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Lies Wijnterp



Making Borges

The Early Reception of Jorge Luis Borges's Work
in France and the United States

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**MAKING BORGES:
THE EARLY RECEPTION OF
JORGE LUIS BORGES'S WORK
IN FRANCE AND THE UNITED STATES**

LIES WIJNTERP

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Radboud University Nijmegen

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PART I: INTRODUCTION



Chapter 1. A review of the literature on the reception of Borges's work

1. Making Borges

The Argentine writer Jorge Luis Borges (1899-1986) has been translated into many languages and has become known throughout the Western world. *Ficciones* (1944) and *El Aleph* (1949), in particular, triggered a literary revolution in Argentina, Latin America as a whole, and later in Western Europe and the United States. In the translations that appeared outside the Spanish-speaking world from the 1950s onwards, first in France and then in the whole of Western Europe and the United States, Borges's work took on new and different forms that were not necessarily to the liking of the author himself, as is suggested by the following statement he made in Adolfo Bioy Casares's diary:

En Texas van a publicar *El hacedor*. Le dejan el nombre así, en español. Yo les propuse que le pusieran *The Maker*. Me dijeron que no, que había algo en *El hacedor* que se perdía al traducirlo por *The Maker*. La verdad es que a mí primero se me ocurrió el título en inglés, *The Maker*, y lo traduje por *El hacedor*. ¿No pensaron en "Lament for the Makers"? Nadie sabe nada de nada.¹

El hacedor, published in Buenos Aires in 1960, was eventually issued by the University of Texas Press in 1964 under the title of *Dreamtigers*, with a book cover showing a tiger in tall grass.

Borges's reference to *Lament for the Makers* (c. 1505) by the Scottish poet William Dunbar evokes the figure of the *makar* [sic], the poet-maker who is mourned but also remembered, as in the title story of *El hacedor*, as it is his destiny to echo forever in the memory of mankind.² This concept of the poet-maker and his lasting glory, which Borges applies to Homeros

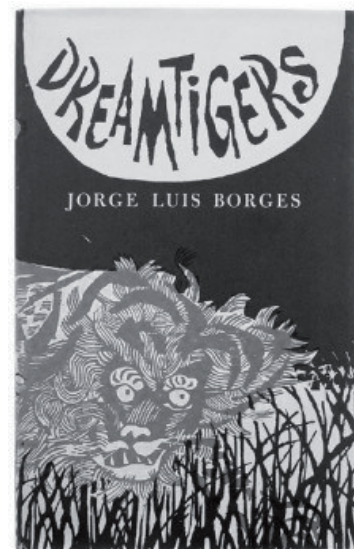


Figure 1: Book cover
Dreamtigers, 1964

¹ Bioy Casares, *Borges*, 889.

² Borges, "El hacedor," 192.

in the title story “El hacedor,” could also be seen as a playful reference to his own budding national and international recognition.³ Likewise, the concept can be extended to the individuals who were involved in the reception of his work abroad: just as “El hacedor” evokes the idea of a plurality of makers contributing to literature, one could say that a large number of makers “created” Borges by selecting, translating, publishing, discussing, appropriating, and evaluating his work. In contrast with the figure of the author-maker, however, the individuals who contributed to Borges’s work in this way did not, in most cases, gain posthumous glory.

In this thesis, I will use the term mediator for these individual agents who were embedded in the concrete individual, institutional, national, and international contexts in which Borges’s work was received. As these individuals were the first to deal with Borges’s work and mediate it for readers in his home country and abroad, they offer a practical starting point for dealing with the complex issue of reception, its various levels, and the plurality of texts and other reception material involved. The large number of mediators requires, however, that I select and focus on a number of mediators who were most important in the reception of Borges’s work. This group includes reviewers, essayists, academic critics, and authors who evaluated Borges’s work, as well as publishers, translators, and editors who facilitated the critical reception. I will describe how various key mediators “selected” and “classified” Borges’s work in the translation and publication process, and in literary criticism.

