes Argentineans themselves regularly employ them never knowing they are using a *Lunfardismo*. This theory necessitates further study to support or contest it, closely comparing the distinct editions and corrections to his texts.

### 3.7. Anthologies Adopting a Literary Position in the 1940s and 50s

Let's return to the period of the conception of Borges' definitive style and the development of his own literary voice. At this time, Borges had laid out this new literary style in *Discusión* and had begun to implement this style in *Historia Universal de la Infamia* as well as some of his early short stories, such as "El acercamiento a Almotásim" (1936) and "Pierre Menard, autor del Quijote" (1939), which were later incorporated into *Ficciones*. He felt secure enough to place himself within a very well-defined literary field which would not only lead him to a prominent position within the Argentinean literary tradition, but also revealed the possibilities of this literary style in a larger literary context and made an early foray into Universalism. At the beginning of 1940s, Borges placed himself in a very strategic position in both camps; in the Argentinean national literary tradition through the publication<sup>211</sup> of *La Antología poética Argentina* and in the

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<sup>211</sup> Exclusively in South America in 1941.

genre of fantasy literature mainly through the publication<sup>212</sup> of his famous *Antología del la literatura fantástica*.

*La Antología poética Argentina* marks a transformation in Borges' writing style and sets out the path he was to follow. Although the title might give the impression that the anthology covers the entire literary production of the country since its founding, it is comprised only of authors of the twentieth century and with a heavier incidence of authors from the latter half of the century and many of whom were part of Borges' network of friends and acquaintances.<sup>213</sup> There are but a few undisputable literary references to writers of the early part of the century such as Lugones, but only in critique within the prologue for "las fealdades endémicas de Lugones, sus lapsos de mal gusto". This is to say, such references are included more as an illustration of what writers must break away from in the outdated literary tradition and how to innovate in Argentinean literature. "Lugones, cuya obra prefigura casi todo el proceso ulterior, desde las inconexas metáforas de ultraísmo, [...] hasta las límpidas y complejas estrofas de nuestro mejor poeta

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<sup>212</sup> First published by a South American publisher in 1940, but later editions in 1965 and 1970 made additions and significant changes to this first edition.

<sup>213</sup> This includes Borges' flings or impossible loves such as Norah Lange, Elvira de Alvear, Wally Zener (although misspelled), and very dear friends and acquaintances such as Adolfo Bioy Casares, Silvina Ocampo, Roberto Godel, Ezequiel Martínez Estrada, Brandán Caraffa, Luis Bernárdez, José Pedroni, Nicolás Olivari, Eduardo González Lanuza, Carlos Mastronardi, Ricardo Molinari, Ulyses Petit de Murat, etc. There are still other inclusions of dubious authorship, such as Juan Bautista Bioy, which was the name of Adolfo Bioy Casares' paternal grandfather, who was a previously unpublished writer and was likely included in jest.

contemporáneo Ezequiel Martínez Estrada” (8). This sentence itself represents a call to arms, with Borges’ departing from the *Ultraísta* movement and breaking from tradition and entering into the writing style he would adopt which is as profound as it is complex, both in terms of thought and references. In point of fact, the element which is redeemed from Lugones’ work conforms to the writing style which Borges leads: “tal vez Lugones fue el primer poeta argentino que cuidó cada línea, cada epíteto, cada verbo” (9).

As the writer of the prologue, Borges declares from the start that “[no] se empeña en simular una erudición que linda con la omnisciencia” and that his<sup>214</sup> selections are hedonistic and subjective, only in accordance with his taste. As with any subjective choice, there are certain criteria which clearly take precedence. Apart from breaking with previous tradition, which is considered excessive or tedious, and defending a clear, calculated writing style with “piezas contemporáneas, locales”, Borges further seeks to distinguish himself from two other contemporary movements: *Criollismo* with its focus on socio-political engagement as well as *Vanguardismo*, the Avant-Garde. The criticism of the limitations of *Ultraísmo* separates Borges from his own past within the movement. The critique of politically-engaged<sup>215</sup> literature is more brutal, being completely absent from the selections, and cuts Borges’ ties to his former *Criollista-Nacionalista* period.

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<sup>214</sup> This is written in the first person, although Silvina Ocampo and Bioy Casares were also listed as contributors.

<sup>215</sup> About this he says: “Ahora se prefieren las distinciones religioso-políticas: interminablemente oigo hablar de poetas marxista, neotomistas, nacionalistas

Similarly, Borges chooses to distance himself from all popular literature or which includes too much “local colour”. The practical implications of this are that Borges explicitly dismisses octo-syllabic romances, which were common in popular literature, as well as any poet who employs *Lunfardismos*, which were common in popular poetry, Tango music, and in the ordinary speech of a country which was highly Italianised. For instance, he attempts to redeem Almafuerte, a poet who Borges felt was unjustly forgotten, but rejects his popular work, replete with *Lunfardismos*, which, according to Borges “depravaron o entorpecieron la jerigonza de los diarios y el arrabal” (8). About this popular literature, Borges states: “Es muy sabido que los literatos veneran lo popular: siempre que les permita un glosario y una pompa crítica [...] celebran y comentan las payadas de los gauchescos [...] las letras de tango [y piensan] ¡Ahí está lo argentino!” (11).

All of this paves the way for Borges’ new style and literary manifesto. This anthology serves to announce his own literary journey to come and establish a poetic position within the Argentinean literary tradition. Prophetically, he proclaims a role yet to be filled: “A diferencia de los bárbaros Estados Unidos, este país (este continente) no ha producido un escritor de influjo mundial – un Emerson, un Whitman, un Poe...” (11). And yet, it would be twenty years before Borges would return to poetry.

With regards to Borges’ position on prose, we have *La Antología de la literatura fantástica*. This anthology is a milestone in Latin American literary history, published in 1940 by *Sudamericana* magazine and revised and expanded in 1965. It was not only a sort of new credo or statement, but also laid the foundation for the literary style that Borges would come to represent and lead, given his didactic or even evangelical tendency as previously analysed by Daniel Balderston (*De la Antología* 104).

The anthology was compiled in collaboration with Silvina Ocampo and Bioy Casares. They are clearly strategically positioned in this prosaic literary genre<sup>216</sup> given that they insert some of their own texts among the many national and international authors selected, including world-famous writers like Kafka, Joyce, Don Juan Manuel, Chesterton, Lugones, Lewis Carroll, Allan Poe, Wells, Kipling, etc. In the second prologue to the edition of 1965, Bioy describes himself as “un bien intencionado ardor sectario por parte de los antólogos”. The anthology was launched in the very same year that Borges published several of the stories<sup>217</sup> that would be included in the book *El jardín de senderos que se bifurcan* in 1941 and the first section of the book *Ficciones* in 1944. At this point, Borges had already written enough theory on Dante’s style and as a result the book is entirely made up of short texts which avoid the verbose style of *Gongorismo* or the realist, localist aesthetic or “local colour” popular at the time.

Beyond the style, there are two further aspects of the anthology which can be analysed with respect to Italian literature. The inclusion of a story by May Sinclair bears mentioning, as it develops the story of Paolo and Francesca from the famous fifth canto of *The Divina Commedia*,

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<sup>216</sup> A few weeks before the anthology was published, Bioy had just published *La invención de Morel*, which would be his most famous work, and Silvina Ocampo had in 1937 published her collection of short stories *Viaje olvidado*. Although the story “La expiación” by Silvina Ocampo was added to the second edition, she was already listed as a contributor to the anthology.

<sup>217</sup> Apart from “El acercamiento a Almotásim” and “Pierre Menard, autor del Quijote” which had previously been published, in the same year as *Antología de la literatura fantástica* (1940), other famous stories were published, including “Tlon, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius” and “Las Ruinas circulares”, which make up half of the book and to which 4 more stories were added in 1941.

“questi, che mai, da me, non fia diviso, la bocca mi baccio tutto tremante” (Canto V, v. 136). This was a motif Borges favoured, similar to another story relating to *The Inferno* by Swedenborg. Of the greatest importance, however, is that fact that the only Italian author included in the anthology was Giovanni Papini, an author previously mentioned in Chapter One. Papini was not only the contemporary Italian author which Borges most admired, but also the one who most influenced his work creatively.

Borges preferred Papini’s early fantasy writing above all others, and three books in particular: *Il trágico quotidiano* (1906), *Il pilota cieco* (1907) and, to a lesser degree *Parole e sangue* (1912). The story which was selected for *La Antología de la literatura fantástica* was “La última visita del caballero enfermo”, from the original “L’ultima visita del gentiluomo malato”, translator unknown, and came from *Il trágico quotidiano*. In this story, the narrator/protagonist realises that he is the product of the dream of another person who is asleep, he only began to exist when the other began to dream, and that he is condemned to die when the other character wakes up.<sup>218</sup> According to Roger Caillois, this story by Papini is the clearest source of inspiration of one of the most famous stories written by Borges, “Las ruinas circulares”, which was published by *Sur* magazine (year X, no. 75, Dec. 1940) just months after the anthology and which would later be included in the book *Ficciones*.

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<sup>218</sup> In a piece published in 1975 entitled “Lo specchio che fugge” (originally published in Italian) which included this story, Borges states in the introduction that the story “presenta in modo intimo, nuovo e triste il secolare sospetto che il mondo — e nel mondo, noi — altro non si sia che i sogni di un sognatore segreto”.

It is evident that the story introduces Idealist concepts which Borges was taking in and would later apply in many of his stories: the man out of a dream, or the lack of distinction between fiction, dream, and reality, or, as Paoli wrote “nella favola filosofica di Papini hanno potuto concorrere le grandi filosofie dell'apparenza, dal buddismo a Schopenhauer, da Platone a Berkeley, nonché tutti i maggiori rinunciatori letterari dell'equazione vita-sogno” (Paoli *Papini* 330). This idea will, upon occasion, become associated with another aspect of Dante and of Papini, the multiplication of self, which is also a theme associated with Idealist theory. The story “L'ultima visita del gentiluomo malato” was the most mentioned and repeated<sup>219</sup> story by Borges.

Between the fantasy anthology and the later anthology of fantasy short stories, *Cuentos breves y extraordinarios* (1955), Borges would publish the most prestigious work of his entire career. There is a period of 15 years which can be distinguished for the greatest number of references to Dante in Borges' work outside of *Nueve Ensayos Dantescos*. This was a period when Borges was studying Dante and taking prodigious notes, and also when he published the first versions of some of his essays on Dante.<sup>220</sup> In each of the essays on Dante, different aspects of

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<sup>219</sup> As we shall see, this would later be republished in the collections *La Biblioteca di Babele* and *Biblioteca Personal*.

<sup>220</sup> These essays began as private notes, but he began to publish them in 1946: “La última sonrisa de Beatriz” (1947); “El encuentro en un sueño” (1948); “El enigma de *Ulises*” (1948); “El seudo problema de Ugolino” (1948); “El Simurgh y el águila” (1948); “El último viaje de Ulises” (1948); “El verdugo piadoso” (1948); “Estudio preliminar” (1949), that will be the base of the prologue for the a republication of the *Divina Commedia* in the argentinean collection *Los clásicos Jackson*; and “El noble castillo del canto cuarto” (1951). The only essay to be added in *Nueve Ensayos*

style and authorship are analysed; this will be explored further in the last section, focused on *Nueve Ensayos Dantescos*. Each of the *Dantesque* elements examined in his essays were also applied to his creative work;<sup>221</sup> generally, but not exclusively, in short stories. The analysis of the history and progression of these elements in Borges' work and their application in his fiction merits its own intense study beyond the constraints of this thesis. Nevertheless, I shall limit myself to its role at the core of the most important works by Borges.

The publication of the anthology *Cuentos breves y extraordinarios* in 1955 must be seen as the realization of Borges' goal to dedicate himself to the fantasy genre, as he had announced or prophesied in *La Antología de la literatura fantástica*. It also marks the end to a creative phase, since Borges had almost completely lost his vision by this point. Having prepared for this, Borges had put pressure on himself in 1953 to finish putting together his Complete Works, mostly incomplete in *Emecé*. Later works would mostly recycle motifs from this early creative period.

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*Dantescos* in 1982 that would be completely new was “*Purgatorio I, 13*” (1982). The rest were modified versions from those essays written in the 1940s.

<sup>221</sup> The texts from the 1940s and 50s which mention Dante directly or deal with *Dantesque* themes are, in *Ficciones* (1944), “Tres versiones de Judas” which mentions in passing three interpretations of the figure of Judas and, in the book *El Aleph* (1949) in “Historia del guerrero y la cautiva”, “la otra muerte”, “El Zahir”, “La escritura del Dios”, “Abenjacán el Bojarí, muerto en su laberinto”, “La espera”, and “el Aleph”, which is the most studied. In his essays there are also mentions or elements that resonate with Dante in the collection *Otras inquisiciones* (1952): in “La esfera de Pascal”, “Quevedo”, “Nathaniel Hawthorne”, “Kafka y sus precursores”, “De las alegorías a las novelas”, “Nota sobre (hacia) Bernard Shaw”, and “Sobre los clásicos”.

Amidst this heterogeneous collection, the only thing which these texts from around the world and different time periods have in common is the hedonistic interest of the anthologists, Borges and Bioy, and the effectiveness of the stories, achieved through brevity and conciseness.

The collection ends with an apocryphal text about Dante by the apocryphal author Benito Suárez Lynch, as previously mentioned, an invention of Borges and Bioy. This text is cited as coming from the nonexistent book *Estudios Dantescos*, which is supposed to have been published in Buenos Aires in 1891. The short story is written with a light tone, based on Dante's surprise that regular people did not recognise Beatrice, the muse behind *The Divina Commedia* as well as *Vita Nuova*. This passage too is an invention. The result is a *Borgesian* jest, most likely a mockery of literary criticism based largely on supposition or speculations rather than evidence in the text itself; something which Dante may have seen or thought, but which cannot truly be proven.

#### EL MUNDO ES ANCHO Y AJENO

En el capítulo XI<sup>222</sup> [sic], de la *Vida Nueva*, Dante refiere que al recorrer las calles de Florencia vio unos peregrinos y pensó con algún asombro que ninguno de ellos había oído hablar de Beatriz Portinari, que tanto preocupaba su pensamiento.

B.Suárez Lynch, *Estudios dantescos* (Buenos Aires, 1891), (*Cuentos breves* 152).

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<sup>222</sup> Not sure if this is a typo or a voluntary mistake given the ludic nature of this text, as it was done in an apocryphal text from an apocryphal author by Borges and Bioy. In reality the pilgrims are mentioned in Canti XL and XLI.

The title itself, “El mundo es ancho y ajeno”, can be seen as a critique of one of the most famous pieces of Indigenous or Regionist literature, a book of the same name by Ciro Alegría. As well, it announces that Borges and Bioy are working against this writing style, popular at the time. This anthology is diametrically opposed, using brevity and conciseness as well as Universalist themes in place of the local, as derived from Dante. This short text closes the book and affirms this with humour.

### 3.8. The Years of the 1960s and 70s in Contrast: Entering the International Scene with the Formentor.

The second period when motifs and references to Dante arise in Borges’ work falls around the time of his Formentor prize win in 1961, both slightly before and after. This was followed by a period spent under the influence of Thomas di Giovanni in the United States and marked by recalcitrant Anglophilia and the minimisation of Italian content. Likely due to Borges’ gradual and complete loss of sight, between the 1950s and receiving the Formentor prize, launching him to world-wide fame, more and more time<sup>223</sup> would pass between publications in any genre and what

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<sup>223</sup> In prose, there are almost 20 years separating *El Aleph* (1949) and *El informe Brodie* (1970). Almost 30 years passed between the book of essays *Otras Inquisiciones* in 1952 and the following book *Siete noches*, which was based on a series of talks he gave upon his return to Italy and which include many Italian motifs and themes from Dante and which will be discussed later. He had abandoned poetry in 1929 after *Cuaderno San Martín*, shortly before entering his creative maturity and would not return to poetry until 1960 with *El Hacedor*, but this was put together mostly from unconnected poems which had been relegated to storage, but many of which show a marked influence from Dante.

little was published would usually collect earlier unpublished work, such as *El Hacedor*. In fact, his blindness and growing fame served to reinforce Borges' work as an anthologist and his collaborations, even if many of them were essentially dictated or otherwise directed by Borges. In the period around his Formentor prize win, Borges was a conscious participant in a satisfying intellectual community and among famous figures; there is also a notable amount of activity in relation to Italian themes at this time. Beyond essays published by the Instituto Italiano de Cultura in Argentina at this time, such as "Italia", in direct praise of Italy as the cradle of all culture, or "Mi primer encuentro con Dante" which posited Dante as the greatest Universalist author and praised his incomparable style, there was also an inspiration from Dante present in *El Hacedor* and in three further anthologies which, to various extents, related to Dante and Italy.

El manual de zoología fantástica (1958<sup>224</sup>) is a bestiary which brings together a huge number of fantastic or mythological creatures from the world over which Borges had encountered through his many readings. Yet this is far from consistent in its representation of all cultures and countries, with predominantly Italian and Latin authors and content, as is evident in the following list<sup>225</sup>:

1. Dante Alighieri- El ave fénix, Cancerbero, el Golem, el Grifo, el Minotauro, Lilith, el Monstruo Aqueronte, and el Simurg.
2. Benvenuto Cellini- la Salamandra.
3. Torquato Tasso - El Hipogrifo, las Arpías.
4. Ludovico Ariosto- El Zaratán, el Hipogrifo.

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<sup>224</sup> Republished in 1967 as *El Libro de los seres imaginarios*.

<sup>225</sup> Shown exactly as they appeared in the book without translation.

5. Giovanni Papini- el Doble.
6. Marco Polo -El Ave Roc, el Grifo and la Salamandra.
7. Leonardo Da Vinci- La pantera, el Pelicano, la Salamandra y el Unicornio.
8. Virgil- Arpías, Cancerbero, la Quimera, el Caballo del mar, el Hipogrifo and los Monóculos, el monstruo Aqueronte.
9. Brunetto Latini- la Anfisbena.
10. Benvenuto de Imola – el Pelicano.
11. Other Latin classic authors- las Lamias.
12. Pliny: La Anfisbena, el Asno de tres patas, el Ave Fénix, el Centauro, el Basilisco, el Catoblepas, el Dragón, el Caballo del Mar, la Esfinge, el Grifo, la Mandrágora, los Monóculos, el Manticora, Rémora, la Pantera, la Salamandra, el Unicornio and las Crócotas and Leucrocotas.
13. Other creatures related to Italian geography or literature - El Peritio; Escila, monster, swirl but before nymph housed between Italy and Sicily; el Hada Morgana from the Italian seas; and los Ictiocentauros, in Roman sculptures.

In 1960, Borges and Bioy Casares published *El Libro del cielo y del infierno*, an anthology which, from the very title itself, is dictated by Dante in theme, selection, and inspiration. This book opens with a epigraph from verses 32 and 33 of the second Canto in *The Inferno*.

The third of the anthologies from this period and, in fact, the same year that Borges received the Formentor Prize, was *La Antología Personal*. This was the first to collect what Borges considered his best work. Just as he had attempted in his first, early publication of Complete Works in 1953 in *Emecé*, which sought to expurgate many undesirable texts, and almost a decade before

writing his autobiography, which was also prescriptive, here too Borges was preoccupied with its reception and the legacy he would leave internationally. Beginning with the prologue, the intent to lay out a literary journey of readings “preferidas” is clear, while avoiding his early, juvenile creative stages. “Quiero ser juzgado por él [este libro], justificado o reprobado por él, no por determinados ejercicios de excesivo y apócrifo color local, que ondan por las antologías y que no puedo recordar sin rubor” (*Ant. Personal* 7).

The anthologies which he refers to are, in many cases, judged too Avant-garde or, at other times, too Regionalist or localised. Now Borges wishes to position himself as a Universalist, without ties to a particular context or locale. To this end, he contradicts Croce. “Croce juzgó que el arte es expresión; a esta exigencia, o a una deformación de esta exigencia debemos la peor literatura de este tiempo” (7). It is evident that Borges was preoccupied by his entry into posterity. For Borges, the anthology is a selection of the work which he believes to define or represent him best, but his perspective will not always remain the same; in fact, some of the choices will stand in stark relief. To illustrate this, I will analyse two editions of the same anthology.

The first edition of *La Antología Personal* published in 1960 truly reflects a surge in the *Dantesque* and Italian-influence, as can be seen in the choice of texts. The book includes: “La muerte y la brújula” (which mentions Roma<sup>226</sup>), “La trama” (about Caesar and his precursors), “El Sur” (the descent into the Inferno), “Las ruinas circulares” (about the dreamer in another dream,

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<sup>226</sup> The notion of Rome as the origin of all culture: “El mundo es un laberinto, del cual era imposible huir, pues todos los caminos, aunque fingieran ir al norte o al sur, iban realmente a Roma”. No es casual la mención de Roma porque el cuento trata de los nombres sagrados de Dios, el cual era a veces asociado con el nombre verdadero de Roma.

inspired by Papini), “el Ajedrez” (also relating to Papini), “El Golem” (relating to Dante), “Infierno I,32” (relating to *The Divina Commedia*), “La rosa amarilla” (relating to Giambattista Marino, and Dante, as well as the notion of the Classic), “Baltasar Gracián (which mentions Giambattista Marino), “Ariosto y los árabes” (relating to Ludovico Ariosto), “El Aleph” (Dante and the revelation of everything), “El Zahir” (also relating to the revelation), “La noche cíclica” (a poem about Roma and Dante’s creatures), “Historia del guerrero y la cautiva” (referring to Dante), “Paradiso XXXI, 108” (referring to Dante), “Poema conjetural” (referring to *The Divina Commedia*), “La Luna” (Ludovico Ariosto), “Arte poética” (indirect mention to Papini), “Borges y yo” (in indirect reference to Papini and Dante). This version of the anthology shows none of the pronounced English focus which Borges displayed in the 1970s. There are only three sparing references to Anglophone themes, either directly or indirectly: “El enigma de Edward Fitzgerald”, “Everything and nothing” and “Composición escrita en un ejemplar de la gesta de Beowulf”.

There is a sharp contrast in the selections for *La Nueva Antología Personal* published in 1968, at a time when Borges was residing in the United States, and under the influence of Thomas di Giovanni. This version sought to change what *La Antología Personal* represented with something new, as the new title indicates, and bring the anthology into line with the new image Borges wished to project and match the autobiography which he had begun to construct. In this anthology, Borges pushes his *Englishness* to the forefront, while texts with references to Dante or Italian culture practically disappear. English texts and themes abound: “A un poeta sajón”, “Jonathan Edwards”, “Emerson”, “Un soldado de Lee”, “Un poeta de Lee”, “Everness”, “Eiwigkeit”, “Adam Cast Forth”, “New England, 1967”, “James Joyce”, “The unending gift”, “La flor de Coleridge”, “El sueño de Coleridge”, “Nathaniel Hawthorne”, “Sobre Oscar Wilde”, “Sobre Chesterton”, y “Las Kenningar”. The only selection relating to the Italian world are: “Una

rosa amarilla”, “La esfera de Pascal” and “La escritura de Dios”. In point of fact, the selection of texts, as we see clearly in *La Nueva Antología Personal*, works in tandem, placing emphasis on his *Englishness* and Argentinean lineage with local themes, just as he would in the autobiography. It is also important to note that the last piece included is “Sobre los clásicos”, as Borges sought to become a Classic himself, and this process went hand-in-hand with his new Anglophone persona, which we be analysed in more detail later.

The very Anglophile period of the 1970s came to a close with the cooling relationship between Borges and di Giovanni and an increasing closeness between Borges, Ricci, and Porzio, which be further analysed later. The third and final period of Italian influence took place at the beginning of the 1980s, which coincides with the publication of *Nueve Ensayos Dantescos*, and the reception of several prizes, awards and other distinctions from the Italian government, academia in Italy, and the Italian editorial milieu. This is also at the time when the critical edition of *Tutte le opere* was published under the direction of Domenico Porzio in the prestigious collection *I Meridiani* in Mondadori. Domenico Porzio was clearly motivated by the admiration he had for Borges, through the contact they had while preparing *Obras Completas* and the periods he stayed at Borges’ house. He published the only biography of Borges and one of his sister Norah in Italian.<sup>227</sup>

Beyond the anthologies and other works that he did in collaboration with Ricci in his later years, Borges published one final anthology of his own work. While similar to his previous *Antología Personal* and *Nueva Antología Personal*, this one was entitled *Páginas de Jorge Luis*

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<sup>227</sup> See his books *Jorge Luis Borges: Immagini e Immaginazione* (published in 1985, slightly before Borges died) and *Norah / Jorge Luis Borges*.

*Borges seleccionadas por el autor* (1982). In this collection he sought to compensate for the tendency in *Nueva Antología Personal* to focus on Anglophone influences and eliminate Italian connections. This was the first to include essays on Dante, “El Simurg y el águila” and “El noble castillo del canto IV”, among his best and most beloved texts which he felt were worth remembering. There are also texts inspired by or otherwise connected to Italian culture, such as “El Sur”, “La otra muerte”, “Las ruinas circulares”, and “La luna”. It is also notable that the essay “Sobre los clásicos” was included. Furthermore, there are a greater number of Universalist texts and themes, not exclusively Anglophile ones. Several prominent critics and authors chose to portray Borges as the best Argentinean author, and one of the best in the world. Later, I will outline the origins of Borges’ preoccupation with the notion of what is Classic and themes of immortality in several texts.

### 3.9. Collaborative Anthologies: Borges-Ricci

Particularly within the realm of anthologies, it is worth making a brief aside to discuss the noted bibliophile, publishing entrepreneur, and editor Franco Maria Ricci, and his role in Borges’ work and creative process. No other foreign publisher provided the same impetus for Borges as FMR, Ricci’s publishing house; pushing through new collections and being the first to publish many unedited works. As briefly mentioned in Chapter 2, Borges made several visits to Italy starting in 1977. The focus of this section will be the influence and impact of Ricci as an editor to Borges’ writing. The pairing of Borges and Ricci led to the production of many anthologies, both in books and multi-volume collection formats. Franco Maria Ricci was a retired entrepreneur from a well-off family who wanted to make a fresh start in the publishing industry due to his love of books. He founded his publishing house in 1965, a few years after Borges had already won the Formentor Prize. By virtue of investment capital, exquisite literary taste, and a good eye for unique

new publishing opportunities, FMR quickly gained recognition. The books were marked by the discovery of new talent, a high level of refinement, and the care taken in new editions and publications, especially deluxe editions. Borges was one of Ricci's favourite authors and spared no expense on homages, gifts, trips and special editions of his work. According to Bioy Casares' biography (1409), Ricci's first contact with Borges was in 1971, the result of his admiration and desire to publish some of his work.

It is important to note that from the beginning of their relationship, Ricci sought out the part of Borges' work with the most Italian influences and put into circulation. Ricci would republish, translate into Italian and publish the books rich in Italian content. This serves to slowly balance out, or at least compensate for, the highly Anglophile bent to Borges' work following the influence of di Giovanni starting in 1968 and which would last for almost a decade. Although Borges owed a lot to the influence of Dante and Italian writing when he began to develop his definitive style in the 1940s, in the 1970s he reached his greatest point of Anglophilia, and it was Ricci who caused Borges to revisit Italian elements and who republished the part of his work with the most Italian content, including some unpublished texts. Furthermore, Ricci brought to light some of Borges' most memorable and important anthologies, which entered into a dialogue with the word-wide literary canon and sought to renounce or subvert it, and succeeded, at the very least, in reimagining it.

The first piece was translated in 1971 and published in 1972 with an introduction by Roger Callois under the title *Cielo e Inferno* (originally *Libro del cielo y del inferno* published in 1960 in Spanish, shortly before he received the Formentor). This was one of the few books which had yet to be published in Italy, and would be a grand entrance for Ricci, given the *Dantesque* influence therein which was highly appealing to the Italian public. As previously mentioned, the title of this

anthology is a clear reference to Dante, not only because of the topic and the selections, but also because there was an epigraph directly from Dante at the beginning of the book (verses 32 and 33 in “Canto II del Inferno”). Both Ricci and Borges were fervent admirers of Dante. In 1972, Ricci visited Borges at the Biblioteca Nacional during his time as its Director. Fernández Ferrer (9) recalls that Borges recited a passage from *The Divina Commedia* to Ricci from memory; when Dante joins Virgil to begin his mythical journey. This would mark the beginning of the friendship between the writer and his editor.

The second book to be published by FMR would be *Racconti brevi e straordinari*, in 1973 under the imprint Biblioteca Blu. This anthology represents the very peak of Borges’ skill and mastery in Dante’s short and efficient style as well as the Fantasy genre which Borges had not only allowed to dominate his own writing but also grown to appreciate in literature globally. This was a translation of the Third Edition of *Cuentos breves y extraordinarios*, published in collaboration with Bioy Casares and which included more texts<sup>228</sup> than the previous editions. The choice of stories was of a Universalist character, attempting to cover a broad range on cultures and time-periods, stating: “hemos interrogado textos de diversas naciones y de diversas épocas, sin omitir las antiguas y generosas fuentes orientales” (7). The only unifying factors, other than a few possible thematic ties between a some texts, are brevity and clarity: “a condición de ser breves

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<sup>228</sup> The book had been published originally by the Raigal publishing house in 1955, although the opening remarks signed by Borges and Bioy Casares are dated 1953. The second edition was published in 1967 by the Rueda publishing house with five additional texts. Finally, a third edition was published by Losada publishing house with 17 additional texts as well as the previous additions. FMR obviously used this last edition.

[...] lo esencial de lo narrativo está, nos atrevemos a decir, en estas piezas; lo demás es episodio ilustrativo, análisis psicológico, feliz o inoportuno adorno verbal” ( 7). These are, in fact, traits which he first discovered and admired in Dante, as stated in his lecture on *The Divina Commedia*:

Una novela contemporánea requiere quinientas o seiscientas páginas para hacernos conocer a alguien. A Dante le basta un solo momento. En ese momento el personaje está definido para siempre<sup>229</sup> (*Siete Noches* 20).

Some of the authors included<sup>230</sup> in this anthology had also appeared before in *Antología de literatura fantástica*, which was a watershed moment in Borges’ literary career. In this new anthology, however, as indicated by the title *Cuentos breves y extraordinarios*, the texts selected are very brief, indeed, some do not even exceed one page, but with a profound narrative intensity. Borges and Bioy were already a step ahead in terms of creativity. Above the creative effort to compile the texts, there was translation where necessary, inclusion of their own work among a select canon of international writing among maestros of the short story, as well as adding apocryphal texts (including that of Dante closing the book) which they themselves had written. As a result, this anthology promotes two traits of Borges’ own work, putting into practice not only

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<sup>229</sup> Lecture included in the book *Siete Noches*.

<sup>230</sup> This obviously includes his friends Bioy Casares and Silvina Ocampo as a form of self-promotion for their creative circle. More importantly, this includes authors in the same line of production he is defending such as Gibbon, Kafka, Alfonso Reyes, Poe, etc., whom Borges directly relates to Dante in many of his writings or to various elements extracted, appropriated, or developed by Dante. He also includes the Napolitan Fra Diavolo with an apocryphal text most probably invented by Borges, the type of ticks that he does profusely.

brevity but also the power of apocryphal details. This is made clear in the prologue to Borges' book, *Ficciones*, in the 1940s:

Desvarío laborioso y empobrecedor el de componer vastos libros; el de explayar en quinientas páginas una idea cuya perfecta exposición oral cabe en pocos minutos. Mejor procedimiento es simular que esos libros ya existen y ofrecer un resumen, un comentario (7).

In the same year that *Racconti brevi e straordinari* was published under the Biblioteca Blu imprint, so too was the Italian edition of the critical anthology *Literaturas germánicas medievales* written with Maria Esther Vazquez (a revised and augmented version of the book *Antiguas literaturas germánicas*, written in 1951 with Delia Ingenieros). Ricci changed the title to *Brume, dei, eroi*, (translated by Gianni Guadalupi), which is a less technical, more evocative title and, more than anything, more Italian, which may have served to make it seem like it was new or previously unpublished, in order to boost sales. Later publications would revert to the original title to *Letterature germaniche medioevali*.

Without doubt, however, one of the collaborative works that Ricci and Borges would be best-known for was the collection *La Biblioteca di Babele*. This unique multi-volume anthology of selected and enhanced books, each with prologue or commentary by Borges, best represents Borges' varied range of literary tastes through texts which he admired or appreciated. The first editions were published starting in 1975 and would remain in publication until Borges' death in 1986. The choice in texts is consistently surprising, in many ways. Firstly, it does not conform to traditional anthologies, which usually collect famous or revered works from the history of literature, which are strung together with many other canonical selections. This anthology recovers many texts and authors that, historically, have not been well-known or, have even fallen into

disgrace, such as Papini who was largely denounced late in life due to his ties to Fascism. Borges not only compiled the majority of works, with only a few selected by Ricci, but he also provided prologues and introductions, as well as translations, for several. Many of the authors and texts in this collection were or would later be used in other anthologies or commentaries, either placed in harmony with the surrounding texts or in drastic contrast; such as *La antología personal* (1961), *La nueva antología personal* (1968), *Páginas de Jorge Luis Borges seleccionadas por el autor* (1982), etc. This disjunction creates an intriguing impact; perhaps the intention was to multiply or diversify the selections to avoid restrictions, or being limited to a definitive collection. Borges was fond of fragmentation and the synthesis of diverse elements; this is clear in all of his work. The *Biblioteca di Babele* anthology is, in and of itself, a reflection on unexpected associations, exploring rarely-seen qualities and unconventional authors; when a classic piece is included, it is for analysis in a new light or tends to minimise the most-revered elements. This can be seen as an attempt to enlarge the canon, an effort which can be perceived from his earliest anthologies, which already contested the pre-established canon not only by aligning himself with the new, as the author and the authority with all the weight to “authorise”, but also clearly posited that the canon is mutable, evolving, and required to change constantly. To him, the literary canon is a living thing which persistently affirms or rejects, and even rejection can be seen as a sort of declaration.

Another notable characteristic of each of the volumes in the complete *Biblioteca di Babele* collection is that the first publication was in Italian, before the Spanish version, which was to be published for the most part in Spain by Siruela, while six volumes would be published by Ediciones Librería de la Ciudad. Each publishing house enumerated the collection in a different way; the Spanish-language editions do not follow the chronological order set out in the Italian edition. The same publisher released volumes from this collection in other languages, above all, English and

French,<sup>231</sup> and the collection would be republished by other larger, more popular publication houses, garnering exposure to a new audience. One of the early volumes, the second, in fact, released in 1975, has work by Giovanni Papini. As we already mentioned, Borges selects not the texts from the height of Papini's fame in Italy which took a Pessimist slant as a contestation or polemic, such as *Gog*, *Dante vivo*, *Storia di Cristo* and *Il libro nero*, but he also includes early works from his earlier Fantasy period, which as largely unread. This choice lends new importance to the author, placing him back into the Italian literary canon in a new context, and countering public disfavour following the Second World War when he kept ties with Fascism. The volume is entitled *Lo specchio che fugge*, and the texts included are as follows: "Due immagini in una vasca", "Storia completamente assurda", "Una morte mentale", "L'ultima visita del Gentiluomo Malato", "Non voglio piú essere quello que sono", "Chi sei?", "Il mendicante di anime", "Il suicida sostituto", "Lo specchio che fugge", and "Il giorno non restituito". One can see that a text, which was already included in *La Antología de Literatura fantástica*, "L'ultima visita del Gentiluomo Malato", is repeated. *Lo specchio che fugge* would later be published in Spanish by Librería de la Ciudad (no. 1, 1978) and Siruela (no. 5, 1984). Papini and Dante were both, to differing extents, among the few authors which remained high in Borges' esteem from the moment he discovered them. In later years, he would again have occasion to publish work on Papini in another collection of books, but this time in Argentina. Given the robust success of the *Biblioteca di Babele* collection by Ricci in various languages, editors at the Hyspamérica publishing house in Argentina used it as

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<sup>231</sup> For example, the book *El congreso del mundo* was first released in Italian as *Il Congresso del mondo* and was followed by a French release (*Le Congrès Du Monde*) in 1979 as well as English (*The Congress of the World*) in 1981, all in the same FMR publishing house.

the model for “Biblioteca Personal.”<sup>232</sup> This latest collection included a new selection of works and authors, and it republished three pieces by Papini, “Lo trágico cotidiano”, “El piloto ciego”, and “Palabras y sangre”, along with a new prologue, although this last was not particularly innovative, repeating much of the prologue to *Lo specchio che fugge*. Beyond this, the new collection includes an expansion to the Italian authors selected and their length, including Dino Buzzati’s “El desierto de los tártaros”, Atilio Momigliano’s “Ensayo sobre el Orlando Furioso”, Virgil’s *Aeneid*, as well as Edward Gibbon’s book, *Decadencia y ruina del Imperio Romano*. In stylistic terms, the inclusion of *Crítica Literaria* by Paul Groussac is also important. In addition to this, there were further draughts for anthologies on Pliny and Cicero, and a book by Miguel Asín Palacios entitled *Dante y el Islam*, but these projects never came to fruition as he died suddenly before he could complete them.

Returning, however, to the question of Papini and his impact on Borges, it is important to mention that several of Borges’ short stories, especially in *El Libro de arena*, seem to have been influenced by Papini. Such stories include “El otro”, “Ulrica” and “Utopía de un hombre cansado” (328). One in particular, “El otro”, was singled out as an appropriation bordering on plagiarism from Papini’s “Due immagini in una vasca”, and it is difficult to deny, not only due to the similarity between the two stories in plot (but with different endings) but also because *El Libro de arena* and *Lo specchio che fugge* were both published in the first Italian edition of the *Biblioteca di Babele* collection in 1975 and both Ricci’s collection and the story “el Otro” were put together over the

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<sup>232</sup> According to the introduction, this consisted of the selection of “cien obras de lectura imprescindible que [fueran] prologadas por él mismo” (8). The book by Papini in this collection was published in 1985, shortly before his death.

course of years, beginning at least in 1973. Papini is placed in the second volume of Ricci's prestige collection, which comprises what Borges considered to be the best of world literature. I cannot provide a definitive answer to the debate, which would require philological study of the manuscripts in question, but I will highlight the explicit justification which Borges made when confronted with the accusation of plagiarism. It remains unclear when Borges read Papini for the first time, as the only information about this is as stated by Borges himself and as such far from reliable. In his introduction to "Lo specchio che fugge", Borges states that Papini was one of his favourite readings from his childhood, this was further repeated in the introduction to the section on Papini in *Biblioteca Personal*.

Each time<sup>233</sup> that Borges mentions having read Papini as a child, it serves to justify the position that he had simply forgotten having read that story in particular and, subsequently, he reproduced his version subconsciously, later in life. In the introduction to "El Espejo que huye", he affirms:

Yo tendría once o doce años cuando leí, en un barrio suburbano de Buenos Aires, "Lo trágico cotidiano" y "El piloto ciego", en una mala traducción española. A esa edad se goza

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<sup>233</sup> The comment in *El espejo que huye* is almost identical to the one in the prologue dedicated to Papini in *Biblioteca Personal*, which states: "Yo tendría diez años cuando leí, en una mala traducción española, Lo trágico cotidiano y El piloto ciego. Otras lecturas los borraron. Sin sospecharlo, obré del modo más sagaz. El olvido bien puede ser una forma profunda de la memoria. Hacia 1969, compuse en Cambridge la historia fantástica El otro. Atónito y agradecido, compruebo ahora que esa historia repite el argumento de Dos imágenes en un estanque, fábula que incluye este libro."

con la lectura, se goza y no se juzga. Stevenson y Salgari, Eduardo Gutiérrez y *Las mil y una noches* son formas de felicidad, no objetos de juicio. No se piensa siquiera en comparar; nos basta con el goce. Leí a Papini y lo olvidé. Sin sospecharlo, obré del modo más sagaz; el olvido bien puede ser una forma profunda de la memoria. Sea lo que fuere, quiero referir una experiencia personal. Ahora, al releer aquellas páginas tan remotas, descubro en ellas, agradecido y atónito, fábulas que he creído inventar y que he reelaborado a mi modo en otros puntos del espacio y del tiempo. Más importante aún ha sido descubrir el idéntico ambiente de mis ficciones (12).

Nevertheless, having visited his personal archive in Buenos Aires in-person, thanks to the gracious permission of his widow, María Kodama, I was able to confirm that there was no copy of a book by Papini which included the stories that he mentions having read in childhood among his personal collection, nor “en mala traducción española” as he had stated. There is also no such book included in the collection donated to the Biblioteca Nacional during his lifetime, if indeed such a book ever existed. Clearly, this is far from confirmed, and it would necessitate much closer philological analysis. One must never forget that, at times, Borges actively sought to be elusive about his sources and apportioned contradictory historical information, as is the case with Dante and many others. It is not unreasonable to suspect that Borges repeated the same information almost verbatim to remove the weight of any possible accusation of plagiarism for his story, “El otro”, and it must not be forgotten that Borges also suggested that all literature must, of necessity, be plagiarism to a certain extent, given that literature is in various situations the reflection of previous and future texts.

It would be appropriate to do a more detailed study with more resources in order to test whether this was a ploy to distract critics, as he had done in reference to Dante and many other

false biographical details, especially in his autobiography. Ultimately, however, the effect is a distortion which only two critics, Paoli and Caillois, seem to have analysed in relation to Borges and Papini, and they have taken Borges' position at face value.