As the example of *Dreamtigers* shows, the actions of various mediators gave Borges’s work new forms and meanings that differed from the images of Borges and his work in Argentina. Another paradigmatic example is that several translations of different books by Borges were entitled *Labyrinthes* or *Labyrinths*, a title never used before in Argentina and for which particular mediators in the importing countries were responsible. Especially in later academic criticism, there is a tendency to consider the foreign reception of Borges’s work as a process that reduced its diversity in order to fit it into national conceptions of literature. Prominent Borges scholars such as Daniel Balderston, Edna Aizenberg, and Beatriz Sarlo have increasingly criticized the “unreal” or “decontextualized” readings of his texts in the Western world for having disregarded the historical references in the Argentine writer’s texts,

³ For this aspect in *El hacedor*, see Lefere, *Borges: Entre autorretrato y automitografía*, 97-109.

and the historical context in which these came about. In the introduction to a series of lectures given at Cambridge University in 1992, the Argentine critic Beatriz Sarlo states:

Far from the climate which conditions the readings of his work in Argentina, and firmly established within Western literature, Borges has almost lost his nationality: he is stronger than Argentine literature itself, more powerful than the cultural tradition to which he belongs. [. . .] There are many reasons for this, but here I would like to address what I consider to be the most important of them: in the current European climate, the image of Borges is more potent than that of Argentine literature. The fact is that in Europe Borges can be read without reference to the marginal region where he wrote all his work. In this way we are given a Borges who is explained by (and at the same time explains) Western culture and the versions that this culture also offers of the Orient, and not a Borges who is also explained by (and explains) Argentine culture, and particularly the culture of Buenos Aires. Borges's reputation in the world has cleansed him of nationality.⁴

Defying this "denationalization" that became part of Borges's international recognition, Sarlo tries to restore Borges to the Argentine context in which his work was produced, without placing him in the type of picturesque or folkloric pigeon-hole that he himself abnegated. In this way, she shows how Borges's work has a cosmopolitan as well as a national side, or, as Sarlo formulates it: "Placed on the limits between cultures, between literary genres, between languages, Borges is the writer of the *orillas*, a marginal in the centre, a cosmopolitan on the edge."⁵

Very different from this simultaneous process of "denationalized" appropriation and international literary celebration is the history of Borges's polemical reception in Argentina from the 1920s onwards. Before his international breakthrough, Borges was a controversial writer in his home country. As María Luisa Bastos states in her study on the early reception of Borges's work in Argentina between 1923 and 1960, Borges's work was rarely received in a neutral manner.⁶ His

⁴ Sarlo, *Writer on the Edge*, 1-2. For similar statements, see Balderston, *Out of Context*; and Aizenberg, "El Borges vedado."

⁵ Sarlo, *Writer on the Edge*, 6.

⁶ Bastos, *Borges ante la crítica argentina*.

early volumes of poetry and essays, such as *Fervor de Buenos Aires* (1923), *Luna de enfrente* (1925), *Inquisiciones* (1925), and *Discusión* (1932), were met with enthusiasm and resentment alike. Later, his story volumes from the 1940s were read in a very different climate in Argentina from how they were read in Western Europe and the United States. Criticism of Borges's stories in Argentina seemed to repudiate precisely those "universal" characteristics for which Borges was praised outside his homeland. The account of the jury of the 1942 Premio Nacional de Literatura on their decision not to reward Borges's submission of one of these story volumes, *El jardín de senderos que se bifurcan*, is a case in point. Borges's stories are described as "literatura deshumanizada, de alambique [. . .] exótica y de decadencia que oscila, respondiendo a ciertas desviadas tendencias de la literatura inglesa contemporánea, entre el cuento fantástico, la jactanciosa erudición recóndita y la narración policial."⁷ After the 1940s, leftist, nationalist, and populist critics in Argentina continued to question the merits of Borges's writing. As has been emphasized more than once, however, the international acclaim Borges's work enjoyed contributed to the canonization in his homeland.⁸

Without necessarily questioning these general tendencies in the reception of his work, the reception of Borges's writings can be assumed to have been much more heterogeneous than this dichotomy between an enthusiastic and reductive reading in Western Europe and the United States and a polemical and perhaps equally reductive reading in Argentina suggests. Differences in the reception of Borges's work may have appeared not only between his homeland and Western Europe and the United States, but also between language areas, countries, organizations, institutions, and between individual mediators. For the countries in which Borges's work was translated and published, these differences may have manifested themselves, for instance, in the moment and the way in which it was translated, in how book translations were materially presented and promoted, in the vocabulary with which Borges's work was classified in literary criticism following the book translations, in the way that Borges's work was integrated in certain literary movements, and in the active role played by various types of mediator. At the same time, significant similarities between the interpretations of Borges's work can be expected, possibly because certain mediators influenced others in their interpretations.