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, Borges' relationship with Di Giovanni had changed, mainly because of Maria Kodama, and it was the peak of Borges' relationship with Ricci, who lived to please him and finally allowed Borges to visit Italy in 1977. This visit led to an unprecedented impact in Italian media, largely fomented by Ricci, and resulted in a still greater flood of favourable critique and reverence among the highest echelon of arts and culture, which from genuine admiration led to an expanding circle of people to accompany and look after him. As reactionary and extremely sensitive as Borges' reception always was, there is a distinct reestablishment of the old link between Borges and Dante, as well as the mythology of Rome. The clearest sign of this is the series of talks which were recorded in Buenos Aires upon his return from Italy. The first was specifically about *The Divina Commedia*<sup>234</sup> and others were full of Italian references<sup>235</sup>, with further mention to Dante directly, or to *The Divina Commedia*.

There are many important factors to these talks which bear mentioning. Firstly, Borges took great pains to edit them for publishing as a book, entitled *Siete Noches*, which would also later be included in his Complete Works; this was never done with any of his other talks. The

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<sup>234</sup> Talk given June 1, 1977. Later published in the daily newspaper *La Opinión*, año 7, n° 1872, August 10, 1977.

<sup>235</sup> The series of talks took place between June and August of 1977. The talk on *The Divina Commedia* was the first of the series, and the same order was followed in the book. The majority of references are to Dante or his work, but there were other authors as well.

process was meticulous, similar to the undertaking for his autobiography, which was reviewed sentence-by-sentence<sup>236</sup>, but this time without any outside influence. It is, perhaps, even more notable the way that Borges relates this book to his work as summarised in the last sentence of the epilogue, clearly revised and authorised by Borges for publication, and which closes the book: “No está mal; me parece que sobre temas que tanto me han obsesionado este libro es mi testamento” (169). In effect, Borges was not only interested in commenting on or critiquing a variety of literary works in this book, but also creating an organic order among the themes discussed in each of the seven essays, which maintain a particular format and allow Borges to demonstrate his deeply-held literary convictions. He explains, in general, what he believes literature is or should be, or at least what he himself seeks to defend or represent, how such literature or style is made, and where such literature fits within the larger traditions. As such, he explores many elements relating to authorship, the notion of the Classic, the varying levels of interpretation to a piece, Universal or encyclopaedic books, and the relationship between reality, dream, and fiction, among many other ideas which have always obsessed him, as he says.

Given the testimonial quality of the book, which mirrors the work for the autobiography, it is worth briefly reviewing its content. The first essay on *The Divina Commedia* is the most important and returns to many of the themes and interests evident from his earliest essays on Dante,

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<sup>236</sup> Roy Bartholomé did the transcription work, and he described the process in an epilogue to the book: “No dejó frase en pie. Una y otra vez, cinco, seis, siete veces debí leerle cada párrafo, cada oración y dos o tres cada conferencia. Quitó mucho, casi no agregó nada, todo lo transformó, respetando escrupulosamente la idea original, pues en modo alguno cayó en la tentación de hacer otro libro... Persigue la expresión justa, el vocablo preciso con admirable paciencia” (168).

especially those in the book *Discusión* in 1932. The essay seeks to emphasise the major qualities which distinguish *The Divina Commedia* as the greatest work of all time and within any literary tradition, but it goes further than that, becoming a confession of all that Borges owes to Dante himself, above all in relation to style.

Although Borges had previously published isolated essays about different aspects which stand out in Dante's work and *The Divina Commedia*, it was not until *Siete Noches* that he explicitly states having a debt to Dante. "yo he querido hacer lo mismo en muchos cuentos y he sido admirado por ese hallazgo que es el hallazgo de Dante en la Edad Media" (20). According to Borges, one of the most notable characteristics of Dante is the intensity of his work, mostly due to his style. "si pensamos en los cien cantos de poema, parece realmente un milagro que esa intensidad no decaiga" (20). Borges, as the receptor or heir to Dante's style, in this literary inauguration works to mythologise himself, similar to the undertaking of the autobiography, setting the plot of the talk to coincide with supposed moments of comprehension or illumination through the text:

...los grandes de Dante son mucho más de lo que significan. Eso lo observé desde el principio. Cuando llegué a la cumbre del paraíso... ahí en aquel momento en que Dante está abandonado por Virgilio y se encuentra solo y lo llama, en aquel momento sentí que podía leer directamente el texto en italiano y solo mirar de vez en cuando el texto en inglés....Leí así los tres volúmenes...Después leí otras ediciones. He leído muchas veces la Comedia...no sé otro italiano que el que me enseñó Dante y que el que me enseñó después Ariosto cuando leí el Furioso. Y luego el más fácil, desde luego, de Croce. He leído casi todos los libros de Croce y no siempre estoy de acuerdo con él, pero siento su encanto (*Siete Noches* 12-13).

Borges intended to make clear his impressive expertise and knowledge about Dante. He states, “leía todas las ediciones que encontraba y me distraía con los distintos comentarios, las distintas interpretaciones de esa obra múltiple”(13). And, much in the manner of Groussac in his literary analysis, Borges demonstrates, or gives the impression that he has analysed all literary criticism and is making a brief, historical classification of trends in critique. “[C]omprobé que en las ediciones más antiguas predomina el comentario teológico; en las del siglo XIX, el histórico, y actualmente el estético, que nos hace notar la acentuación de cada verso, una de las máximas virtudes de Dante” (13). All of this comes down to the point which Borges himself admires most and wishes to emphasise: the aspects of aesthetic and style. “[N]ingún libro me ha deparado emociones estéticas tan intensas [...] y yo soy un lector hedónico, [...] busco emoción en los libros”(27). With the authority conferred by his status as an exceptional reader, Borges is well-placed to analyse stylistic aspects. He judges this the greatest work of literature, something which is very complex and many facets to consider, not only in terms of intertextuality, but also reception.

The virtuoso style of Dante in the text can be linked to several factors simultaneously; a rare blend of delicacy and intensity (14), tenderness and rigour (21), and efficiency and clarity, among other characteristics. One of many practical ways he applies this is through an assertive use of metaphor,<sup>237</sup> but not as a needless embellishment or decoration; “la retórica debería ser un puente, un camino, no una muralla, un obstáculo, como se observa en escritores tan distintos como Séneca, Quevedo, Milton o Lugones” (18). Metaphor is employed to say more or to communicate that which cannot be said because of the natural limits of language (14-16). Here, it suggests or

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<sup>237</sup> This is a focus with relation to Dante that has been evident since his essay on metaphor and another about the Kenningards in *Discusión*.

evokes more than is described, as it is impossible to reflect reality in its entirety. The quality of the narrative is largely due to precise linguistic choices, limited to only the most important and specific elements required by the content; “conviene atenerse al relato” (16) to captivate the reader and create a shared reality or poetic truth like “un voluntaria suspensión de la incredulidad”(17). According to Borges, it is important to generate a sense of liveliness in a story, and Dante does so with great mastery; in just a few lines he is able to enliven characters in a manner which is more memorable than longer novels. According to Borges, his characters “viven en una palabra, en un acto, no se precisa más” (20). Borges also celebrates the way that Dante multiplies the “I”, as Groussac had previously stated. Dante is, himself, the most accomplished character which he ever wrote; “el personaje central, Dante, es quizá el personaje más vívido de la literatura” (27). Borges also emphasises the dreamlike quality of all of his work. Characters which have been dreamed up may love, hate, or sympathise with Dante (28), the objects of the dream define the dreamer, and the border between dream, reality, and fiction is blurred; an aspect to Papini’s work as well as Idealist philosophers. Similar to his situation with Papini, or the controversy surrounding his supposed plagiarism, Borges mentions how Melville undertook an analogous process with Dante’s work; “prefiero pensar que [Melville] la leyó [...] que la asimiló de tal modo que pudo olvidarla literalmente; que la Comedia debió ser parte de él y que luego redescubrió lo que había leído hacía ya muchos años, pero la historia es la misma” (29), since the great novel exactly matches the end to one of Dante’s cantos’s.

But all of those intratextual references crafted by Dante, directly and meticulously, and which further enrich the text are linked to the reception of the work itself and lead to its status as a masterpiece. Borges observes that *The Divina Commedia* is an inexhaustible work; it deals with all subjects and can be read through infinite perspectives and levels of interpretation, it is an

absolute text. Similarly to what was said in “Mi primer encuentro con Dante”, Borges asserts that *The Divina Commedia* is a self-contained universe; the work sets out to encompass many themes encyclopaedically, but it is masterfully structured by the author to allow for readings on a variety of interpretive levels. The idea of “un texto capaz de generar multiples lecturas” or multiple levels of interpretation, set out in a calculated way, was a common practice in the Middle Ages, widely recognised to originate from Dante’s letter to *Cangrande della Scala* (*Siete Noches* 10). The idea of thinking of a text as capable of saying everything and “un texto que encierra infinitos sentidos” is extremely attractive. But unlike Holy Scriptures and Kabala which are supposedly written by God, *The Divina Commedia* was created by an author who was able to introduce his individuality by doubling himself and declaring himself the author, hidden behind a Divine Authority which inspired him and made the work possible. This is to say that Dante was calculating in his approach to keep his work as open as possible and constructed it in such a way that it lends itself to multiple, endless interpretations; Dante plays God, temporarily usurping his role as demiurge. For this reason, Borges most admires one of Dante’s passages in reference to Ulysses, who in defiance to God attempted to breach the coast of the Isle of Purgatory, forbidden to man. Borges comments on how Dante sympathises with Ulysses upon his arrival in Hell, and how Dante sees in himself reflected in Ulysses as his own efforts in *The Divina Commedia* are also beyond the purview of mankind and meant only for the divine. Just as Dante sees himself in Ulysses, Borges sees himself in Dante; “quiero llegar por fin, al segundo episodio que es para mí el más alto de la Comedia”. He declares that this was what motivated him to write the essay “El enigma de Ulises”<sup>238</sup>. Yet beyond the work itself, its complexity, and multiplicity of readings, the rest of the effect stems

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<sup>238</sup> Content from *Nueve Ensayos Dantescos*.

from story itself, as each new reading and interpretation adds to our present understanding of the work. When we read the text it is accompanied by all that we have heard about it before, which is a fundamental piece in the make-up or the making of a Classic. Because of all this, Borges considers *The Divina Commedia* “el ápice de la literatura, y de las literaturas” (27).

The six talks which followed in the book *Siete noches* are also important and linked, in many ways, to the first talk on *The Divina Commedia*. In the talk entitled “La pesadilla”, Borges speaks about the theme of dreams and their ties to reality, or the blurring between the two, as well as the importance of dream in literature, specifically in the Fantasy literature which Borges represents. There are references to Groussac in this essay, as well as Latin and Italian writers such as Virgil (in the Aeneid), Romulus and Remus, Augustus, Petronius, Ovid, Lucan, Horace, and, obviously, Dante.

In the essay entitled “Las Mil y una Noches”, Borges refers to Orientalism as an invention of the West and its function or uses in literature. He mentions the Western interest in diversity as the source which generated the narrative genre, referring to Marco Polo, Coleridge, and Byron in his Italian period, as well as an indirect reference to Aristotle.

In the talk entitled “La poesía”, the discussion centres on book which, like *The Divina Commedia* or The Bible, “tienen un número infinito de sentidos” (101) and Borges focuses on breaking down or contrasting the position of Benedetto Croce on poetry, as well as talking about Carducci, Naples, Sicily, and Etna, among other themes.

The talk entitled “la Cábala” serves to continue the line of discussion from the previous, and is linked to the earliest references to Dante, infinite books, and endless interpretation. *The Divina Commedia* is, obviously, mentioned but, more importantly, Borges discusses the concept of the Classic and refers to Latin writer Plutarch, among others.

In the talk “La ceguera”, Borges contributes to his own mythology among blind, visionary writers, among whom he includes not only Classics like Homer and Milton, but also contemporaries such as Groussac (who was also a librarian) and Joyce, and, perhaps, Papini. This allusion to his own mythology as the blind poet and visionary; made for and by literature, is also constructed around the myth of Rome as the source of a Universal culture.

As is evident, many of the themes I have mentioned here were already part of his earlier works *Discusión*, *Historia de la eternidad*, *Otras inquisiciones*, and other essays on Dante which were originally published in the 1940s and later collected in *Nueve Ensayos Dantescos*. What is new is its synthetic and confessional nature which closely relates many facets of his own authorship and literary production to Italian influences and, importantly, to Dante. The book *Siete Noches* was published in 1980, and from that point onwards Borges began the revision and editing process for his essays on Dante written in the 1940s and 1950s to become a book.

However, the relationship between Borges and Ricci did lead to many other project and results. The collection *La Biblioteca di Babele* included previously unpublished works in Italian, which would only be published in Spanish three years later. Such is the case for the book *Venticinque agosto 1983 e altri racconti inediti* (No. 19 translated by Gianni Guadalupi), published in 1980 in celebration of Borges’ 80<sup>th</sup> birthday. The book is comprised of three texts by Borges, previously unpublished in Spanish: “Los tigres azules”, “La Rosa de Paracelso”, “Veinticinco de Agosto, 1983”, as well as the story “Utopía de un hombre que está cansado” (very à propos for the aged writer), previously published in *El libro de arena*. Siruela reissued the book in Spanish three years later, and the contents would also be included by Borges in the book *La memoria de Shakespeare*. This is not an isolated case, as some later books would also be released with more unpublished works.

The book *Racconti argentini*, published in 1981, is comprised, almost in its entirety, of texts by close friends, including, obviously, Bioy Casares and Silvina Ocampo, but also, other important friends such as Maria Esther Vazquez and Manuel Mujica Lainez in addition to less intimate acquaintances like Manuel Peyrou, Federico Peltzer, and the couple Arturo Cancela and Pilar de Lusarreta. The only author outside of this close-knit circle is the highly-venerated Leopoldo Lugones, well-known in Argentina. This volume would serve to vastly increase public interest in these authors among Italians, with Bioy Casares, Silvina, and Manuel Mujica Lainez achieving special popularity. The latter, having written an excellent novel including details about the Italian Renaissance, entitled *Bomarzo*, would win his first National Literary Prize as well as many Italian devotees.

The collection was projected to include 100 texts, but Borges only selected 29 and Ricci added only four of his choice. When Borges, already frail, began to suffer poor health he stopped writing prologues and selecting texts for the *Biblioteca di Babele* collection as a matter of course. Nevertheless, Borges would author three more volumes in the collection: *Nuovi racconti di Bustos Domecq*, (vol. núm. 31, 1985, a translation of *Nuevos Cuentos de bustos Domecq*), *Il libro dei sogni* (vol. núm.32, co-written with Bioy, translated from *El libro de los sueños* by Tilde Riva), and, a unique text, a borgesian dictionary called *A/Z* (núm. Vol. 33) translated and edited by Gianni Guadalupi (Borges' translator *par excellence*), whose title suggests an overview of everything, and would not be translated into Spanish until 1994, by Antonio Fernández Ferrer. Eventually, the *Biblioteca di Babele* collection would be taken over by the massive publishing house Oscar Mondadori. Following Borges' death, Ricci would publish a special re-edition with illustrations by Tullio Pericoli and edited by Gianni Guadalupi. At the same time, Pericoli released a book

exclusively composed of the portraits of Borges' selected authors from the collection, entitled *Suite dei ritratti di Tullio Pericoli* and also edited by Guadalupi as a part of the *Biblioteca di Babele*.<sup>239</sup>

At the same time that the *Biblioteca di Babele* was being published, another collection was being published by FMR with some texts by Borges; the prestigious special edition of *Segni dell'uomo*. All of the volumes in the series were released in limited edition on high quality paper with a black suede cover lettered in gold, a special case, and colour illustrations executed by hand. Four volumes by Borges were included, three of which were published in his lifetime, and one released posthumously. The first was *El Congreso*, or *Il Congresso del mondo* in Italian (no. vol. 14, 1974), which included illustrations and an essay by Raniero Gnoli about Indian Tantrism. Later, *Il Libro delle visioni* would be included in the same collection, published in 1980 (num. Vol. 26), as well as other later additions such as a prologue dictated by Borges in 1977 about his visit to Italy and texts about famous visions in literature, and a previously unpublished text, *Veinticinco de agosto, 1983*, still yet to be translated into Spanish. This also included authors as important as Homer, Plato, Virgil, Cicero, and Shakespeare, among others. It is interesting that it is Borges himself, who sets his work on the same level as such iconic writers, united works in this book by the capacity for various sorts of visions. This anthology remains unpublished in Spanish and only the prologue was published in the book *Círculo secreto* in 2003 by María Kodama.<sup>240</sup>

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<sup>239</sup> See Pericoli, Tullio, and Gianni Guadalupi. *Suite Dei Ritratti Eseguiti Per La Biblioteca Di Babele*. Franco Maria Ricci, 1993.

<sup>240</sup> Borges, Jorge Luis, Sara L. Carril, and de S. M. Rubio. *El Círculo Secreto: Prólogos y Notas*. Emecé Editores, 2003.

Another volume in the same deluxe collection which included previously unpublished works is *Finimondo*, which, in Spanish, would be re-titled *Libro de las ruinas*. Despite being published posthumously in 1997, both the prologue and choice of texts were tasks undertaken by Borges. It is an anthology of literary texts about catastrophes and natural disasters at different times and within different civilisations. Several texts relate to the sacking of Rome by Charles V or the ruins of the Roman Empire. Ricci mentions in the book that the prints that were to accompany the book were originally to be by Neapolitan painter Monsú Desiderio, but he had been deterred when friends advised that it was bad luck to print his paintings of ruins and chose, instead, paintings by the English painter William Feaver. Maria Esther Vázquez was a key figure in the compilation of the book, helping Borges to make his selections.<sup>241</sup>

It is apparent that Ricci and Borges' rapport went far above the conventional author-editor relationship. They struck up a strong friendship, based on mutual respect and appreciation within their respective fields. Borges made concessions to Ricci that he would never make with any other publisher in Spanish. Ricci, in turn, won a great deal of prestige, in large part due to Borges' works. Ricci would always express his admiration for Borges, in various ways. In addition to creating the *Biblioteca di Babele* imprint entirely to Borges' own specifications, he gave him a copy of previously unpublished works as a gift for his 80<sup>th</sup> birthday. On his 84<sup>th</sup> birthday, he threw a huge party and gave him 84 gold coins, one of the most expensive gifts Borges would ever receive. These are not the only gestures of friendship; at his home in Fontanellato, near Parma, he had the largest bamboo maze (or labyrinth, to borrow Borges' terminology) erected over seven hectares of land at a cost of ten million Euros, which recently opened to the public in 2015. The project had

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<sup>241</sup> See the article "Una rareza borgeana" in *el Diario la Nación*, 17 December, 1997.

been discussed by the two men over many years, although Borges would not live to see its completion. Other labyrinths were built all over the world in his honour, such as one in Venice. The Fontanellato labyrinth would inspire a book,<sup>242</sup> included in the same deluxe collection bound in black suede entitled *Finomindi y Libro delle visioni*. This very year, Ricci is editing the second edition of another book<sup>243</sup>, *Labirinti*, for the Rizzoli publishing house. The book discusses the most famous labyrinths worldwide which also attracted Borges' interest, as much as Ricci. It is accompanied by an introduction by Umberto Eco, another labyrinthine devotee.

### 3.10. Borges and the Classics

A recurring theme of particular importance which is linked to Dante is the notion of the Classics. The first mention of this theme in relation to Dante is in the prologue to *El Cementerio Marino* by Paul Valery en 1931. There are many mentions to the Classics in various stages of his literary life, but the concept evolved over time. This is most evident in the different versions of his own essay, entitled "Sobre los clásicos". When the text was first published in the literary magazine *Sur* in 1941, Borges referenced the Classics in association with national literature, and alluding to a quote from Carlyle, said:

...mucho, en verdad, importa que una nación logre con voz explícita, y engendre al hombre que melodiosamente proclame lo que encierra su corazón [...] Italia, por ejemplo, la pobre Italia yace desmembrada, despedazada, y sin ningún protocolo o acuerdo de unidad; pero

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<sup>242</sup> Ricci, Franco Maria, et al. *Labirinto Della Masone: Bambù, Arte E Delizie Nel Parco Di Franco Maria Ricci a Fontanellato*. FMR, 2014.

<sup>243</sup> First edition of *Labirinti* by Franco Maria Ricci, Umberto Eco, and Giovanni Mariotti. Also published in English and French by the same publishing house.

la noble Italia es una, indivisa: Italia ha producido a su Dante, Italia puede hablar. [Mientras que] el Zar de todas las Rusias es fuerte, con tantas bayonetas, cosacos y artillería, y es una hazaña que sujete a unidad su vasta porción de tierra; pero no puede hablar. Algo grande hay en él, pero es una grandeza muda. La ha faltado una voz genial, para que lo escuchen todos los hombres y todas las épocas. Debe aprender a hablar. Su artillería y sus cosacos ya se habrán herrumbado hasta no ser y todavía se percibirá la voz de ese Dante (*Sur*, year X, no. 85, 1941)

Borges employs this argument to suggest that Argentina, like Russia, lacks a voice such as Dante's, a voice that will endure. At the same time, Borges discredits Sarmiento and Hernandez. On the subject, Borges states "Alemania, Italia, Inglaterra han escogido bien sus libros canónicos", and further denounces the lack of a Classic in national literature: "carecemos de tradición definida, carecemos de un libro capaz de ser nuestro símbolo perdurable" (*Sur*, year X, no. 85, 1941).

The way that Borges correlates the idea of the Classic with national literary tradition is motivated by his aspiration to consecrate himself within the context of Argentine literature. At that moment, he was writing the works that later made him famous. In the same year that he published the article "Sobre los clásicos", he also published his book *El jardín de los senderos que se bifurcan*, whose reception was mixed, as he was denied the Premio Municipal. In 1944, however, the book *El jardín de los senderos que se bifurcan*, together with other texts becomes part of his famous book *Ficciones*, which was widely accepted and well-received.

In contrast, another text also titled "Sobre los clásicos", which Borges wrote in the last days of 1965 and published in the literary magazine *Sur* in 1966 (no. 298-299, enero-abril) is unmistakably different from the version of 1941. This text is included in the third edition of his book *Otras Inquisiciones* (1966), as well as in the first edition of *Nueva Antología Personal* (1968).

At that time, Borges already enjoyed considerable international prestige and his worldwide notoriety was expanding. Interestingly, Borges did not include the “Sobre los clásicos” of 1941 in his first *Antología Personal* published in 1961 and also in his Complete authorized works. From the essay “Sobre los clásicos” of 1965-66, the definition of a Classic is instead as follows:

Clásico es aquel libro que una nación o un grupo de naciones o el largo tiempo han decidido leer como si en sus páginas todo fuera deliberado, fatal, profundo como el cosmos y capaz de interpretaciones sin término. Previsiblemente, esas decisiones varían. Para los alemanes y austríacos el *Fausto* es una obra genial; para otros, una de las más famosas formas del tedio, como el segundo *Paraíso* de Milton o la obra de Rabelais. Libros como el de *Job*, *the Divina Commedia*, *Macbeth* (y, para mí, algunas de las sagas del Norte) prometen una larga inmortalidad, pero nada sabemos del porvenir, salvo que diferirá del presente (OC 134-135, vol. 2).

In this definition, Borges principally calls attention to the all-encompassing capacity a classic work, as it is capable of containing all (“profundo como el cosmos”), and generating interminable meanings or interpretations (“capaz de interpretaciones sin término”), that can vary from one epoch to another. This is exactly mirrored in the first essay of *Siete Noches*, but not restricted to national circle, instead specifically stressing their universality or at least more extended range for recognition. Moreover, this quality should also provoke a keen interest, because of the capacity to interest readers and reveal admirable things to the readers of different times and places; this is precisely what makes a text perdurable despite the barriers of geography, politics or linguistics. As Borges puts it,

La gloria de un poeta depende, en suma, de la excitación o de la apatía de las generaciones de hombres anónimos que la ponen a prueba, en la soledad de sus

bibliotecas. Las emociones que la literatura suscita son quizá eternas, pero los medios deben constantemente variar, siquiera de un modo levísimo, para no perder su virtud. Se gastan a medida que los reconoce el lector (OC 134-135, vol. 2).

A text will cease to live and remain relevant when it ceases to be interesting, revealing, commented upon and translated; when it no longer generates controversy, questioning, or surprises. Only the Universal Classics have the power to avoid such a fate.

Borges' definition contradicts the traditional concepts that advocate a Classic work as something that is unalterable, a perfect, immutable monument; as a Classic is transmitted, its relevance and the reasons why it should be admired remain the same. As such, the critics will expound upon and indoctrinate what is to be considered of value and how this work should be interpreted.

In her book *El nacimiento de un clásico: Borges y la crítica*, María Caballero dedicated a great deal of study to the process by which Borges corrected and changed his works in reaction to the reception he encountered from critics. According to Caballero, it is precisely these two gradual processes of Borges' intense labour of rewriting and the work of the literary critics, processes which are intimately related, that consecrated him. Borges metamorphosed into a living Classic (151).

Over the years, through the different creative phases already mentioned and his readings of Dante, Borges acquired many of the characteristics related to the notion of the Classics. Some of the explicit traits mentioned in the definition of the Classic, as well as others mentioned in different texts, allow us to see the way that Borges incorporated a series of concrete mechanisms that would enable his own conversion into a Classic into his work (which he amended, polished and re-polished), and establish the indelible mark of his work on literature. One of Borges' works

that can be of assistance in deciphering all of these mechanisms is his summation of the works of the greatest author of all time, Dante, in his book *Nueve Ensayos Dantescos*. That book is an expanded version of the first essay from *Siete Noches* and identifies the characteristics of Dante as the greatest Classical writer and the path which Borges sought to follow in his own writing.

### 3.11. *Los Nueve Ensayos Dantescos*: the lessons from the teacher

From the very first paragraph of the prologue to *Nueve Ensayos Dantescos*, we can identify some important traits in the definition of the Classics and that seem to coincide with what Borges admired in the work of Dante. This is evident in the first sentence, which states that to be considered a Classic a work must be read “como si en sus páginas todo fuera deliberado, fatal, profundo como el cosmos y capaz de interpretaciones sin término” (OC 134-135, vol. 2). In *Nueve Ensayos Dantescos* Borges posited that the Comedy is a *Suma* or an Aleph containing all past history knowledge and literature, as well as any future possibility. This recalls the image of the whole universe in expansion; no matter what has been written or will be written, it’s already in *The Divina Commedia*:

Imaginemos una lámina pintada hace muchos siglos [...] a medida que nos adentramos en el grabado, comprendemos que no hay cosa en la tierra que no esté ahí. Lo que fue, lo que es y lo que será, la historia del pasado y la del futuro, las casas que he tenido y las que tendré, todo ello nos espera en algún lugar de ese laberinto tranquilo... He fantaseado una obra mágica, una lámina que también fuera un microcosmo; el poema de Dante es esa lámina de ámbito universal (Borges, III, 575).

Dante created a book that can be considered completely in line with the tradition of the Mediaeval *Summa*, which other authors, mainly philosophers, had undertaken, such as the *Summa Teologica*. It appears to be perfect; a piece comprising all things and all human knowledge for all

time. Borges is attracted to all-encompassing books; it must not be forgotten that the first references to Dante in Borges' writing were in connection to absolute texts<sup>244</sup> and, in turn, this theme would generate many more *Borgesian* texts. Borges' crafted stories with elements that would symbolically contain or encompass the whole universe, starting with "El espejo de tinta"<sup>245</sup> in *Historia Universal de la Infamia* (1935). In other essays, he mentioned Dante along with the notion of eternity, such as in "Historia universal de la eternidad". These elements are extensively used in both books *Ficciones* (1944) and *El Aleph* (1949), as exemplified in the texts "La muerte y la brújula"<sup>246</sup> (1942), "Funes el memorioso" (1944), "la Biblioteca de Babel"<sup>247</sup>, "Tres versiones

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<sup>244</sup> Such as "Vindicación de la Cábala" (1930) and "Duración del Infierno" (1929).

<sup>245</sup> The sorcerer showed Yakub el Doliente through the circle of ink everything that was created and has happened, and he could also see his own death.

<sup>246</sup> The secret name of God contains all that was, is and will be: "su novena atributo, la eternidad, el conocimiento inmediato de todas las cosas que son, que son y que han sido en el universo" (OC 893, vol. 1).

<sup>247</sup> All the knowledge and the universe is contained in the library in all the combinations of words and signs possible.

de Judas” (1944), “La busca de Averroes”<sup>248</sup> (1947), “El Zahir”<sup>249</sup> (1947), “La escritura de Dios” (1949) and the highly celebrated “El Aleph”<sup>250</sup> (1949), which are replete with references to Dante.

Borges is aware that in modern times, with the developments in all areas of human knowledge, it is impossible to write a book such as the *Divina Commedia*, all in one sitting. Despite this, Borges is known as an Universal writer who unifies different times (Classic and modern), spaces (occident and orient, he is cosmopolitan), and languages or literary traditions. Clearly, this does not mean that Borges truly covers all topics, but he does give that impression, in part because that is the image he projects for the public, and also because of the way his work is constructed. Borges’ works are comprised of many short texts that can be seen as poems, essays, stories, or hybrids thereof, and they also refer to a wide breadth of authors, facts and references that, when

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<sup>248</sup> The Koran is the book of all the attributes of God and contains everything.

<sup>249</sup> The Zahir, a twenty-cent coin was able to reveals the universe. This short story has many Dantesque elements; it mentions Caronte and it’s said that “quien ha visto el Zahir, pronto verá la Rosa[...] el Zahir es la sombre de la Rosa y la rasgadura del velo” making clear allusion to the rose in the Paradise of the Comedy, alluding to the moment of revelation of God, the veil (“velo”) are taken from Paradise XXX 46- 52: " Come subito lampo che discetti / li spiriti visivi, sì che priva /da l'atto l'occhio di più forti obietti, /così mi circumfulse luce viva,/e lasciommi fasciato di tal velo / del suo fulgor, che nulla m'appariva. / Sempre l'amor che queta questo cielo”. A very similar image is included in El Aleph.

<sup>250</sup> The circular, small Aleph contains all the universe with its possibilities. Many authors have studied the many Dantesque elements of the Aleph. One of the first, serious complete studies was made by Roberto Paoli in *Borges: Percorsi di significato*.

put together as fragments of a whole, create a piece like Dante's. One might think that to be exhaustive and extensive, it must all be written in his works, but human languages are limited and can't possible say everything. This is why Borges lays out mere suggestions that must be then be realised by the reader.

Fragmentation is connected to another key quality of the Classic author according to his own definition: the never-ending capacity to generate multiple interpretations. Borges learned from Dante, in his letter to *Cangrande della Scala*, the diverse interpretive levels of texts, and it is then also expressed in the prologue of *Nueve Ensayos Dantescos*. Additionally, Borges studied Dante through an impressive variety of critical texts, taking into account the large majority of interpretive levels,<sup>251</sup> with the specific goal to achieve a range of interpretive levels in his own texts. He does this, for example, by incorporating an open ending, which not only multiplies interpretations, but also requires that the reader chooses an ending when reading.

The use of artful, naturalistic timing allows simultaneous, open endings which are only hinted at. As Borges explains in his essay, "El falso problema de Ugolino", Dante revealed the possibilities for Ugolino with an intentional ambiguity. "En el tiempo real, en la historia, cada vez que un hombre se enfrenta con diversas alternativas opta por una y elimina y pierde las otras; no así en el ambiguo tiempo del arte, que se parece al de la esperanza y el olvido... Ugolino devora

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<sup>251</sup> The prologue written for "Ensayo sobre el Orlando Furioso" by Momigliano, recognises this critique as perhaps the most complete from the vast list of critics that he consulted. Momigliano stresses almost all the interpretive levels of the *Divina Commedia* and revisits the study of the genealogy of the critique of Dante, from his contemporaries to the present day. (*Biblioteca Personal* 124).

y no devora a los amados cadáveres” (OC 585, vol. 3). Another way by which Borges manages to expand the meaning of his texts is by writing several versions, multiplying the texts, removing and adding to his own authorized works, and republishing them with modifications.

Another important characteristic of the Classic author is the capacity to overcome the boundaries of space and time, in other words, to be Universal, and as such his works must be “ésa lámina de ámbito universal”. Borges meditated on the concept of Universalism very early in his career, very soon after coming to the end of his *Criollista* or *Localista* phase. The first manifestations of this contemplation are diverse; for instance, the quantity of authors and themes that are recurrent in his works and already present in texts from the 1930s, such as *Historia Universal de la infamia*, the title of which is in itself very suggestive. Borges will also link the idea of universalism to *Argentinidad*, starting with the famous essay “El Escritor argentino y la tradición” (1952), in which he states that Argentina, being such a young country, does not have a clear and established tradition. His tradition is European, Western culture in general, and he thus takes part in a more ample tradition that is not limited to what is local. If Dante is seen as the heir to a synergistic mix of the best of both Western and Eastern worlds, as Borges mentions in the text “Italia” of 1960 (*Textos Recobrados* 66), Argentineans are the direct recipients of that rich hybrid, among other reasons, for being a nation composed of many immigrants, and as Borges explained in “Nostalgia del Latín”<sup>252</sup>. Borges, who attempted to expurgate the popular Italianised speech and culture from his texts, seems to reappraise the contribution of immigrants, who were by majority

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<sup>252</sup> “Nostalgia del Latín” derives from a conference in 1980, while Borges was preparing the final text of *Nueve Ensayos Dantescos* with Jorge Vehil.

Italian in Argentina and, more particularly, in Buenos Aires. This change of stance is expressed in this statement:

El hecho de que procedan (todos ustedes, el autorío) de muy distintas naciones, yo creo que precisamente es una de las virtudes de este país, tantas veces desventurado, el hecho de ser un país de inmigrantes. [...] Yo he nacido en Buenos Aires [...] Recuerdo –tenía 4 o 5 años- toda la manzana de casas bajas [de inmigrantes pobres]. A veces he dicho que soy un caso raro, porque no tengo sangre italiana y todo el mundo la tiene aquí. Seguramente soy un forastero aquí y, sin embargo, me considero argentino a pesar de mi falta de sangre italiana (*Textos Recobrados* 199).

The melting pot that is Argentina must naturally reflect Universalism and Multiculturalism, but because it is from a Latin lineage, it is directly connected to Rome:

¿Cuál sería nuestra tradición? [...] Debemos ser europeos... ser buenos europeos significa una tradición una tradición occidental... una tradición occidental es ante todo el dialogo de [...] griegos e Israel [...] cultura de oriental y occidental (200).

Of equal importance to the implicit and clear notions of the Classic in *Nueve Ensayos Dantescos*, is the complexity, yet limpid clarity, of the work: it avoids obscurantism, it cannot be cryptic and limiting, as the aim is to reach a public as wide as possible and multiply the possibilities of interpretation, thus ensuring that it becomes eternal. Several of Borges' stylistic choices are consistent with this, such as using a standardised language that does not revolve around local jargon. Borges' style approaches what is characteristic of Dante and what Borges admires in his work. Indeed, it also seems to be one of the traits in Dante that helped Borges approach English literature, as Borges also admired these characteristics in several English authors, according what he said in the prologue to *Nueve Ensayos Dantescos*. “[...] notaríamos otros caracteres [...] harto

más deleitables; en primer término, quizá, el que destacan los dantistas ingleses: la variada y afortunada invención de rasgos precisos” (OC 575, vol. 3).

Some of the aspects which Borges praises the most in Dante is his style of precision, clarity and concision, achieved through economy of language, and an assertive, rather than cumulative, use of appropriate metaphors; “la variada y afortunada invención de rasgos precisos” (OC 575, vol. 3). In just a few words, both Dante and Borges can create powerful descriptions and develop complete psychological portraits of characters. In striking contrast, in *Nueve Ensayos Dantescos* Borges criticizes the style and language used by a certain type of writers and schools, such as Petrarca and Góngora, much as he did in *Siete Noches*. These authors tend towards hyperbole, distorting the rigour of words, make unnecessary and indiscriminate use of adjectives based on imperfect observations. Unlike them, Dante “se prohíbe ese error; en su libro no hay palabra injustificada” (575). This represents a clear ending to Borges’ previous affinities for Góngora and Petrarca, a dissociation that is openly stated in the introduction to *Nueve Ensayos Dantescos*, where he disparages their style for making unnecessary and indiscriminate use of adjectives. For Borges *The Divina Commedia* is the paramount example of precise imagination, where every single element is both aesthetically and psychologically justified (*Textos Cautivos* 64), more perfect and precise than any other revered writer. “Yo he observado que Shakespeare o Cervantes alguna vez se equivocan; pero Dante no, Dante siempre tiene razón y aceptamos que nos lleve de su mano por ese mundo que ha inventado” (Alifano 39).

Borges is known as a master of this style equal to Dante. Being clear and concise does not require less art, as simplicity can at times be more difficult to express than a flourish. As Borges states in “El Otro, el mismo”, a work of fiction which is highly autobiographical, “no la sencillez, que no es nada, sino la modesta y secreta complejidad” (OC 236, vol. 2).

Borges further multiplies the interpretations of his texts through the transgression of genres and the elimination of preconceived limits, similar to the diffuse presence of Borges within his work as writer/reader/narrator/character/critic ... etc. This is seen in texts such as the previously cited “El Otro, el mismo”, or in the story “El otro”, based on “Due immagini in una vasca” by Papini. Borges specifically alludes to Dante’s capacity for multiplicity and adopts it. Borges not only places himself in constant dialogue with the Classics and situates himself at the same level. This is a theme explored in “El Noble Castillo del Canto IV”:

Homero, Horacio, Ovidio y Lucano son proyecciones o figuraciones de Dante, que se sabía no inferior a esos grandes, en acto o en potencia. Son lo que ya era Dante para sí mismo y previsiblemente sería para los otros: un famoso poeta (OC 581-582, vol. 3).

Additionally, he expresses his opinions on these authors, re-catalogues and reconfigures them to, finally, find himself in a position above them. In the essay “Dante y los visionarios anglosajones”, Borges explores the idea that the author has the power to determine who his predecessors were and how a piece, especially one that is considered a Classic, is the accumulation of readings and interpretations, in layers like an onion. “Un gran libro como *the Divina Commedia* no es el aislado o azaroso capricho de un individuo; muchos hombres y muchas generaciones tendieron hacia él. Investigar sus precursores [...] es indagar los movimientos, los tanteos, las aventuras, las vislumbres y las premoniciones del espíritu humano” (OC, III, 595). This means that the reading of literary history cannot be simplistic or straightforward inheritance.

I would like to conclude this thesis with a reminder that behind Borges’ arsenal of tricks and the intricacies involved in such carefully calculated texts, and very much in spite of the impression which they may give that they are open to interpretation by the reader, Borges is always present, anticipating us with work constructed for near-infinite interpretive possibilities.

La noción panteísta de un Dios que también es el universo, de un Dios que es cada una de sus criaturas, es quizás una herejía y un error si la aplicamos a la realidad, pero es indiscutible en su aplicación al poeta y a su obra. El poeta es cada uno de los hombres de su mundo ficticio, es cada soplo y cada pormenor. Una de sus tareas, no es la más fácil, es ocultar o disimular esa omnipresencia (OC 577-578, vol. 3)

In this way, the interpretations of Borges' work, just like that of Dante, can only proliferate and give everlasting life to their writing. I hope that with a fresh, multidisciplinary approach I have revealed the Italian facet of Borges and that this will open new, interesting avenues for further study linked to central elements of the work and which remain open to debate.

### 3.12. Conclusions to chapter 3

There are two possible ways to trace the Italian content in a work as complex and vast as Borges'. One is to start with what Borges has to say about himself and his work in testamentary or autobiographical texts, and another chronologically following a genealogy of his texts. I tried following both lines in a general way while trying to compare them because what Borges really does in his texts, does not always coincide with what he says he does and what he does and says to be doing also change in each creative phase he goes through in his career.

This last part of the thesis starts with the autobiography for two reasons, to examine precisely the way Borges projects himself to the public in the global perspective of his complete works, and the enormous impact that the autobiography as prescriptive work has had (for better and for worse) for the critics, on the interpretation of the rest of his work. Most of the critics so far have felt forced to see the whole of Borges's work through that lens of autobiography, forgetting that Borges goes through quite contrasting creative stages. But such ephemeral photograph of Borges taken at a specific moment, reflected by affirmations and silences, his preferences, literary

beliefs and what he claims to be the image of himself and his work, or better said of himself only with respect to his work (because it is what interests him after all) in that given period. Such a cross section does not imply that the before and after the moment are the same way, or does it presuppose the honesty of the photographed.

Robin Lefere, the greatest specialist on the biographical contents of Borges, states in his last article "Biography selon Borges: théorie et pratique" (supported by the profound study on autobiography and automation that gave him fame) that Borges did not really write any biography or autobiography in itself, but rather all texts (with heterobiographical elements) that have been labeled as biographical or autobiographical are hybrids of other genres and are endowed with a good dose of fiction with the purpose of creating certain effects or results. He revisits each one of them giving specific reasons for such affirmation in each. Borges' autobiography really has very little of the material that characterizes that kind of intimate confessional type, and is full of inaccuracies that are easily detectable. The major function of autobiography is to project itself as a type of determined author that produces, promotes and defends a specific type of literature of fantastic style with a very defined style that fully matches the attributes that critics and the general public identify it with and that have become commonplace.<sup>253</sup> That is to say that he had and

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<sup>253</sup> Common places not lacking in contradictions or contrasts: Anglophile writer who writes in Spanish; universalist but at the same time locatable with some elements at the center of the national identity (language, tango, Buenos Aires, suburbs, etc.); likes to participate in brain games (mirrors, labyrinths, totality / infinity) but also philosophical and human character that likes to mix and confuse dreams or fiction with reality; apolitical by decision, but is one of the most influential and

maintains the capacity to be able to mark interpretative keys of his work, biasing the reading and/or the general opinions we have of him much before we even read his work. But that projected image corresponds to a period in which Borges sought to position himself strategically in the Anglophone cultural world.