⁷ Giusti, "Los premios nacionales de literatura," 116.

⁸ See, for instance, Sorensen, "Toward a Transnational Republic of Letters," 140.

In this sense, studies that comment in general terms on the reception of Borges's work in order to offer new interpretations of classical Borges texts contribute naturally to criticism but do less for our understanding of actual reception processes, as they focus on Borges's work rather than on its reception. From an institutional perspective, all mediators reduced Borges's work to their own categories of perception, which were restricted to a particular aesthetic and geographic viewpoint. Borges's international reputation was "made" in processes of evaluation ruled by the norms of early mediators in various literary spaces. At the same time, one could also wonder whether Borges's work came to change the aesthetic norms by which he was initially judged. In the present study, I will therefore pay particular attention to literary norms—that is, underlying beliefs about literature—by studying how mediators selected and classified Borges's work. Without being normative, I will contextualize these norms and explain possible dehistoricized or denationalized interpretations of the author's work. In combination with the existence of hierarchies in the reception process, these norms can explain differences and similarities at the individual, institutional, national, and international levels of reception. Theoretical insights from literary sociology, in particular by Pierre Bourdieu and a number of scholars who have been influenced by his institutional approach, will be used to analyze these issues and will be discussed in the next, methodological chapter of my thesis.

This study will focus on the non-Spanish-speaking areas in which Borges's work was received in translation. It will analyze the behavior of mediators in two national spaces from the Western world: France and the United States. While magazine and anthology translations appeared outside Argentina from the 1920s onwards, it was not until the 1950s that Borges was translated in book form: first in France, and later in the United States. As the two countries were, together with Italy and Germany, the first in publishing book translations of Borges's work, they may have played a pivotal role in "making" his work for the first time outside Argentina, possibly in interaction with each other. It is for this reason that I will analyze the early phase of the reception of Borges's work, which lasted from 1923 to 1964 in France and from 1934 to 1968 in the United States. I will define these periodizations in the next chapter.

The early translation and reception process of Borges's work in these two nations was in various ways linked to the publication and reception of Borges's texts in Argentina, not least because the book translations of the author's work were of

course partially based on the original Argentine editions. More important for my study, however, is that the first book translations in France were largely initiated by Roger Caillois, who stayed in Argentina during the Second World War and later became an important mediator of Borges's work in France, and who may thus have passed on Argentine discussions of Borges to the French literary space. It could be assumed that readings of the author's work in Argentina were taken up in France or the United States, either by direct contact from mediators or via other, less direct processes of interaction. At the same time, however, the reception in Argentina seems to have differed greatly from Borges's reception abroad, and the interaction between the reception processes in the two nations may not necessarily have passed through the homeland. These are two matters I will take up in this thesis.

The great impact of Borges's work has not passed unnoticed in academic circles. A variety of studies about the worldwide reception of Borges have been published. I will discuss this literature here and focus on the way it approaches this vast topic. I will critically evaluate the methodological choices made by the different scholars and compare them with mine in order to situate my study within the body of literature. For practical reasons, most studies confine themselves almost exclusively to the reception of Borges's work in a particular national literature ("Borges in Argentina," "Borges in Brazil," "Borges in Germany," etc.).⁹ This thesis differs not only because of its international and comparative focus, but also because it takes more interest in the specific mediators, organizations, and institutions that were involved in the reception in different nations. Moreover, whereas most reception studies place their emphasis on the critical reception of Borges's work in the respective importing countries, my study takes a different perspective by starting from the role of a number of key individual mediators, both in the translation and publication process and in criticism.

Four scholars, Emilio Carilla, Jaime Alazraki, Ana María Caballero Wangüemert, and Diana Sorensen, do analyze Borges's success in different

⁹ See, for instance, Artal, "Borges en Estonia"; Bastos, *Borges ante la crítica argentina*; Gracia, "Larga celebración"; Maison, "Algunos aspectos de la presencia de Borges en Italia"; Pellicer, "Borges y la crítica española"; Piñeyro, "Borges en Suecia"; Santos Unamuno, "Borges en Italia"; Schwartz, ed., *Borges no Brasil*; Sobol-Jurczykowski, "Borges en Polonia"; Steenmeijer, "Borges en Holanda"; Telecan and Korembliit, "Borges en Croacia"; and Vrhel, "Borges y Praga." There is a particularly rich tradition of studies on the reception of Borges in Germany: Bollinger, "Borges en Alemania"; Broyles, *German Response to Latin American Literature*; Gutiérrez-Girardot, "Borges in Germany"; Siebenmann, "Ein deutsches Requiem für Borges"; and Siebenmann, "La recepción de Borges en Alemania."