Such an image projected in the autobiography has two general practical effects: Borges undoubtedly achieved the desired strategic positioning in the Anglophone cultural world, and with this he placed himself in a privileged position in the Argentine and Western literary canon in general; for the reader and for criticism, an interpretative disposition, has contributed strongly to orient them in a certain specific direction that has allowed for the over-exploitation of certain things adopting the same interpretative angles that have exhausted results and now (a lot of it) are only repeated constantly without saying anything really unique.

There are also two aspects that call attention to this autobiography with respect to Italian content, the scarcity of mentions to authors or Italian works (despite having devoted many years to the study of Dante and other authors) that does not correspond to the weight they have in his work, and the obvious historical inaccuracies, especially with respect to his reading of Dante, which he places at around 1938 when he already carried out many previous texts published with quotes and mentions. This makes it necessary to review his work and the way in which he reincorporates Italian aspects, above all Dantesque, in his work, to understand the true dimension and role that the Italian aspects plays in his work.

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politicized Argentine writers (stances or momentary incendiary statements that cost him the Nobel prize).

Such a journey seeks to question Borges and his work from a somewhat "discouraged" perspective, which apparently is not given by any of the characteristics that apparently are more obvious (which the author himself proposes as a reading itinerary in the autobiography), but precisely because of this it can result in a productive analysis in such a well-studied author. By questioning the most Italian elements in Borges (a field not greatly studied) in a most orderly and systematized way possible was indeed a novel lens that allows the adoption of a different angle or perspective outside of the lines dictated by the reading of Borges, because the Italian elements are often (in the words of Annick Louis) in the shadow area of his own work, not in the area that Borges tries to illuminate or highlight. But it is precisely the threshold, the edges, areas of indetermination between what is revealed and what is obscured that has the greatest importance in the work of Borges.

In the course of his work, there were some useful anthologies to identify fluctuations as references that constitute positions that Borges has in various periods of his career, like flags that represent an aesthetic and stylistic creed according to the type of literature that is produced at any time. The interests of reading are also coincident or congruent with each stage, and I tried to mention some of them in relation to the Italian world, obviously reading and writing about things that are believed and interest him. Dante was especially a good reference because it is a constant in his life of reading and writing and allows you to see what Dante takes and leaves in each moment. But at the same time each change of creative stage supposes a readjustment of a certain part of his work to make it reflect what in the newly adopted creative stage he then wants to reflect on.

In his first three decades of life, Borges is distinguished by being quite volatile and changing. While he had a considerable amount of Italian readings already, they were rather taken

as reference points to avoid for various reasons. In the first stage of his literary life, he tries to insert himself in an Avant-garde group that goes according to the tendencies in vogue at that moment in Spain. Futurism was an obligatory referent of which ultraism was nurtured but Borges just tried to differentiate his own Argentinean branch of the movement from it in order to give genuineness to its proposal. Once his ultraist stage is ended, the criticism of Futurism is accentuated with respect to its limitations and contingency, although it will recognize the value it had to help break with tradition. But the same criticism was valid for ultraism that considered exhausted and that to stand out among the new generation of writers it was not enough to shout louder as the vanguards proposed.

In his most *criollista* phase, he is interested in debates and motives of national identity. But he is selective, avoids the political terrain that already divided and confronted society, focuses his interests on the question of language and the consolidation of an Argentine literary tradition differentiable from other foreign traditions, especially Spanish, therefore advocates *criollismo* and linguistic and cultural purism. In that effort tries to adopt a colloquial language (he uses words like “usté, ciudadá, etc.) that gives local colour but avoids any use of *lunfardismos*, *cocoliche* or other foreign vocabulary despite the significant use already in popular speech in Buenos Aires. But in a city with a high level of immigration, especially a population of Italian descent, his position was unsustainable, since the multicultural melting pot is foundational and constitutional of Argentine society itself. Tango is another subject which he uses as an attempt to show a failed purification, especially of his origins and its more Italian elements. He manages, however, to participate in a mythification of Buenos Aires and the suburbs or shores that achieved great acceptance and will be considered ever after an important part of Argentine history and identity. At the same time, he

also neglects or belittles the gaucho tradition because he considered it an artificial creation of writers and away from reality.

Between the end of the 1920s and the 50s is the first of the stages of greater intensity of Italian content. After a creative crisis he begins to look for a more definitive voice and style that brings him closer than ever to Italian literary sources. The contact with the experienced Alfonso Reyes, and the discovery (or strictly speaking, rediscovery) of Dante (mediated by the Dantesque critic of Groussac) are quite beneficial for him in creative terms, as well as his participation in *Sur* and *Hogar* magazines in order to constantly feedback readings and views of the reception of his newly created works. According to the evidence gathered, this stylistic discussion includes not only Borges and Reyes but the stylist Amado Alonso, who highlights Groussac's Dantesque study of the virtues of style in *the Divina Commedia*. From then on, the citation of texts by Dante (and other Italian authors) is increased to a maximum in Borges' texts, while he makes a transformation of his own style of writing, helping him to find a definitive voice and changing his conception of the role of author and of the literature that deserves to be looked after. Many of the Dantesque readings found a varied applicability in the Borgesian production, first in a theoretical form in essays from his book *Discusión* to later be incorporated in his fiction work. Meanwhile, the continuous study of the Dantesque material will lead to the gradual publication of articles derived from these reflections (in periodicals) and the prologue to an edition of *the Divina Commedia*, which will form the basis of the book *Nueve Ensayos Dantescos* of 1982. But the transformation and assimilation of dantesque aspects is gradual, and in the chapter I review some of the specific stylistic elements that Borges discovers in Dante and is incorporating freely in his own work. Some of the things that interest Dante the most are the notion of totality and total works, universalism and encyclopaedism, plurisemy or different levels of interpretation of a text, and the clear and

concise style that he seeks to apply in his own incipient narrative. He begins to explore many of these elements in his new narrative and has good reception. The 40s and early 50s are the period of greater productivity of Borges with texts that give him his fame and this makes him enter a deep revisionist spiral and modification of his previous work (trying to suppress texts, editing work, changes, etc.) of works that he feels he no longer represents. This is a constant changing game of areas of shadow and light in both his recognized works and some others to be silenced. Not only does he expunge texts that he does not want anymore, but he changes things from those that remain. He tries above all to get rid of the part of his most avant-garde, criollista and *lunfardo* elements, but also what is left of excessive or baroque language, replacing it with the clearest, and most precise and concise language that will characterize him thereafter. The anthology *Cuentos Breves y Extraordinarios* is only the confirmation of the mastery already acquired in that style and search for recognition in this type of literature worldwide.

After a pause in his production due to the definitive loss of sight, Borges gives priority to the anthological productions of both his works and other admired authors, and from then on in his new productions he will recycle many of the motives and elements of the works that made him famous.

Around 1961, when he won the Formentor Prize, another great moment occurred in the use of references and Italian themes that were reflected in his readings and written texts, by now combining poetry (he resume) and prose, in addition to his active work as an anthologist. It is above all the epoch in which he recognizes Dante as the pinnacle of literature and Western Culture ("My first encounter with Dante"), and of the idea of Rome as the cradle of Western civilization ("Italy"). Several themes derive from this, the precursors and ways of influencing or changing the literary tradition, and there is a growing concern for his legacy and the theme of posterity or

immortality linked to the classics. In very varied ways, either echoes or Dantean motifs are noticed in his work. After his reception of the Formentor he is more concerned about his projected image and that public attention and reception are in accordance with his authorized work; for this purpose he creates the *Antología Personal*, which emphasizes what he considers to be more valuable in his own work, which in itself has already been expurgated and selected. In that first version of the anthology he incorporates many texts with echoes or Dantesque mentions, faithful to his new mature style and to the work done the previous two decades. Also, his book *El Hacedor* reflects that, but it is difficult to determine the exact moment of composition of the texts there because they were recycled texts from drawers. In anthologies of works of others we find the *Libro del Cielo y del Infierno* inspired and dedicated to Dante from the title and epigraph and that seeks to map in literature other writers who have written with some mastery on that subject, or also an international bestiary book that incorporates in great measure Dantesque creatures and from other Italian authors more than from any other worldwide.

The production and anthologies of the late 1960s and 70s, a period of residence in the USA, teaching chairs at universities and a close relationship with Thomas di Giovanni, contrasts sharply with that of the previous period. The anthologies of the 70s are much more in line with the model or image he projects in the autobiography that exalts in an unprecedented way his anglophony, in tandem with his Argentinean *criollo* family line, denying or minimizing his link with any other literature, including the Italian one. His new productions and anthologies of the 70s make particular emphasis on English readings (including frequent titles of poems or texts in English) and Argentine literature of ‘hoodlums’ or local issues. While writing his autobiography, he published in 1969 a new anthology of his own work with a selection of texts that at that moment represent him more, replacing the previous selection (therefore called *Nueva Antología Personal*).

The publications and anthologies of the late 1970s and 80s recover a Universalist character and redistribute their interests more homogeneously (less biased with pragmatic intentions) in different cultures. Borges returns to give his just importance and recognition to Dante and Italian literature but this time recognizing more directly and punctually the debt in terms of style that he has with Dante. Moreover, Borges does his best to align himself with the characteristics that a classic author must have in order to be considered as one. The conditions for such a change are complex but it greatly influences the cooling of the relationship with Di Giovanni and the narrowing of the new friendship with Franco Maria Ricci, a prestigious Italian publisher who favours the re-publication of more Italianist texts and anthologies and unpublished texts by Borges. It is also influenced by his first visit to Italy in 1977, which opens a spiral of recognition in Italy (fueled by Ricci to a large extent), the largest he will receive in any country in the world, as he will be the foreigner who has received the greatest amount of awards and Italian tributes in history. All that period coincides with a third great boom of mentions- and Dantesque readings. Starting with a with series of lectures on Dante and recovers reflected topics on *the Divina Commedia* in essays from the 30s, which will be included in the book *Seven Nights*, that will be followed in turn by the publication of *Nueve Ensayos Dantescos*.

The period between 1970s and 80s, coincides with the period of greater popularity and recognition of Borges in Italy and in the world largely as a result of the work of Calvino as cultural broker and Ricci as editor. Ricci is linked to an important stage of Borges anthology with intentions to consummate as a Universalist writer and a process of contestation or reformulation of the Western canon. The period of collaboration between Borges and Ricci is of great wealth in a number of flanks: with his innumerable anthological collaborations he sometimes proposes unusual or little-esteemed authors, or proposes fresh looks to the work of some already consecrated

authors, and places himself with many of his texts in strategic literary genres or areas mostly in fantasy literature but also covering a wide spectre of genres and especially reassessing some considered minor like mystery or black novels, and retaking national aspects that appeal to universal values. With all this, Borges tries to constantly reconfigure the tradition and the way in which genres are perceived or used, exercising his authoritative capacity that extends the aesthetic proposal.

After making the journey through all his creative stages with a panoramic image of the process of constant transformation of his work and the image of himself that tries to homogenize or make coincide (in both works and autobiography, fiction and reality coexist strongly in different proportions). In this process of endless revisionism of his work there is a cluster of valuable teachings, especially in relation to the construction of authorship and the way to become a classic of western literature that were greatly inspired or influenced by the Dantesque readings: His work tries to be encyclopedic and universal (a melting pot of stories many times like *mise en abyme*), a crossroads of epochs and cultures and the sum of human knowledge, a dialogical relationship with the different traditions while subverting or reconfiguring them in several flanks. It is a work as vast as it is fragmentary, but at the same time, powerful writing full of evocation, but of impeccable clarity and conciseness. He tirelessly seeks to forge himself as a model of total universal author. He tries to become the author of authors, reconfiguring genres, manipulating or altering interpretative levels, and giving the impression of building a total book, or laying the groundwork for us readers to continue infinitely building.

Finally, from the compilation of two testamentary writings such as his autobiography and the tandem *Seven Nights / Nine Dantesque Essays*, there is an open debate for further discussion about the two rather divergent public images that Borges tried to generate without one necessarily

or completely canceling the one another. According to the evidence gathered so far, my opinion is that the image projected by the autobiography is only a photograph or temporary mask (more ephemeral than the other) used at a specific time and once that period of convenience has passed, it moved to a different more consistent one, but the critics have taken it too seriously to interpret the rest of Borges' work with a historical rigor that does not exist at all in the autobiography. In the period that Borges writes the autobiography sought, under the advice and help of Thomas di Giovanni, to enter the Anglophone cultural world in which he had not achieved even the recognition he hoped to have and longed for despite having won the Formentor, one of the most prestigious prizes than a writer could have achieved. In that period some elements of his work (such as Anglophony) although they were already present in his work before, in that period is accentuated disproportionately by subtracting weight to other literatures such as the Italian that had caused an enormous influence on his style and more definitive voice as an author, but who had managed to disimulate skillfully. At the end of his life, from both books *Siete Noches* and *Nueve Ensayos Dantescos*, Borges leaves not only another very contrasting public image, and a testament that reveals his great debt especially in stylistic matters with Dante and other Italian authors. That legacy corresponds more faithfully to what went on behind the scenes in the period that he wrote the most important works of his career between the two decades of 1940s and 1950s.

But Borges' immanent fragmentary poetics (full of contrasts, controversies and contradictions) are precisely set in such a manner to fuel discussions, which is the first ingredient to perpetuate his works, in other words he somehow managed to set the correct elements to turn himself into a classic.

#### 4. General Conclusions

Having completed an ambitious overview accounting for Borges' Italian background and the Italian readings throughout his career, while also analysing the significance of the elements drawn from such reading, their gradual and creative incorporation in his works, and reciprocal impact of Borges in Italy, and vice versa, this dissertation argues that Italian literature and culture

play a very important role in the life and works of this writer, even though it has been greatly ignored thus far in Borgesian critique.

Focusing in Italian Studies within the field of Borgesian critique proved to be a very productive approach that deserves to be taken seriously by critics in the field. Even though I have pointed out many of the specific accomplishments in the conclusions of each chapter, I will provide here a brief recapitulation of the entirety of the results of this thesis.

In regard to the discussion of Borges Italian background in, it is surprising to discover the importance of the years that the writer spent in the Italianized neighbourhood of Palermo. Borges' experiences in those years precede the majority of the leitmotifs recurrent in in the entirety of his works, a trait that is common in many writers that were marked by events of their early years. Furthermore, much of the elements drawn from the Italianized popular culture heavily influenced and conditioned, in a consistently negative way, all of Borges literary production.

Linguistically, according to the creative periods Borges went through, it is possible to ascertain a sustained effort to demarcate and extirpate *lunfardo* from his writings. Moreover, Borges maintained a convincing and constant criticism of *lunfardo*, even though at times he allowed himself to use it, in a mocking or ironic tone directed at specific enemies. Regardless of the tone, and of the attempts to eliminate *lunfardo*, Borges paradoxically demonstrated a significant knowledge of what he rejected. Borges tried to de-Italianize the literature of the *arrabales*, linked to the culture of courage and *cuchilleros* that he discovered and studied in the same neighbourhood of Palermo, and that was a very important creative vein of many texts that contributed to the mystification of Buenos Aires. Similarly, Borges also tried to separate tango from its Italianized origins.

In contrast to the Italianized popular culture, which conditioned Borges' works in a negative way, Italian high culture and literature had the opposite effect. Borges displayed very positive opinions in regards to high Italian culture and literature and this is also visible in the fundamental role that they played in his works. Borges mentioned having read many Italian authors (that are listed in Appendix 1). Although these authors merit to be studied individually, due to the nature of this study, I focused on some that stand out, namely Dante Alighieri.

After tracing the diversity of ideas that Borges creatively assimilates from Dante, this Italian author unequivocally holds a fundamental role in the conformation of Borges' more mature style. Importantly, this process of assimilation can be traced to the period from the 1920s onward, and not the 1930s, as Borges indicated and is generally accepted by the critics. Through the study of Dante, Borges finds the unique literary voice that characterizes him to this day and serves as a complex model to the usage of a large range of literary games, such as a tendency to encyclopaedism, the hybridization of literary genres, the multiplicity of the narrative or poetic speaker, universalism, all-encompassing works and the formula to edify his image as a classic author, amongst others.

Dante was the author that Borges studied the most during his life, and also one that had a significant influence upon work. However, Borges does not always seem to give Dante the credit that he deserves and even deviates attention from the influence he had, avoiding recognizing his debt to him. The most obvious example of this behaviour is the book *Autobiographical Notes*, in which Borges creates a mythic image of himself emphasizing his Anglophone side and his genius, which leaves little space for anything else. Besides practical contextual editorial reasons, Borges was anxiously hiding Dante's influence. Only in the last years of his life did Borges recognize the

huge debt his literary proposition has towards Dante, as it was revealed in *Siete Noches y Nueve Ensayos Dantescos*. Importantly, Borges also says that these two books represented his legacy.

Beyond aspects of intertextuality, Italian writers influenced Borges in other ways. Borges was always very reactive to the reception of his works and subjected them to a constant process of revision. Italy was the country that awarded the highest number of literary prizes and recognitions to Borges and where he benefited of the most positive reception. Calvino was one of the main promoters of Borges, his apprentice, and also the figure behind the awarding of Formentor Prize — a prize that unleashes a series of other important distinctions and awards and effectively catapults Borges' into worldwide fame. The editor Franco Maria Ricci was also engaged in divulging and promoting Borges' work. Ricci successfully directed Borges work towards Italian themes and succeeded in having the publishing rights of novel texts, including some texts in Spanish. The Italian world was clearly ahead in terms of translations and publication of Borges' works, surpassing in many ways Borges homeland, Argentina. As an example, in the 1980s Borges publishes a critical edition of his complete works that encloses more texts than the Spanish version. Moreover, Italy supports Borges nomination for the Nobel Prize, with more intensity than Argentina. Conversely, Borges also has a positive impact in Italy at a critical moment, as he offered much needed alternatives to Neorealism and Vanguardism, thus influencing a great number of indisputably world-renowned critics and writers, such as Sciascia, Tabucchi, Magris, Luzi, Eco, among others.

I am aware that despite a number of significant advances in the field, this thesis is only the starting point for various other works focusing on the theme of Italian Studies in Borges. Indeed, this work aims to precisely draw attention to, and awaken the interest of critics for these important,

and largely unexplored themes, which transcend mainstream scholarly literature on Borges and point to an unattempted approach to the Argentinian master.

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## 6. Appendices

### 6.1. APPENDIX 1. Direct references to Dante Alighieri in Borges' works.

This list of works were built through thorough direct consultation of Borges' works and interviews, and the different indexes and bibliographies available about Borges' works, or from mentions to specific texts from different critics.