literatures.¹⁰ Carilla and Alazraki's articles offer, because of their limited length, a first enumeration of a number of translations, prizes, critical texts, special magazine numbers, and visits by Borges that played a role in his international reception. Caballero Wangüemert's book on Argentine, French, US, and other Borges criticism, comes closer to the present research in its extension, internationalism, and focus on the early reception period. Carilla, Alazraki, and Caballero Wangüemert are, however, not primarily interested in the differences between individual mediators, organizations, institutions, national spaces, and literatures that form key elements in the present study—perhaps because of their focus on the source, in this case Borges, rather than on the target literature—and will therefore only be used for the bibliographic references they contain.

Different is the case of Diana Sorensen's 2007 book on Latin American literature in the 1960s, which features a chapter on the construction of a "new" Latin American culture in the 1960s. In "Toward a Transnational Republic of Letters: A Geography of Discursive Networks," she focuses mainly on periodicals such as *Primera plana*, *Marcha*, and *Mundo nuevo*, and on the publishing scene in Latin America and Spain. Her comparative and institutional approach is similar to mine, as she uses concepts by Pierre Bourdieu and speaks of a transnational republic of letters. Contrary to Sorensen, I will use the term international rather than transnational, as the first term keeps the idea of national boundaries intact while the second transcends clearly defined borders. In this way, I emphasize that the circulation and reception of Borges's work was situated in concrete individual, institutional, national, and international literary contexts. In a short section included in the chapter, Sorensen also studies the reception of Borges in Argentina, France, and the United States from a Bourdieusian point of view on cultural capital. For the reception of Borges's work in Argentina, Sorensen examines criticism of Borges's work: mostly the negative criticism that was voiced in magazines such as *Nosotros*, *Centro*, and *Contorno*. For the French case, she mentions the mediating roles of Victoria Ocampo and Roger Caillois, and analyzes some of the more famous French criticism already studied by Sylvia Molloy, whose work I will discuss later. For the case of the United States, Sorensen uses the publishing archives of New Directions, among other sources, to show the competition between several publishing houses to

¹⁰ Carilla, "Difusión internacional de Borges"; Alazraki, introduction to *Jorge Luis Borges*; Caballero Wangüemert, "Anotaciones a Borges"; and *Nacimiento de un clásico*; and Sorensen, "Toward a Transnational Republic of Letters."

acquire the publishing rights to Borges's work. Although her approach is thus comparative, the case studies on the various spaces in which Borges's work was received are not comparable: the comparison between Latin American and French criticism on the one hand, and US translation and publication processes on the other, should be complemented with a more balanced study of the role of publishing houses and criticism in the different countries. Although Sorensen only offers a five-page overview of Borges's international reception, the attention for mediators, prizes, publishing houses, and literary criticism is a fruitful point of departure in Borges reception studies and a line that this study will follow. In the next two sections, the reception studies that focus exclusively on either of the two national spaces involved in my research will be examined.

2. A review of the literature on the reception of Borges's work in France

The reception of Borges's work in the French literary field has received much scholarly attention. Probably as a reflection of the importance of the Argentine author's work in France, from the 1970s onwards numerous studies have focused on different aspects and moments of the reception process. These studies generally analyze the mediators, organizations, institutions, translations, and criticism that contributed to the dissemination of Borges's work in France, although most of them concentrate on French criticism. The studies that focus more specifically on one particular mediator or factor in the reception without taking into account the broader framework of reception will be dealt with directly and briefly in the two chapters on France itself.

One of the earliest and most important studies on the reception of Borges's work in France is Sylvia Molloy's chapter on Borges in her 1972 book *La diffusion de la littérature hispano-américaine en France au XX^e siècle*. Here, Molloy analyzes the reception in France from 1925, when the first article she studies was published, until 1967, when she last collected reception material in France. This period is similar to my study, which extends from the first individual translation in 1923 to the special *L'Herne* issue on Borges in 1964. The Argentine scholar discusses a selection of reviews that she presumably chose because of the importance of the literary critic, the prestige of the review medium, or the extension of the reviews. Molloy herself does not make her selection criteria explicit, although she does state that she analyzes

“certains aspects de ce matériel, ceux qui me paraissaient les plus intéressants.”¹¹ The critics she comments on are all quite well known and include Valery Larbaud, Roger Caillois, Maurice Nadeau, René Étiemble, Paul Bénichou, Marcel Brion, René Marill Albérès, Philippe Jaccottet, François Mauriac, Gérard Messadié, Maurice-Jean Lefebve, Maurice Blanchot, Christian Remedy, André Rousseaux, and Jean Cassou. Molloy discusses the themes, characteristics, and comparisons of Borges's work that these reviews deal with, and the impact the reviews appear to have had.

Although her main focus is on literary criticism, Molloy also analyzes other forms of reception. In addition to studying French anthologies, special magazine issues, and the lists of publishing houses that issued Latin American literature, she looks into the role of Roger Caillois, who stayed in Argentina during the Second World War, set up a book collection of Latin American literature, *La Croix du Sud*, when he returned to France, and made a particular effort to disseminate Borges's work in France. Furthermore, Molloy names several French writers who may have been influenced by Borges's work: something that could be described as creative reception, and which critics already observed in contemporaneous reviews of Borges's work. In a separate section, she briefly examines translations of Borges's work in France. She first discusses remarks on these translations by critics including René Étiemble, Paul Bénichou, and Néstor Ibarra, and then comments on common translation problems posed by Borges's work, such as the role of “surprising” adjectives and the use of hypallage, a transferred epithet.

La diffusion de la littérature hispano-américaine en France au XX^e siècle thus discloses and examines much important reception material, such as magazine and book translations and criticism. My study will follow up on Molloy's by taking a similar, broad definition of reception, especially by focusing on the way mediators were involved in translations and publications of Borges's books and in literary criticism. Although a full study of the creative reception and the translations is beyond the scope of this thesis, I will briefly deal with these topics in order to determine and compare the selections and classifications of Borges's work by mediators in their different roles (editor, translator, publisher, critic, author, etc.). For the corpus of translations and criticism, Molloy uses Borges's press file at Gallimard in Paris, which my study also takes up and complements with new material. With the help of more recent bibliographies, reception studies, paper and digital indexes,

¹¹ Molloy, *La diffusion de la littérature hispano-américaine*, 253

and electronic databases, I considerably extend Molloy's corpus within the period of study.

Apart from this extension of the corpus, my approach differs methodologically from Molloy's study. Especially for the first years, Molloy relates the reception of Borges's work in France to her own interpretation of the author's work. In her selection and discussion of the reviews, she evaluates the texts explicitly, for instance when she claims that certain interpretations reduce or impoverish Borges's work or when she argues that Louis Pauwels and Jacques Bergier's 1960 book *Le matin des magiciens* is "un bel exemple d'irresponsabilité intellectuelle."¹² Because of her own aesthetic criteria, rather than because of a criterion of representativeness or impact, Molloy therefore only briefly discusses this publication. This normative approach can be seen in the light of the development of theories on reception. Molloy's study was written in the 1960s, at a time when field theory had not been developed and reception studies had not yet taken an institutional turn. It is therefore not surprising that her book takes less interest in the particular mediators, organizations, and institutions in the French literary field. Although Molloy does comment occasionally and indirectly on the institutional positions of some French mediators, she pays more attention to thematically describing a large amount of criticism of Borges's work.

Several later studies elaborate on Molloy's work and extend the corpus with more recent material, especially with regard to French criticism. Studies by Teresa Alfieri in 1981, Pierina Lidia Moreau in 1999, and Juan Moreno Blanco in 2007 seem to use a similar method for studying criticism to Molloy: their criteria for selecting material within the large corpus of critics and criticism are not made explicit and their discussions are therefore eclectic and sometimes enumerative, especially when they deal with a lengthy time period.¹³ Like Molloy in her study, Alfieri, Moreau, and Moreno Blanco dedicate little space to comment on a very large amount of material, and in this sense their methodology does not progress beyond the state of the art. In my discussion of the reception of Borges's work, I will extend my scope beyond these studies and focus more on those that deal with institutional aspects. In the chapter on early translations and publications in France, for instance, I will use published and unpublished correspondence, other archive material, and studies on particular mediators and publishing houses in order to look at the ways in which publishers,

¹² Molloy, *La diffusion de la littérature hispano-américaine*, 221, 225.