“Las coplas acriolladas” (essay, 1926)

“La duración del infierno” (essay, 1929)

“Prefacio” in *El cementerio marino* (Prologue, 1931)

“Una vindicación de la cábala” (Essay, 1932)

“Las pesadillas y Franza Kafka” (Essay, 1935)

“Historia de la eternidad” (essay, 1936)

“Benedetto Croce” (one-page biography, 1936)

“Insel Almanach auf das Jahr” (book review, 1937)

“James Joyce” (one-page biography, 1937)

“Tres versiones de Judas” (short-story, 1944)

“Francisco Ayala: El hechizado” (book review, 1944)

“Silvina Bullrich Palenque: La redoma del primer ángel” (book review, 1944)

“Moral y literatura” (survey/essay, 1945)

“El Aleph” ((short-story, 1945)

“Nota Preliminar” in *Novelas ejemplares* (prologue, 1946)

“La última sonrisa de Beatriz” (essay, 1947)

“El encuentro en un sueño” (essay, 1948)

- “El enigma de Ulises” (Essay, 1948)
- “El seudo problema de Ugolino” (essay, 1948)
- “El Simurgh y el águila” (essay, 1948)
- “El último viaje de Ulises” (essay, 1948)
- “El verdugo piadoso” (essay, 1948)
- “Prólogo” in Prosa y verso (prologue, 1948)
- “Estudio preliminar” in La Divina Comedia (prologue, 1949)
- “Historia del guerrero y la cautiva” (short-story, 1949)
- “De las alegorías a las novelas” (essay, 1949)
- “La espera” (short-story, 1950)
- “Abenjacan El Bojarí, muerto en su laberinto” (short-story, 1951)
- “Beda el venerable” (essay, 1951)
- “El musipilli” (essay, 1951)
- “Las sagas” (essay, 1951)
- “La esfera de Pascal” (essay, 1951)
- “Nota sobre (hacia) Bernard Shaw” (essay, 1951)
- “El noble castillo del canto cuarto” (essay, 1951)
- “La metáfora : el historiador Snorru Sturlson...” (essay, 1952)
- “Nathaniel Hawthorne” (essay, 1952)
- “Quevedo” (essay, 1952)
- “Destino escandinavo” (essay, 1953)
- “Glosa” in Arrabal (prologue, 1954)
- “Paradiso XXXI, 108” (essay, 1954)

- “Inferno I, 32”, (essay, 1955)
- “Lugones, poeta” (essay, 1955)
- “Alfonso Reyes” (essay, 1955)
- “Una rosa amarilla” (prose, 1956)
- “Análisis del último capítulo del Quijote” (essay, 1956)
- “¿Cómo recibieron los premios” (essay/survey, 1957)
- “Juan Ramón Jiménez” (essay, 1957)
- “Dante y los visionarios anglosajones” (essay, 1957)
- “Mi primer encuentro con Dante” (essay, 1961)
- “Italia” (essay, 1961)
- “Homenaje a don Luis de Góngora” (conference, 1961)
- “Sarmiento” (essay 1963)
- “Página sobre Shakespeare” (essay, 1964)
- “El siglo XIX. La prosa” (essay, 1965)
- “Nuestro siglo” (essay, 1965)
- “Cynewulf” (essay, 1965)
- “Los expatriados” (essay, 1967)
- “Prólogo” in *El matrero* (prologue, 1970)
- “Prólogo” in *Más allá de mi río* (prologue, 1971)
- “Los amigos” (essay, 1972)
- “Prólogo” in *Obras completas* (prologue, 1974)
- “Montaigne, Walt Whitman” (essay, 1975)
- “Prólogo” in *Los libros de Alicia* (prologue, 1975)

- “The thing I am” (poem, 1977)
- “La Divina Comedia” (conference, 1977)
- “Things that might have been” (poem, 1977)
- “La pesadilla” (conference, 1977)
- “Las mil y una noches” (conference, 1977)
- “Norah” in *Norah* (prologue, 1977)
- “Prólogo” in *Mystical Works* (prologue, 1977)
- “Prólogo” in *El espejo que huye* (prologue, 1978)
- “Emanuel Swedenborg” (conference, 1979)
- “Inferno I, 32” (poem, 1979)
- “La inmortalidad” (conference, 1979)
- “V.O.” (essay, 1979)
- “Prólogo” in *Libro delle visioni* (prologue, 1980)
- “Prólogo” in *Teatro. poesía* (prologue, 1981)
- “Introducción” in *Antología Poética* (prologue, 1982)
- “Prólogo” in *La inundación* (prologue, 1982)
- “El falso problema de Ugolino” (essay, 1982)
- “Prólogo” in *Nueve ensayos Dantescos* (prologue, 1982)
- “Purgatorio I, 32” (essay, 1982)
- “Prólogo” in *El nombre de la mar y sus sirenas* (prologue, 1983)
- “El laberinto” (prose, 1984)
- “Prólogo” in *El corazón de las tinieblas. La soga al cuello* (prologue, 1985)
- “Prólogo” in *El imperio jesuítico* (prologue, 1985)

“Prólogo” in *Lo trágico cotidiano. El piloto ciego. Palabras y sangre* (prologue, 1985)

“Prólogo” in *La estatua de sal* (prologue, 1985)

“El hilo de la fábula” (poem, 1985)

“¿Por qué me siento europeo?” (essay, 1985)

“Prólogo” in *Ensayo sobre Orlando Furioso* (prologue, 1986)

“Prólogo” in *La Eneida* (prologue, 1986)

“El arte de contar historias” (conference, 2001)

“Susana Vieyra: Mirar hacia adentro” in *El círculo secreto* (prologue, 2003)

## 6.2. Appendix 2 - Italians cited in Borges' works

## A

**Albertilli, Pilo** (1907-1944)

*Italian thinker.*

Mention:

“La esfera de Pascal” (Essay, 1951)

**Alighieri, Dante** (1265-1321)

*Italian poet, author of the Divina Commedia.*

Mention:

*Cf.* Appendix 1

**Alighieri, Jacopo di Dante** (1289-1348)

*Italian Poet, youngest son of Dante Alighieri.*

Mention:

“Prólogo” [Nueve ensaios dantescos] (Prologue, 1982)

**Alighieri, Pietro di Dante** (m. 1364)

*Son of Dante Alighieri, commenter of his works.*

Mention:

“El encuentro en un sueño” (Essay, 1948)

**Andreoli, Raffaele** (1823-1891)

*Italian literary critic.*

Mentions:

“El último viaje de Ulisses” (Essay, 1948)

“La espera” (Tale, 1950)

**Ariosto, Ludovico** (1474-1533)

*Italian poet, author of Orlando Furioso.*

Main references:

“Ariosto y el *Nibelungenlied*” (Essay 1951)

“Ariosto y los árabes” (Poem, 1960)

“Ariosto y los Nibelungos” (Essay, 1965)

“Prólogo” (*Ensayo sobre Orlando Furioso*) (Prologue, 1986)

Mentions:

“La metáfora” [“El historiador Snorri Sturluson...”] (Essay, 1955)

“El tango pendeciero” (Essay, 1955)

“Prologo” [Crónicas marcianas] (Prologue, 1955)

“Análisis del último capitol del *Quijote*” (Essay, 1956)

“La luna” [Cuenta la historia que en aquel pasado..."] (Poem, 1959)

“Parábola de Cervantes y *Quijote*” (Short prose, 1969)

“La rosa” (Poem, 1969)

“La *Divina Comedia*” (Conference, 1977)

**B**

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**Bandello, Matteo** (1490-1560)

*Italian writer.*

Mention:

“Nota 321reliminary” [Novelas ejemplares] (Prologue, 1946)

**Bardi, Simone de** (s.XIII)

*Italian banker.*

Mentions:

“La última sonrisa de Beatriz” (Essay, 1947)

**Baronio, Césare** (1333-1607)

*Italian historian and cardinal.*

Mention:

“Formas de una leyenda” (Essay, 1952)

**Bertrand, Aloysius** (1807-1841)

*Italian poet.*

Mentions:

“El modernismo” (Essay, 1955)

**Bianchi, Brunone** (1803-1869)

*Italian literary critic and commenter of Dante's work.*

Mention:

“El falso problema de Ugolino” (Essay, 1982)

**Boccaccio, Giovanni** (1313-1375)

*Italian poet and writer, author of the Decameron.*

Mention:

“El doctor Mardrus” (Essay, 1936)

**Boccioni, Umberto** (1882-1916)

*Italian painter and sculptor. Theorist and promoter of the Futurism movement.*

Mention:

“Cubismo, expresionismo, Futurismo” (Translation, 1914)

**Boiardo, Matteo Maria** (1434-1494)

*Italian poet. Author of Orlando innamorato.*

Mention:

“Ariosto y los Nibelungos” (Essay 1965)

**Bonifacio V** (m.625)

*Napolitan priest. Pope from 610 to 625.*

Mention:

“La apostasía de Coifi” (Essay, 1953)

**Borgese, Giuseppe Antonio** (1882-1952)

*Italian writer, journalist and literary critic.*

Mention:

“De la vida literaria” [4 feb. 1938] (Article, 1938)

**Borgia, César** (1475-1507)  
*Italian prince and cardinal.*

Mention:

“Gerald Heard: Pain, sex and time” (Review, 1941)

**Bottacchiari, Rodolfo** (1885)  
*Italian academic and literary critic.*

Mentions

“De la vida literaria” [5 feb. 1937] (Article, 1937)

**Botticelli, Sandro** (di Mariano di Vanni Filipepi, Alessandro) (1445-1510)  
*Italian painter.*

Mention:

“Norah” [*Norah*] (Prologue, 1977)

**Bruno, Giordano** (1548-1600)  
*Italian philosopher and writer, condemned to the stake for heresy.*

Mentions:

“La esfera de Pascal” (Essay, 1951)

“Pascal” (Essay, 1952)

“Prólogo” [Crónicas marcianas] (Prologue, 1955)

“Et teatro” [“En el comienzo de la era cristiana...”] (Essay, 1955)

“Prólogo” [Teatro. Poesía] (Prologue, 1981)

**Buenaventura, San** (1221-1274)  
*Italian mystic and cardinal. Seraphic doctor of the Catholic Church.*

Mention:

“Epílogo” [Otras inquisiciones (1939-1952)] (El, 1975)

**Buonarroti, Michelangelo** (1475-1564)  
*Italian sculptor, architect, and painter.*

Mention:

“Sobre el *Vathek* de William Beckford” (Essay, 1943)

**Buti, Francesco de la** (1324-1406 ca.)

*Italian literary critic.*

Mentions:

“El encuentro en un sueño” (Essay, 1948)

“Prólogo” [Nueve ensaios dantescos] (Prologue, 1982)

“Purgatório, I, 13” (Essay, 1982)

**Buzzati, Dino** (1906-1972)

*Italian writer.*

Main reference:

“Prólogo” [El desierto de los tártaros] (Prologue, 1985)

## D

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**Cagliostro, Alessandro** (1743-1795)

*Sicilian doctor, alchemist and occultist.*

Mention:

“Del culto de los libros” (Essay, 1951)

**Calogero, Guido** (n.1904)

*Italian philosopher.*

Mention:

“La esfera de Pascal” (Essay, 1951)

**Calvino, Italo** (1923-1984)

*Italian writer and literary critic.*

Main reference:

“La fantasía de la realidad” (NP, 1985)

**Campanella, Tommaso** (1568-1639)

*Italian philosopher.*

Mention:

“La esfera de Pascal” (Essay, 1951)

**Can Grande, della Scala** (1291-1229)

*Italian noble, Ghibelline leader of Verona and protector of Dante.*

Mentions:

“Mi primer encuentro con Dante” (Essay, 1961)

“Prólogo” [Mystical works] (Prologue, 1961)

“La Divina Comedia” (Conference, 1977)

“Prólogo” [Libro delle Visioni] (Prologue, 1980)

“Prólogo” [Nueve ensaios dantescos] (Prologue, 1982)

**Carducci, Giosne** (1835-1907)

*Italian poet.*

Mention:

“La poesía” (Conference, 1977)

**Carpaccio, Vittore** (1460-1525 c.a)

*Italian painter.*

Mention:

“Venecia” (Short prose, 1984)

**Carrá, Carlo de** (1881-1966)

*Italian painter, member of the futurist movement.*

Mention:

“Cubismo, expresionismo, Futurismo” (Translation, 1924)

**Casanova, Giacomo** (1725-1798)

*Venetian writer and traveler.*

Mentions:

“El teatro” [Es curioso que en Inglaterra...] (Essay, 1967)

“Prólogo” [Los tres impostores] (Prologue, 1985)

**Casini, Tomasso** (1859-1917)

*Italian writer and literary critic. Commenter of Dante's work.*

Mentions:

“La última sonrisa de Beatriz” (Essay, 1947)

“El Simurgh y el águila” (Essay, 1948)

“El ultimo viaje de Ulises” (Essay, 1948)

“El enigma de *Ulises*) (Essay, 1948)

“El falso poema de Ugolino” (Essay, 1982)

**Cattaneo, Bartolomeo** (1883-1949)

*Italian pilot and aviator.*

Mention:

“La canción del barrio” (Essay, 1930)

**Celestino V** (1215-1296)

*Pope from 1294-1296.*

Mention:

“El verdugo piadoso” (Essay, 1948)

**Cesarotti, Melchior** (1730-1808)

*Italian poet and translator.*

Mention:

“El movimiento romántico” (Essay, 1965)

**Colombo, Cristoforo** (1451-1506)

*Italian navigator and explorer.*

Mentions:

“Ascendencias del tango” (Essay, 1927)

“The truth about Columbus, de Charles Duff” (Review, 1936)

“De la vida literaria” [28 mayo 1937] (Article, 1937)

“Lugones, poeta” (Essay, 1955)

“Franklin, Cooper y los historiadores” (Essay, 1967)

“Emmanuel Swedenborg” (Conference, 1979)

“Prólogo” [El crimen de Lord Arthur Savile” (Prologue, 1984)

**Colleoni, Bartolomeo** (1400-1475)

*Italian warlord.*

Mentions:

“Prólogo” [Sueño que sueña] (Prologue, 1983)

“Prólogo” [La scultura di Santiago Cogorno] (Prologue, 1984)

**Crisologo, Pietro** (ca. 380-450)

*Italian priest and doctor of the church, became archbishop of Ravenna in 433 until his demise.*

Mention:

“Las kenningar” (Essay, 1933)

**Croce, Benedetto** (1886-1952)

*Italian writer and philosopher.*

Main references:

“Benedetto Croce” (Biography, 1936)

“De las alegorías a las novelas” (Essay, 1949)

Mentions:

“El culturismo” (Essay, 1927)

“La simulación de la imagen” (Essay, 1927)

“Indagación de la palabra” (Essay, 1928)

“La postulación de la realidad” (Essay, 1931)

“Insel Almanach auf das Jahr 1937” (Review, 1937)

“De la vida literaria” [4 feb. 1938] (Article, 1938)

“Introduction à la Poétique, de Paul Valéry” (Review, 1938)

“John Dickson Carr: The black spectacles” (Review, 1940)

“El verdugo piadoso” (Essay, 1948)

“Historia del guerrero y de la cautiva” (Tale, 1949)

“La muralla y los libros” (Essay, 1950)

“El cantar de les Nibelungos” (Essay, 1951)

“La edda menor” (Essay, 1951)

“El noble Castillo des canto cuarto” (Essay, 1951)

“La metáfora” [El historiador Snorri Sturluson...] (Essay, 1952)

“Nathaniel Hawthorne” (Essay, 1952)

“Leyenda y realidad” (Letter, 1971)

“La Divina Comedia” (Conference, 1977)

“La poesía” (Conference, 1977)

“El cuento policial” (Conference, 1979)

“Prólogo” [Teatro. Poesía] (Prologue, 1981)

“El falso problema de Ugolino” (Essay, 1982)

“Prólogo” [Ensayo sobre Orlando Furioso] (Prologue, 1986)

“Prólogo” [El gran rostro de piedra] (Prologue, 1986)

“Credo de poeta” (Conference, 2001)

“El enigma de la poesía” (Conference, 2001)

## D

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**D’Annunzio, Gabriele** (1863-1938)

*Italian poet and writer.*

Main reference:

“Le dit du sourd et muet, Gabriele D’Annunzio” (Review, 1936)

Mentions:

“Marinetti fue una medida profilática” (Interview, 1926)

“De la vida literaria” [28 mayo 1937] (Article, 1937)

“De la vida literaria” [4 feb. 1938] (Article, 1938)

“Pierre Menard, autor del Quijote” (Tale, 1939)

“Norah” [Norah] (Prologue, 1977)

“Prólogo” [Ensayo sobre Orlando Furioso] (Prologue, 1986)

**D’Ovidio, Francesco** (1849-1925)

*Italian academic and commenter of Dante*

Mention:

“El falso problema de Ugolino” (Essay, 1982)

**Da Vinci, Leonardo** (1452-1519)

*Italian painter, inventor and scientist.*

Mentions:

“Paul Valéry” (Biography, 1937)

“La violenta luz de la gloria” (Conference, 1975)

“Emmanuel Swedenborg” (Conference, 1979)

**Damiani, Pietro** (1007-1072)

*Italian theologian, monk and doctor of the Church.*

Mentions:

“Epílogo” [El Aleph] (El, 1949)

“La otra muerte” (Tale, 1949)

“Prólogo” [En tu aire, Argentina] (Prologue, 1960)

“Nota para un cuento fantástico” (Poem, 1981)

**Dandolo, Vincenzo** (1758-1819)

*Italian chemist and agronomist*

Mention:

“Venecia” (Short prose, 1984)

**De Chirico, Giorgio** (1888-1978)

*Italian painter associated with surrealism.*

Mentions:

“Films” (Review, 1931)

“Art in England, de R. S. Lambert” (Review, 1938)

“Norah” [Norah] (Prologue, 1977)

“Prólogo” [Un bárbaro en Asia] (Prologue, 1985)

**Donnini, Giuseppe** (1901-1982)

*Italian literary critic.*

Main reference:

“Dostojevski vivente, de Giuseppe Donnini” (Review, 1936)

**Duse, Eleonora** (1858-1924)

*Italian actress.*

Mention:

“Hermann Sudermann” (Biography, 1937)

**E**

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**Eliano, Claudio** (175-235)

*Italian writer and naturalist.*

Main reference:

“Prólogo” [Historia de los animales] (Prolog, 1985)

Mention:

“Elegía” [“Tres muy antiguas caras me develan...”] (Poem, 1975)

**F**

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**Farinata degli Uberti** (m. 1264)

*Italian nobleman and Ghibelline leader, mentioned in the Divina Commedia.*

Mention:

“El enigma de Ulises” (Essay, 1948)

**Favaro, Antonio** (1847-1922)

Italian mathematician

Mentions:

“Del culto de los libros” (Essay, 1951)

**Florio, John** (1553-1625)

*Italian linguist and lexicographer residing in England. Translator of Montaigne in English.*

Mention:

“La memoria de Shakespeare” (Tale, 1980)

**Folco Portinari, Beatriz de** (1266-1290)

*Florentine Lady; Dante’s Beatrice.*

Mentions:

“La última sonrisa de Beatriz” (Essay, 1947)

“El último viaje de Ulises” (Essay, 1948)

“*La Divina Comedia*” (Conference, 1977)

**Foscolo, Ugo** (1778-1827)

*Italian poet.*

Mention:

“*Dante’s Purgatorio*, by Laurence Binyon” (Review, 1939)

**Fra Angelico** (ca. 1390-1455)

*Italian Renaissance painter.*

Mention:

“Norah” [*Norah*] (Prologue, 1977)

**Fra Diavolo** (1771-1806)

*Leader of the Italian resistance against Napoleon’s French occupation.*

Mention:

“Las llamadas sagas arcaicas” (Essay, 1951)

**Frate Alberico** (m. ca. 1307)

*Italian noble incorporated in the *Divina Commedia* by Dante.*

Mention:

“Prólogo” [*Libro delle Visioni*] (Prologue, 1980)

## G

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**Galardi, Alberto** (1930- )

*Italian architect and art historian.*

Main reference:

“Prólogo” [*La scultura di Santiago Cogorno*] (Prologue, 1984)

**Galilei, Galileo** (1564-1642)

*Italian astronomer and philosopher.*

Mentions:

“Del culto de los libros” (Essay, 1951)

“El siglo XVII” (Essay, 1965)

“Yesterdays” (Poem, 1980)

**Garibaldi, Giuseppe** (1807-1882)

*Italian patriot of who there is a statue in Plaza Italia in Buenos Aires.*

Mention:

“Palermo de Buenos Aires” (Essay, 1930)

**Gentile, Giovanni** (1875-1944)

*Sicilian philosopher.*

Mention:

“De la vida literaria” [24 jun. 1938] (Article, 1938)

**Gherardesca, Ugolino della** (1220-1289)

*Italian nobleman sentenced to die of hunger in a tower, along with his sons and grandsons. This story is resumed by Dante.*

Mentions:

“El enigma de *Ulises*” (Essay, 1948)

“La espera” (Tale, 1950)

“El hambre” (Poem, 1966)

“El falso problema de Ugolino” (1982)

**Gioberti, Vincenzo** (1801-1852)

*Italian politician and philosopher, and commentator of Dante.*

Mention:

“El noble Castillo del canto cuarto” (Essay, 1951)

**Gioto** (1267-1337)

*Italian painter and sculptor.*

Mention:

“Norah” [*Norah*] (Prologue, 1977)

**Giusti, Roberto Fernando** (1887-1978)

*Argentinian writer, born in Italy. Co-founder and editor of the magazine "Nosotros".*

Mention:

"Una vida de Evaristo Cariego" (Essay, 1930)

**Goito, Sordello da** (m. 1969)

*Italian troubadour portrayed by Dante in *Purgatorio*.*

Mention:

"*La vuelta de Martín Fierro*" ["No hay libro perdurable..."] (Essay, 1935)

**Goldoni, Carlo** (1707-1793)

*Italian playwright.*

Mention:

"El Aleph" (Tale, 1945)

**Gorani, Giuseppe** (1740-1819)

*Italian explorer and writer.*

Mention:

"Prólogo" [*Libro de las ruinas*] (Prologue, 1997)

**Grabher, Carlo** (1897-1968)

*Italian literary critic. Commentator of the *Divina Commedia*.*

Mentions:

"Mi primer encuentro con Dante" (Essay, 1961)

"*La Divina Comedia*" (Conference, 1977)

"Prólogo" [*Ensayo sobre Orlando Furioso*] (Prologue, 1986)

**Grimaldi, Girolamo** (m. 1543)

*Italian cardinal.*

Mention:

"*The library of Pico della Mirandola, by Pearl Kibbe*" (Review, 1936)

**Guicciardini, Francesco** (1483-1540)

*Italian philosopher, poet and politician.*

Mention:

“Prólogo” [*Libro de las ruinas*] (Prologue, 1997)

**I**

**Imola, Benvenuto Rambaldi da** (ca. 1320-1380)

*Lecturer of the University of Bologna, known for his commentary on the Divina Commedia, by Dante Alighieri: Comentum super Dantis Alighieris Comoediam.*

Mentions:

“El encuentro en un sueño” (Ensayo, 1948)

“El falso problema de Ugolino” (Essay, 1982)

**L**

**Lana, Iacopo della** (ca. 1278-1358)

*Commentator of Dante.*

Mention:

“Prólogo” [*Nueve Ensaïos dantescos*] (Prologue, 1982)

**Lanza del Vasto** [Lanza di Trabia-Branciforte, Giuseppe Giovanni Luigi Enrico] (1901-1981)

*Italian pacifist.*

Mention:

“De la vida literaria” [2 Sept 1938] (Article, 1938)

**Latini, Brunetto** (1220-1294)

*Italian man of letters.*

Mention:

“El enigma de Ulises” (Ensayo, 1948)

**Leonardo [de Pisa]** (ca. 1170-1250)

*Italian mathematician.*

Mention:

“*The library of Pico della Mirandola, by Pearl Kibbe*” (Review, 1936)

**Leopardi, Giacomo** (1798-1837)

*Poeta italiano.*

Mention:

“De la vida literaria” [5 Feb, 1937] (Article, 1937)

**Lippi, Filippo** (1406-1469)

*Italian painter.*

Mention:

“Prólogo” [*Norah*] (Prologue, 1977)

**M****Malatesta, Giovanni** [Gianciotto] (ca. 1240-1304)

*Italian mercenary married to Francesca da Polenta Rimini. Circa 1283-1284 Malatesta caught his wife in adultery with his own brother, Paolo Malatesta, and murdered both with his bare hands. This tragedy is portrayed in Dante's Inferno.*

Mentions:

“Inferno, V, 129” (Poem, 1979)

“La inocencia de Layamón” (Essay, 1951)

**Maltesta, Paolo** (ca. 1246-1283/4)

*Bother of Gianciotto Malatesta. Known for his affair with Francesca da Polenta Rimini and their tragic death at the hands of his husband, and Paolo's brother, Gianciotto. This tragedy is portrayed in Dante's Inferno.*

Mentions:

“Inferno, V, 129” (Poem, 1979)

“La inocencia de Layamón” (Essay, 1951)

**Malvezzi, Virgilio** (1595-1653)

*Italian writer.*

Mentions:

“El falso problema de Ugolino” (Essay, 1982)

“Prólogo” [*La fortuna con seso y la hora de todos. Marco Bruto*] (Prologue, 1985)

**Manzoni, Alessandro** (1785-1873)

*Italian writer and poet.*

Mention:

“Prólogo” [*Ensayo sobre Orlando Furioso*] (Prologue, 1986)

**Machiavelli, Niccolò** (1469-1527)

*Italian philosopher and writer. Author of Il Principe (1513)*

Mentions:

“Proa” (Essay, 1929)

“La flor de Coleridge” (Essay, 1945)

**Marinetti, Filippo Tommaso** (1876-1944)

*Italian poet and editor. Founder of the Futurism.*

Main references:

“Marinetti fue una medida profiláctica” (Inquiry, 1926)

“De la vida literaria” [ 4 Mar, 1938] (Article, 1938)

Mentions:

“Réplica” (Letter, 1920)

“La lírica argentina contemporánea” (Anthology, 1921)

“Cubismo, expresionismo, Futurism” (Translation, 1924)

“Alfredo Mario Ferreiro: *El hombre que se comió un autobús*” (Review, 1927)

“L’homme blanc, de Jules Romains” (Review, 1937)

**Marino, Giovanni Battista** (1569-1625)

*Italian poet.*

Mentions:

“Sobre el *Vathek* de William Beckford” (Essay, 1943)

“De las alegorías de las novelas” (Essay, 1951)

“La poesía de los escaldos” (Essay, 1951)

“Página final” (Essay, 1955)

“Una rosa amarilla” (Brief prose, 1956)

“El advenimiento de Buenos Aires” (Note, 1956)  
 “Baltasar Graían” (Poema, 1958)  
 “El caso *Lolita*” [Respuesta de Jorge Luis Borges] (Inquiry, 1959)  
 “In memoriam A. R.” (Poem, 1960)  
 [Homenaje a don Luis de Góngora] (Conference, 1961)  
 “Los amigos” (Essay, 1972)  
 “Prólogo” [*La scultura de Santiago Cogorno*] (Prologue, 1984)  
 “Prólogo” [*Vathek*] (Prologue, 1984)  
 “Prólogo” [*El secreto profesional y otros textos*] (Prologue, 1985)

**Marzemin, Giuseppe** (1876-1946)

*Italian historian.*

Main reference:

“*Le origini romane di Venezia*, by Giuseppe Marzemin” (Review, 1937)

**Megaro, Gaudens** (1903-1958)

*Italian writer and biographer.*

Mentions:

“De la vida literaria” [ 27 May, 1938] (Article, 1938)

“De la vida literaria” [ 8 Jul, 1938] (Article, 1938)

**Momigliano, Attilio** (1883-1952)

*Italian literary critic.*

Main reference:

“Prólogo” [*Ensayo sobre Orlando Furioso*] (Prologue, 1986)

Mentions:

“El noble castillo del canto cuarto” (Essay, 1951)

“Mi primer encuentro con Dante” (Essay, 1961)

“*La Divina Comedia*” (Conference, 1977)

**Mondolfo, Rodolfo** (1877-1976)

*Italian philosopher who developed his career and production in Argentina.*

Mention:

“La esfera de Pascal” (Essay, 1951)

**Mussolini, Benito** (1883-1945)

*Italian fascist dictator.*

Mentions:

“De la vida literaria” [ 5 Feb, 1937] (Article, 1937)

“De la vida literaria” [ 4 Feb, 1938] (Article, 1938)

“De la vida literaria” [ 8 Jul, 1938] (Article, 1938)

“De la vida literaria” [ 2 Dec, 1938] (Article, 1938)

“Ensayo de imparcialidad” (Essay, 1939)

“Prólogo” [*Ensayo sobre Orlando Furioso*] (Prologue, 1986)

**N**

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**Nardelli, Federico** (1891-1986)

*Italian writer, biographer, and architect.*

Mentions:

“De la vida literaria” [ 28 May, 1937] (Article, 1937)

**Nitti, Frank** (1888-1943)

*Italian-American gangster. Al Capone’s top henchman.*

Mentions:

“Una sentencia del Quijote” (Essay, 1933)

**P**

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**Paoli, Pasquale** (1725-1807)

*Corsican leader and patriot. General in command of the island’s independence movement.*

Mention:

“El siglo XVIII” (Essay, 1965)

**Papini, Giovanni** (1881-1956)

*Italian writer and poet.*

Main references:

- “Prólogo” [*El espejo que huye*] (Prologue, 1978)  
 “Prólogo” [*Lo trágico cotidiano. El piloto ciego. Palabras y sangre*] (Prologue, 1985)

Mentions:

- “Nota preliminar” [*Pragmatismo*] (Prologue, 1945)  
 “El ultimo viaje de de Ulises” (Essay, 1948)  
 “Prólogo” [*Libro delle Visioni*] (Prologue, 1980)  
 “Prólogo” [*Yzur*] (Prologue, 1985)  
 “Prólogo” [*Las variedades de la experiencia religiosa I*] (Prologue, 1986)  
 “Prólogo” [*Los amigos de los amigos*] (Prologue, 1986)  
 “Prólogo” [*Libro de las Ruinas*] (Prologue, 1997)

**Pareto, Vilfredo** (1848-1923)

*Italian sociologist, economist, and philosopher.*

Mention:

- “De la vida literaria” [ 4 Feb, 1938] (Article, 1938)

**Paulinus de Nola** [Pontius Meropius Anicius Paulinus] (355-431)

*Bishop of Nola, in Naples. Writer of Carmina and saint of the catholic church.*

Mentions:

- “Una vindicación de la cabala” (Essay, 1932)  
 “Historia de la eternidad” (Essay, 1936)

**Paulus Diaconus** [Warnfridus] (ca. 720-800)

*Benedictine monk and historian.*

Mentions:

- “Historia del guerrero y de la cautiva” (Tale, 1949)

**Peano, Giuseppe** (1858-1932)

*Italian mathematician and logic.*

Mentions:

- “*Delphos, or the future of international language*, by E. S. Pankhurst” Review, 1939)  
 “El idioma analítico de John Wilkins” (Essay, 1942)

**Petrarca, Francesco** (1304-1374)*Italian poet and humanist.*Mentions:

- “Milton y su condenación de la rima” (Essay, 1926)
- “Flaubert y su destino ejemplar” (Essay, 1954)
- “Portugal” (Essay, 1965)
- “Prólogo” [*Nueve ensayos dantescos*] (Prologue, 1982)
- “Nostalgia del latín” (Conference, 1982)
- “Venecia” (Brief prose, 1984)
- “Prólogo” [*Micromegas*] (Prologue, 1986)

**Pico della Mirandola, Giovanni** (1463-1494)*Italian philosopher and theologian.*Mentions:

- “El doctor Mardrus” (Essay, 1936)
- “*The library of Pico della Mirandola*, by Pearl Kibbe” (Review, 1936)

**Pietrobono, Luigi** (1863-1960)*Italian literary critic, commentator of the works of Dante and Giovanni Pascoli.*Mentions:

- “La última sonrisa de Beatriz” (Essay, 1947)
- “El encuentro en un sueño” (Essay, 1948)
- “El último viaje de Ulises” (Essay, 1948)
- “El enigma de *Ulises*” (Essay, 1948)
- “El falso problema de Ugolino” (Essay, 1982)

**Pirandello, Luigi** (1867-1936)*Italian playwright, won the Nobel Prize of literature in 1934.*Main reference:

- “Para el advenimiento de Pirandello” (Note, 1927)

Mentions:

- “Cine. Cinco breves noticias” (Selection, 1933)
- “Benedetto Croce” (Biografía, 1936)
- “De la vida literaria” [28 May, 1937] (Article, 1937)
- “De la vida literaria” [20 Aug, 1937] (Article, 1937)
- “*Of course Vitelli!* by Alan Griffiths” (Review, 1938)
- “Nathaniel Hawthorne” (Essay, 1952)
- “*La Divina Comedia*” (Conference, 1977)
- “Prólogo” [*Fábulas*] (Prologue, 1983)

**Piranesi, Giovanni Battista** (1720-1778)

*Italian engraver and architect.*

Mentions:

“De la pintura” (Nota, 1980)

“Sobre el *Vathek* de William Beckford” (Essay, 1943)

“There are more things” (Tale, 1974)

“Prólogo” [*Vathek*] (Prologue, 1985)

**Polo, Marco** (1254-1324)

*Venetian merchant and sailor.*

Main reference:

“Prólogo” [*La descripción del mundo*] (Prologue, 1985)

Mentions:

“Itinerario de un vago porteño” (T. S. 1927)

“De la vida literaria” [10 Mar, 1939] (Article, 1939)

“El sueño de Coleridge” (Essay, 1951)

“El movimiento romántico” (Essay, 1965)

“Ariosto y los Nibelungos” (Essay, 1965)

“Caedmon” (Essay, 1965)

“Las mil y una noches” (Conference, 1977)

“Prólogo” [*Las mil y una noches según Galland*] (Prologue, 1985)

**Previtali, Giovanni** (1934-1988)

*Italian art historian.*

Main reference:

“Prólogo” [*Ricardo Güiraldes and Don Segundo Sombra*] (Prologue, 1963)

Rambaldi da Imola, Benvenuto (ca. 1320-1388)

Italian professor, commentator of Dante.

Mention:

“El falso problema de Ugolino” (Essay, 1982)

## R

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### **Ricci, Franco Maria** (1937-)

*Italian editor, designer and bibliographer.*

#### Mentions:

“Prólogo” [*Libro delle Visioni*] (Prologue, 1980)

“Prólogo” [*Libro de las Ruinas*] (Prologue, 1997)

### **Rienzi, Cola di** (ca. 1313-1354)

*Italian popular leader. Byron and Petrarca dedicated verses to him and his life was the subject of one of Wagner’s operas as well as a novel by Edward Bulwer-Lyton.*

#### Mention:

.El siglo XVIII” (Essay, 1965)

### **Rimini, Francesca da Polenta** (m. ca. 1283/4)

*Italian noble murdered by her husband when he discovered her affair with his brother of Paolo Malatesta. This tragedy is portrayed in Dante’s Inferno.*

#### Mentions:

“Inferno, V, 129” (Poem, 1979)

“La inocencia de Layamón” (Essay, 1951)

### **Rossi, Atilio** (1909-1999)

*Italian plastic artist and cartoonist whose training and career were developed in Argentina.*

#### Mention:

“Prólogo” [*Buenos Aires en tinta china*] (Prologue, 1951)

### **Rossi, Mario** (?)

*Italian literary critic. Editor of Discorso di Giacompo Mazzoni in difesa della “Comedia” del divino poeta Dante in 1898.*

#### Mention:

“El noble castillo del canto cuarto” (Essay, 1951)

### **Rustichello** [Ruticiano da Pisa] (s. XIII)

*Italian writer of novels to who Marco Polo dictated the accounts of his voyages, while they were in prison together.*

Mention:

“Prólogo” [*La descripción del mundo*] (Prologue, 1985)

## S

**Sacco, Ferdinando Nicola** (1891-1927)

*Italian immigrant in the United States. Member of the labouring class and political activist of anarchist affiliation. His process, sentencing and execution were considered irregular.*

Mention:

“De la vida literaria” [10 Mar, 1939] (Article, 1939)

**Salgari, Emilio** (1862-1911)

*Italian writer of novels and adventures.*

Mentions:

“Prólogo” [*Martín Fierro*] (Prologue, 1957)

“Prólogo” [*El espejo que huye*] (Prologue, 1980)

**Sanctis, Francesco de** (1817-1883)

*Italian historian and literary critic.*

Mentions:

“La última sonrisa de Beatriz” (Essay, 1947)

“De las alegorías y las novelas” (Essay, 1949)

“*Martín Fierro* y los críticos” (Essay, 1953)

“El falso problema de Ugolino” (Essay, 1982)

“Prólogo” [*Ensayo sobre Orlando Furioso*] (Prologue, 1986)

**Sanzio, Rafael** (1483-1520)

*Italian painter and architect.*

Mentions:

“El siglo XIX. La poesía” (Ensayo, 1965)

**Severini, Gino** (1883-1966)

*Italian painter.*

Mention:

“Cubismo, expresionismo, Futurism” (Translation, 1924)

**Soffici, Mario** (1900-1977)

*Italian director, screenwriter and actor immigrated in Argentina.*

Main Reference:

“Prisioneros de la tierra” (Review, 1939)

**Steiner, Carlo** (1863-1933)

*Italian literary critic.*

Mentions:

“El encuentro en un sueño” (Essay, 1948)

“El ultimo viaje de Ulises” (Essay, 1948)

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**Tamberlick, Enrico** (1820-1889)

*Italian dramatic singer.*

Mention:

“La otra muerte” (Tale, 1949)

**Tartini, Giuseppe** (1692-1770)

*Italian composer and violinist.*

Mention:

“El sueño de Coleridge” (Essay, 1951)

**Tasso, Torquato** (1544-1595)

*Italian poet. Author of the epic poem Gerusalemme liberata in 1580.*

Mentions:

“Falubert y su destino ejemplar” (Essay, 1954)

“Portugal” (Essay, 1955)

“Página sobre Shakespeare” (Essay, 1964)

“El siglo XVII” (Essay, 1965)

“La Divina Comedia” (Conference, 1977)

**Tiziano Vecellio** [Vecelli] (ca. 1476-1576)

*Italian painter.*

Mention:

“De la pintura” (Note, 1980)

**Tommaseo, Niccolò** (1802-1874)

*Italian writer and linguist. Author of an Italian Language dictionary and commentator of Dante.*

Mentions:

“El encuentro en un sueño” (Essay, 1948)

“El ultimo viaje de Ulises” (Essay, 1948)

**Torraca, Francesco** (1853-1938)

*Italian professor and commentator of Dante.*

Mentions:

“La última sonrisa de Beatriz” (1947)

“El encuentro en un sueño” (Essay, 1948)

“El noble castillo del canto cuarto” (Essay, 1951)

“El falso problema de Ugolino” (Essay, 1982)

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**Vaccarelli, Paolo** [a.k.a Paul Kelly] (1876-1936)

*Sicilian delinquent. Immigrated to America where he founded the Five Points Gang in New York.*

Mention:

“Proveedor de iniquidades Monk Eastman” (Tale, 1935)

**Vallentin, Antonia** (1893-1957)

*Italian art critic.*

Mention:

“De la vida literaria: [19 Mar. 1937] (Article, 1937)

**Vandelli, Giuseppe** (1865-1930)

*Italian philologist and literary critic. Commentator of Dante.*

Mention:

“El enigma de *Ulises*” (Essay, 1948)

**Vanini, Lucilio** (1585-1619)

*Italian philosopher and thinker.*

Mentions:

“Gerald Heard: *Pain, sex and time*” (Review, 1941)

“El tiempo circular” (Essay, 1953)

**Venturi, Pompeo** (1693-1753)

*Italian professor, commentator of Dante.*

Mention:

“El Simurgh y el águila” (Essay, 1948)

**Vespucci, Amerigo** (1454-1512)

Italian sailor, he was the first European to understand the land discovered by Columbus were a new continent.

Mention:

“Definición del germanófilo” (Essay, 1940)

**Vico, Giambattista** (1668-1744)

*Italian philosopher and historian.*

Mentions:

“Benedetto Croce” (Biography, 1936)

“Veit Valentin: *Weltgeschichte*” (Review, 1939)

“Tema del traidor y del héroe” (Tale, 1944)

“El inmortal” (Essay, 1949)

“El tiempo circular” (Essay, 1953)

“Prólogo” [*Facundo*] (Prologue, 1974)

**Vitali, Guido** (n. 1881)

Italian literary critic.

Mentions:

“La última sonrisa de Beatriz” (Essay, 1947)

“El encuentro en un sueño” (Essay, 1948)

“El Simurgh y el águila” (Essay, 1948)

“El enigma de *Ulises*” (Essay, 1948)

“El noble castillo del canto cuarto” (Essay, 1951)

“El falso problema de Ugolino” (Essay, 1982)

**Viterbo, Annio da** (Juan) (1432-1502)

*Italian dominican friar and historian.*

Mentions:

“Tres versiones de Judas” (Tale, 1944)

“Portugal” (Essay, 1955)

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**Zurllini, Valerio** (1926-1982)

*Italian cinema director.*

Mention:

“Prólogo” [*El desierto de los tártaros*] (Prologue, 1985)

### 6.3. APPENDIX 3 - Borges' works translated into Italian in chronological order

[1] 1955, *La biblioteca di Babele*, trad. de Franco Lucentini, Torino, Einaudi.

[2] 1959, *L'Aleph*, trad. de Francesco Tentori Montalto, Milano, Feltrinelli (en "Biblioteca di Letteratura-I Classici Moderni"; nueva edición en el 61, en la "Universale Economica"; 2ª ed. 1975; 3ª ed. 1977).

[3] 1961, *Finzioni*. *La biblioteca di Babele*, nueva edición de Einaudi de *La biblioteca di Babele*. Otra edición en 1967, con un ensayo-prefacio de Maurice Blanchot: "L'infinito letterario"; otra en 1971 en "Nuova Universale Einaudi". Con una introducción de Domenico Porzio y el ensayo de Maurice Blanchot la editorial Mondadori la volvió a publicar en el 74, en la colección de bolsillo "Oscar Mondadori".

[4] 1961, *Storia universale dell'infamia*, trad. de M. Pasi, Milano, Il Saggiatore (introducción de Franco Lucentini y Carlo Fruttero en la edición de 1981).

[5] 1962, Antologia personale, trad. de Francesco Tentori Montalto, Milano, Silva (2ª ed. 1965).

[6] 1962, Manuale di zoologia fantastica, trad. e introd. de Franco Lucentini, Torino, Einaudi (2ª ed. 1970; "Nuovi Coralli", 1979).

[7] 1962, Storia dell'eternità, trad. de L. Bacchi Wilcock, Milano, Il Saggiatore.