¹³ Alfieri, "La repercusión de Borges en Francia"; Moreau, "Borges y Francia, Borges en Francia"; and Moreno Blanco, "Borges desde Francia."

editors, and translators selected and classified Borges's works. This question is only touched upon by Molloy, Alfieri, Moreau, and Moreno Blanco. In the chapter on early criticism in France, I will mainly refer to scholars who make wider claims about the French critical reception or about particular critics or magazines, as Molloy and others only discuss these individual critics in brief, thematic terms. In this way, I will be able to look at the selections and classifications made by individual mediators, and the way these were related to their norms on the different levels of reception.

Two other studies cope with this problem of selecting reception material by focusing on a specific group of critics who were institutionally or thematically connected. A 1972 article by Emir Rodríguez Monegal, for instance, studies a group of critics who theorized processes of aesthetic creation and form, for which the Uruguayan scholar uses the name *la nouvelle critique*. Rodríguez Monegal discusses texts by Maurice Blanchot, Gérard Genette, Jean Ricardou, Claude Ollier, Pierre Macherey, and Michel Foucault, almost all of them published in literary magazines in the 1960s. Apart from Maurice Blanchot and Michel Foucault, these critics are not commonly associated with the *nouvelle critique*, in which Roland Barthes, Jean Starobinski, Jean-Pierre Richard, Jean-Paul Weber, and Serge Doubrovsky played an important role.¹⁴ He does, however, select a group of critics who shared an interest in the narrative and formal aspects of literary works, had similar interpretations of Borges's work, and practiced, to quote Rodríguez Monegal, "critical speculation that takes its shape from certain ideas of Borges about the narrative and about his own practice as a narrator."¹⁵ In some cases, the author relates these interpretations to what he believes was the intention of Borges's work, observing what he calls errors of interpretation in the French critics' texts, in a similar way to how Molloy claims that some critics reduced the complexity and variety of Borges's work. Rather than focusing on what these texts, possibly erroneously, say about Borges, I will study what they say about the French critics themselves and the field in which they were immersed.

A well-documented and comprehensive study of the reception of Borges's work in France that takes a more specific thematic focus is *Le nom et le savoir: Abrégé de culture borgésienne* by Eric Flamand.¹⁶ Flamand's main focus is on the political interpretations of Borges's work. He looks at what he calls "la culture borgésienne,"

¹⁴ See Bonzon, *La nouvelle critique et Racine*; and Jones, *Panorama de la nouvelle critique en France*.

¹⁵ Rodríguez Monegal, "Borges and *La Nouvelle Critique*," 28.

¹⁶ Flamand, *Le nom et le savoir*.

the whole of (French-language) discourse on Borges's work, including articles, interviews, books, and mentions—instances in which the author is briefly referred to—from the 1960s until the 1980s, with occasional references from the 1950s. First, Flamand looks into the development of Borges's own political thinking. Then, in the second part of his book, he gathers different kinds of negative criticism of Borges's work, which he divides into what he calls political, sociological-political, and psychoanalytic criticism. These forms of criticism focused on Borges's neglect of Latin American problems, his support for military juntas in Latin America, his cosmopolitanism, and his supposed lack of inventiveness, and thus show the long-lasting presence of a norm of political commitment in the French literary field. Flamand's discussion, however, does not convincingly show that this negative criticism held any real weight in France, especially in the early period that I focus on, as relatively few examples of critical attacks are given, and these include certain Latin American texts that probably had little impact in France. In the third part of his book, Flamand deals with the appraisal of Borges's work, which he observes in three periods or generations that he calls "Mort de l'auteur," "Borges post-moderne," and "Le mythe Borges." The first period, from the end of the 1950s onwards, includes critics such as Maurice Blanchot, Michel Foucault, and Gérard Genette, who were interested in formal and structural aspects of texts; the second, which came into being around 1978, inaugurated the return of the subject and of rhetoric that Flamand associates with postmodernism; the third period, the 1980s, includes, according to Flamand, various groups of critics with diverging interests in Borges's work. Flamand's book was not conceived as a typical reception study, as he mingles French, Argentine, and other criticism of Borges's work with his own interpretations, and gathers together critical remarks from very different time periods. It is, however, a rich account of various interpretative directions in the French reception of Borges's work, supported by a large quantity of French sources.