[8] 1963, Altre inquisizioni, trad. e introd. de Francesco Tentori Montalto, Milano, Feltrinelli ("Univ. economica", 1973; 2ª ed. 1976).

[9] 1963, L'artefice, trad. de Francesco Tentori Montalto, Milano, Rizzoli.

[10] 1967 Antologia personale, trad. de Maria Vasta Dazzi, Milano, Longanesi (2ª ed. 1969; en la edición de 1979, presentación de Alberto Arbasino).

[11] 1969, Carne presunto e altre poesie, trad. de U. Cianciòlo, Torino, Einaudi (republicado por los "Oscar" Mondadori, 1972).

[12] 1970, Evaristo Carriego, trad. de Vanna Brocca, Miláno, Palazzi (en 1972, Torino, Einaudi, en la colección "Nuovi Coralli").

[13] 1971, Conversazioni con Borges, ed. de Richard Burgin, trad. de Vanna Brocca, Milano, Palazzi.

[14] 1971, Elogio dell'ombra, trad. de Francesco Tentori Montalto, incluye "Abbozzo di autobiografia" de Norman Thomas di Giovanni, traducido por Floriana Bossi, Torino, Einaudi, "Einaudi Letteratura"; 2ª ed. 1972; "Nuovi Coralli" 1977).

[15] 1971, Il manoscritto di Brodie, trad. de Livio Bacchi Wilcock, Milano, Rizzoli.

[16] 1971, Sei problemi per Don Isidro Parodi, en colaboración con Adolfo Bioy Casares, trad. de Vanna Brocca, Milano, Palazzi (1978, Roma, Editori Riuniti).

[17] 1972, Cielo e inferno, antología de autores a cargo de Borges y Bioy Casares, trad. de Antonio Porta y Marcelo Ravoni, pres. de Roger Caillois, Parma, Franco Maria Ricci (ed. lujo, numerada).

[18] 1972, Un modello per la morte, en colaboración con Bioy

Casares, con el seudónimo Suárez Lynch, trad. de Vanna Brocca y Rosa Rossi, introd. de Vanni Blengino, Milano, Palazzi (1980, Roma, Editori Riuniti, con la misma introducción; 2ª ed. 1981).

[19] 1973, *Brume, dei, eroi*, en colaboración con María Esther Vázquez, trad. de Gianni Guadalupi y Marcelo Ravoni, presentación de Giovanni Mariotti, Milano-Parma, Franco Maria Ricci (traducción de Antiguas literaturas germánicas ).

[20] 1973, *Discussione*, trad. de Livio Bacchi Wilcock, Milano, Rizzoli.

[21] 1973, *Il "Martín Fierro"*, Milano, Palazzi, trad. e introd. de Vanna Brocca, ilustraciones de Carlos Alonso presentadas por Marco Valsecchi.

[22] 1973, *Manuale di zoologia fantastica*, con seis aguafuertes de Enrico Baj, la misma traducción de Franco Lucentini, del 62, Verona, Gino Castiglioni & Alessandro Corubolo, 80 ejemplares firmados por el grabador y numerados.

[23] 1973, *Racconti brevi e straordinari*, antología de AAVV a cargo de Borges y Bioy Casares, trad. di Gianni Guadalupi,

Parma-Milano, Franco Maria Ricci.

[24] 1974, L'oro delle tigri, trad. de Livio Bacchi Wilcock y Juan Rodolfo Wilcock, Milano, Rizzoli.

[25] 1974, Siete poemas sajones. Seven Saxon Poems.. Impressions by Arnoldo Pomodoro, Verona, Plain Wrapper Press (100 ejemplares, edición de lujo).

[26] 1975, Cronache di Bustos Domecq, en colaboración con Bioy Casares, trad. de Francesco Tentori Montalto, Torino, Einaudi.

[27] 1976, Nuova antologia personale, trad. de Livio Bacchi Wilcock, Milano, Rizzoli.

[28] 1977, Il libro di sabbia, trad. de Livio Bacchi Wilcock, Milano, Rizzoli.

[29] 1977, Norah, edición con 15 litografías de Norah Borges encontradas en Milán por Alberto Vigevano, trad. de Domenico Porzio, prólogo de Borges, incluye un texto de D. Porzio, "Visita a Borges", Milano, Il Polifilo (500 ejemplares).

[30] 1979, *Borges al cinema*, recensioni cinematografiche pubblicate nella rivista *Sur* tra il 1931-40, ed. di Edgardo Cozarinsky, prólogo di Adolfo Bioy Casares, Milano, Il Formichiere.

[31] 1979, *Il Congresso*, trad. di Gianni Guadalupi, con una intervista, una cronologia e una bibliografia di María Esther Vázquez, Milano-Parma, Franco Maria Ricci.

[32] 1980, *Libro delle visioni di Jorge Luis Borges*, ensayo storico-critico di Mariusz Karpowicz, antologia di AAVV, contiene il racconto di B. "25 de agosto de 1983", Milano-Parma, Franco Maria Ricci (de lusso).

[33] 1980, *Poesie (1923-1976)*, selezionate da Jorge Luis Borges, introduzione e note di Roberto Paoli, trad. di Livio Bacchi Wilcock, Milano, Rizzoli.

[34] 1980, *Venticinque Agosto 1983 e altri racconti inediti di J.L.B.*, (include i racconti di *La memoria di Shakespeare*, escluso il racconto omonimo; include "Utopía di un hombre que está cansado" del libro *de arena*), editato per il suo 80° compleanno, con una intervista di María Esther Vázquez, Parma-Milano, Franco Maria

Ricci.

[35] 1981, *Antologia della Letteratura fantastica*, en colaboración con Bioy Casares y Silvina Ocampo, trad. de AAVV, prefacio de Bioy Casares, prefacio a la edición italiana de Borges y Bioy Casares, Roma, Editori Riuniti.

[36] 1981, *Gli altri*, en colaboración con Bioy Casares, prefacio de Gilles Deleuze, trad. de Armando Marchi, Milano, Shakespeare and Company (traducción de un volumen francés: *Les autres* ).

[37] 1981, *La moneta di ferro*, ed. de Cesco Vian, Milano, Rizzoli.

[38] 1981, *Oral*, trad. de Angelo Morino, Roma, Editori Riuniti.

[39] 1982 *I signori del mistero*, antología de relatos policiales, ed. de Jorge Luis Borges y Adolfo Bioy Casares, Roma, Editori Riuniti (traduce *Los mejores cuentos policiales* ).

[40] 1982, *Colloqui con Borges. Immagini, memorie, visioni*, Palermo, Novecento (coloquios con María Esther Vázquez).

[41] 1982, *La cifra*, trad. de Doemnico Porzio y Hado Lyria,

Milano, Mondadori.

[42] 1983, *Antologia della letteratura fantastica*, antología de AAVV a cargo de Jorge Luis Borges, Silvina Ocampo y Adolfo Bioy Casares 2ª ed., Roma, Editori Riuniti (traduce *Antología de la literatura fantástica*).

[43] 1983, *La cattedrale della paura. Due secoli di racconti polizieschi*, en colaboración con A. Bioy Casares, Roma, Editori Riuniti (traduce *Los mejores cuentos policiales*, 1ª serie).

[44] 1983, *Sette notti*, trad. Mirka Eugenia Moras, Milano, Feltrinelli.

[45] 1984-1985, *Tutte le opere*, ed. de Domenico Porzio, Milano, Mondadori, colección "I Meridiani", 2 vols. El primer volumen comprende una "Introduzione" de D. Porzio y las siguientes obras: *Fervore di Buenos Aires* (trad. de Domenico Porzio y Hado Lyria), *Luna di fronte* (trad. de D. Porzio y H. Lyria), *Quaderno San Martín* (trad. de D. Porzio y H. Lyria), *Evaristo Carriego* (trad. de Vanna Brocca), *Discussione* (trad. de Livio Bacchi Wilcock), *Storia universale dell'infamia* (trad. de Mario Pasi), *Storia dell'eternità* (trad. de L. Bacchi Wilcock), *Finzioni* (trad. de Franco Lucentini),

L'Aleph (trad. de Francesco Tentori Montalto), Altre inquisizioni (trad. de Francesco Tentori Montalto) y L'Artefice (trad de Francesco Tentori Montalto); el segundo volumen comprende una "Introduzione" de D. Porzio (IX-XXXI) y las siguientes obras: L'altro, lo stesso (trad. de Francesco Tentori Montalto), Per le sei corde (trad. de Domenico Porzio y Hado Lyria), Elogio dell'ombra (trad. de Francesco Tentori Montalto), Il manoscritto di Brodie (trad. de L. Bacchi Wilcock), L'oro delle tigri (trad. de Livio Bacchi Wilcock y Juan Rodolfo Wilcock), Il libro di sabbia (trad. de L. Bacchi Wilcock), La rosa profonda (trad. de D. Porzio y H. Lyria), Prologhi (trad. de Cesco Vian), La moneta di ferro (trad. di Cesco Vian), Storia della notte (trad. de D. Porzio y H. Lyria), Tre racconti (trad. de Gianni Guadalupi), La cifra (trad. de D. Porzio), Saggi danteschi (trad. de Gianni Guadalupi) y Atlante (trad. de D. Porzio y H. Lyria).

[46] 1984, Conversazioni americane, ed. de Willis Barnstone, trad. de Franco Moggi, Roma, Editori Riuniti.

[47] 1984, Il libro degli esseri immaginari, trad. de Fausta Antonucci, Roma-Napoli, Theoria.

[48] 1984, Letterature germaniche medioevali, en colaboración con

María Esther Vázquez, trad. de Fausta Antonucci, Roma-Napoli,  
Theoria.

[49] 1985, *A/Z*, diccionario borgeano a cargo de Gianni Guadalupi,  
Milano, Franco Maria Ricci.

[50] 1985, *Atlante*, trad. de Domenico Porzio y Hado Lyria,  
Milano, Mondadori.

[51] 1985, *Libro di sogni*, relatos de AAVV seleccionados por  
Borges, trad. di Tilde Riva, Parma-Milano, Franco Maria Ricci.

[52] 1985, *Nove saggi danteschi*, trad. di Gianni Guadalupi e Sergio  
Mancini, prefacio de Giorgio Petrocchi, Milano, Franco Maria  
Ricci.

[53] 1985, *Nuovi racconti di Bustos Domecq*, trad. di Tilde Riva, en  
colaboración con Bioy Casares, Parma-Milano, Franco Maria  
Ricci.

[54] 1986, *Conversazioni con Oswaldo Ferrari*, trad. de Francesco  
Tentori Montalto, Milano, Bompiani.

[55] 1986, *El advenimiento*. Libro in bianco, un poema de Borges y nueve caligrafías de Raymundo Sesma, con transcripción Braille del texto, Milano, Grafica Uno.

[56] 1986, *I congiurati*, Domenico Porzio y Hado Lyria, Milano, Mondadori.

[57] 1986, *Una vita di poesia*, transcripción de entrevistas, trad. del francés de Alessandro Atti y Anna Gloria Mariano, prefacio de Anthony Kerrigan, "Con Borges a Milano", pp. I-VIII, Milano, Spirali.

[58] 1987-1989 (?), *Altre conversazioni con Oswaldo Ferrari*, trad. de Francesco Tentori Montalto, Milano, Bompiani.

[59] 1987, *Realismo fantastico. Gioco di specchi su Swedenborg, Kant, Borges*, escritos de J. L. Borges, Jorge Eugenio Dotti, Hans Radermacher, ed. de Vittorio Dotti, Napoli, Bibliopolis.

[60] 1990, *Ultime conversazioni con Oswaldo Ferrari*, trad. de Francesco Tentori Montalto, Milano, Bompiani.

[61] 1991, *Dall'intimità*, trad. y edición de Francesco Tentori

Montalto, Firenze, Passigli.

[62] 1991, Film, trad. y edición de Winda Leone, Palermo, Novecento.

[63] 1991, *In quante lingue si può sognare?*, trad. del inglés de Raul Montanari, Milano, Leonardo (traduce el volumen *In memory of Borges*, publicado en 1988. Incluye una "Nota del curatore", Norman Thomas di Giovanni, una conferencia "Borges su Borges" de J. L. Borges (del '83) y otras dos, una de Graham Greene y otra de Mario Vargas Llosa que forman parte de una serie de encuentros públicos inaugurados en 1983 por el mismo Borges, encuentros patrocinados por la Sociedad angloargentina de Londres).

[64] 1995, *Cos'è il buddismo*, en colaboración con Alicia Jurado, trad. de Francesco Tentori Montalto, Roma, Newton.

[65] 1995, *Il piacere della letteratura. Oscar Wilde e altri autori*, trad. de Gianni Guadalupi y Francesco Tentori Montalto, introducción de éste último titulada "Borges e i classici spagnoli" (7-10), Palermo, Novecento.

[66] Poesie, Milano, Mondadori, colección "I Miti Mondado

## 6.4. APPENDIX 4 - Literary criticism in Italian (in alphabetical order)

ALLEGRA, Giovanni, 1972, "Jorge Luis Borges e il «libro di Dio»", *Intervento*, n. 2, abril, págs. 63-81

ANDREOLI, Aurelio, 1977, "Una carezza per Keats", *Paese sera*, 6 de mayo.

ARBASINO, Alberto, 1977a, "J. L. Borges: sognando il dottor Jeckyll", *la Repubblica*, 12 de mayo.

ARBASINO, Alberto, 1977b, "Intervista Borges-Arbasino", *L'approdo letterario*, XXIII, 79-80 (ns), págs. 273-285.

BACCHI WILCOCK, Livio, 1962, "Nota" a BORGES, Jorge Luis, *Storia dell'eternità*, Milano, Il Saggiatore.

BARBATO, Andrea, 1972, "Lo scrittore cieco che rifiuta Perón", *La Stampa*, 30 de noviembre.

BELLINI, Giuseppe, 1970, *La letteratura Ispano-americana. Dalle letterature precolombiane ai nostri giorni*, Firenze-Milano, Sansoni-Accademia.

BELLINI, Giuseppe, 1977, "Borges e la letteratura italiana", en *Id.*, *Storia delle relazioni letterarie tra l'Italia e l'America di lingua spagnola*, Milano, Cisalpino-Goliardica, págs. 305-319.

BERNARDI GUARDI, Mario, 1977, "L'ordine del labirinto", *Intervento*, n. 27, mayo-agosto.

BERNARDI GUARDI, Mario, 1979, *L'io plurale* (Borges et Borges), Milano, Il Falco.

BERNES, Jean Pierre, 1991, "Prefazione" a BORGES, Jorge Luis, Film, Palermo, Novecento, págs. 7-27.

BERNES, Jean Pierre, 1993, "Introduction: Portraits et autoportraits", en BORGES, Jorge Luis, 'uvres complètes, edición establecida, presentada y anotada por Jean Pierre Bernès, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, Paris, Gallimard, págs. XIII-XXVIII.

BIANCHINI, Angela, 1977, "Nel labirinto Borges", *Tuttolibri*, 7 de mayo.

BINNI, Francesco, 1964, "Borges inquisitore e poeta", *il Ponte*, N. 6, págs. 852-854.

BLANCHOT, Maurice, 1967, "L'infinito letterario" [1959], en BORGES, Jorge Luis, *Finzioni. La Biblioteca di Babele*, Torino, Einaudi, págs. VII-XI.

BONATTI, Maria, 1977, "Dante en la lectura de Borges", *Revista Iberoamericana*, ns. 100-101, 40 inquisiciones sobre Borges, julio-diciembre, págs. 737-744.

BORGES, Jorge Luis, 1984, "Vi racconto il Mondo", *Panorama*, 15 de octubre, n. 965, págs. 146-152.

CALCAGNO, Giorgio, 1977, "Dante, Virgilio miei contemporanei", *Tuttolibri*, 7 de mayo.

CALVINO, Italo, 1980, "La sfida al labirinto" [1962], en Id., *Una*

pietra sopra. Discorsi di letteratura e società, Torino, Einaudi, págs. 82-97 (ahora en Id., Saggi, edición de Mario Barenghi, Milano, Mondadori, colección "I Meridiani", 1995, vol. I, págs. 105-123).

CALVINO, Italo, 1984, "Scrittori esemplari, vi odio tutti", L'Unità, 20 de septiembre.

CALVINO, Italo, 1991, "Jorge Luis Borges" [1984], en Id., Perché leggere i classici, Milano, Mondadori, págs. 292-301 (parcialmente publicado en la Repubblica el 16 de octubre de 1984; ahora en Id., Saggi, ed. cit., vol. I, págs. 1292-1300).

CAMPO, Cristina 1960, "Jorge Luis Borges", Paragone-Letteratura, abril, págs. 119-121.

CECCHI, Emilio, 1964, "Jorge Luis Borges", Corriere della sera, 27 de marzo (aparecerá una versión española, titulada "Impresiones italianas de Jorge Luis Borges", en el cotidiano bonaerense La Nación, 24 de mayo de 1964).

CHIARLONI, Anna, 1960, "Jorge Luis Borges: L'Aleph", Quaderni Iberoamericani, octubre, p. 54.

CIANCIOLO, Umberto, 1969, "Appunti sulla poetica congetturale di Borges", en BORGES, Jorge Luis, Carme presunto e altre poesie, Torino, Einaudi, págs. 6-34.

CODIGNOLA, Luciano, 1956, "La biblioteca di Babele", Tempo presente, I, n. 2, mayo, p. 178.

COLLIN, Françoise, 1990, "The Third Tiger; or, From Blanchot to

Borges", en AIZENBERG, Edna (ed.), *Borges and His Successors.*

*The Borgesian Impact on Literature and the Arts*, Columbia and London, University of Missouri, págs. 80-95.

CHEVREL, Yves, 1991, *La littérature comparée*, 2<sup>a</sup> ed. corregida, colección "Que sais-je?", Paris, PUF.

CRO, Stelio, 1971, *Jorge Luis Borges. Poeta, saggista e narratore*, Milano, Mursia.

DINI, Massimo, 1984, "Caro Montale, Lei ha sbagliato",

*Panorama*, 15 de octubre, n. 965, p. 149.

FERRETTI, Gian Franco, 1979, *Il mercato delle lettere. Industria culturale e lavoro critico in Italia dagli anni cinquanta a oggi*,

Torino, Einaudi.

FERRETTI, Gian Franco, 1988, *La fortuna literaria*, Transeuropa.

FOA, Giangiacomo, 1979, "Belli questi versi, anche se li ho scritti io", *Corriere della sera*, 28 de octubre.

FRUTTERO, Carlo y LUCENTINI, Franco, 1981, "Introduzione" a

BORGES, Jorge Luis, *Storia universale dell'infamia*, Milano, Il

Saggiatore, págs. 7-13.

GALLO, Ugo, 1954, *Storia della letteraturinquisura Hispano-Americana*,

Milano, Nuova Accademia.

GENOT, Gérard, 1969, "Borges", *Il Castoro*, n. 31-32, julio-agosto.

GERVASO, Roberto, 1978, "J. L. Borges: «scrivo per l'antichità»",

*Corriere della sera*, 11 de junio.

GIANFRANCESCHI, Fausto, 1979, "Lo stile classico di Jorge Luis Borges", en Bernardi Guardi, Marco, 1979, cit., págs. 147-149.

GRAMIGNA, Giuliano, 1979, "Borges è già un testo di Borges", Corriere della sera, 28 de octubre.

GUILLEN, Claudio, 1985, Entre lo uno y lo diverso. Introducción a la literatura comparada, Barcelona, Crítica.

GUTIERREZ GIRARDOT, Rafael, 1976, "Borges en Alemania" [1964], en AAVV, Jorge Luis Borges, edición de Jaime Alazraki, Madrid, Taurus, págs. 288-292.

GUTIERREZ GIRARDOT, Rafael, 1990, "Borges in Germany. A Difficult and Contradictory Fascination", en Aizenberg, Edna (ed.), op. cit., págs. 59-79.

LAFON, Michel, 1996, "Borges, Calvino et la littérature", en AAVV, Borges, Calvino, la literatura, ed. de Alain Sicard y Fernando Moreno, Madrid, Fundamentos, págs. 11-25.

LAURENZI, Carlo, 1977, "Nel labirinto del luogo comune", Il Giornale nuovo, 3 de julio.

LILLI, Virgilio, 1970, "La musa di Borges", Corriere della sera, 29 de diciembre.

LUCENTINI, Mauro, 1971, "Borges conservatore di sogni", Il Mondo, 2 de mayo, p. 27.

LUZI, Mario, 1971, "Tanto Borges", Corriere della sera, 19 de diciembre.

MAGRIS, Claudio, 1974, "L'oro opaco del conservatore", Corriere della sera, 24 de diciembre.

NASCIMBENI, Giulio, 1977, "Sono un po' stanco di essere Borges", Corriere della sera, 29 de abril.

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