In Flamand's work, and to a lesser extent in Rodríguez Monegal's, the study of the critical reception of Borges's work is combined with an analysis of the institutional positions of critics, of their poetical norms, and of the publishing houses and magazines that mediate these norms in the literary field. Flamand, for instance, relates some of the negative and positive criticism of Borges's work to certain groups of critics (Marxists, existentialists, *nouveau roman* authors, authors and critics gathered around the magazine *Tel quel*, etc.) that shared similar conceptions of literature. At the same time, Flamand and Rodríguez Monegal sometimes only refer

implicitly to the institutional context, perhaps because their main focus is on Borges rather than on the French literary field. My study aims to give more explicit attention to these institutional aspects, not only for critics and criticism, but also for mediators involved in publishing houses, such as translators, editors, and publishers. In order to reduce the problem of the large corpus of reception material, especially for criticism, I will select a number of key individual mediators within the limited time period of the early reception of Borges's work in France between 1923 and 1964.

Some of the more recent studies share this attention for institutional aspects and do not limit themselves to a textual study of the critical reception of Borges's work in France. This tendency corresponds with developments in literary studies, in which the institutional approach—mainly Bourdieusian literary sociology—has become more important and in which the study of correspondence and other archive material receives more attention. At the same time, it has to be remarked that many more recent studies on the French reception of Borges's work still have an explicitly normative character, as they start from a preconceived idea of Borges's work and evaluate the interpretations of critics and other mediators. The institutional turn can, interestingly, be observed most clearly in studies that are not framed as reception studies but focus particularly on one mediator (such as Roger Caillois) or on a book collection (*La Croix du Sud*).¹⁷ These studies, which will be discussed in the chapter on early translations and publications of Borges's work in France, use recently published and unpublished correspondence and archive material. French scholar Odile Felgine, for instance, has issued the correspondence between Roger Caillois and Victoria Ocampo and between Caillois and Jean Paulhan, as well as (co-)writing biographies of Caillois and Ocampo.¹⁸ In my study, I will try to contribute to this state of the art by uncovering new unpublished material, mainly from the Borges files of the Gallimard archives. This will enable me to show which mediators were responsible for certain translation and publication processes, and which norms defined the selections and classifications.

Two more recent studies also follow this institutional approach *within* the framework of the reception of Borges's work in France. One example is Annick

¹⁷ For Caillois, see Bernès, "Jorge Luis Borges et Roger Caillois"; Felgine, "De *Lettres Françaises* à la collection 'La Croix du Sud'"; and Louis, "Borges mode d'emploi français." For *La Croix du Sud*, see Fell, "La Croix du Sud"; and Villegas, "Aux seuils d'une collection."

¹⁸ Caillois and Ocampo, *Correspondance Roger Caillois, Victoria Ocampo (1939-1978)*; Paulhan and Caillois, *Correspondance Jean Paulhan, Roger Caillois, 1934-1967*; Felgine, *Roger Caillois: Biographie*; and Ayerza de Castilho and Felgine, *Victoria Ocampo*.

Louis's "Borges mode d'emploi français" from 2007, on the early publishing history of Borges's work in France.¹⁹ Like Diana Sorensen's study on the reception of Borges's work in the 1960s, Louis chooses a relatively limited time period. She focuses on Roger Caillois's fascination with labyrinths, on Néstor Ibarra's preface to Borges's work in the magazine *Lettres françaises*, reprinted in the 1951 French book translation *Fictions*, and on Ibarra's later poetry translations. She relates Ibarra's and Caillois's interpretations to Borges's work and to the Argentine literary field. According to Louis, Borges used the labyrinth mostly in relation to the space of the city in stories with a detective plot, while in Caillois's work in France it took on a more philosophical dimension. Louis stresses the link between Ibarra's prefaces to Borges's work and the Argentine literary field. She argues that Ibarra's prefaces in *Lettres françaises* and *Fictions* took up common opinions that already existed in Argentina—opinions that Louis unfortunately does not explicitly cite or refer to, except for a brief comment on the "Desagravio de Borges," a special issue on Borges's work in Victoria Ocampo's magazine *Sur*. Although I will focus more on understanding Caillois's and Ibarra's actions and norms and their impact in France than on relating them to Borges's work itself, these topics are certainly of interest for my study, especially where the connections between the Argentine and French literary fields are concerned.

A recent article by Michel Lafon reflects on the reception of Borges's work from a more personal viewpoint.²⁰ After dealing with the role of France in Borges's work, Lafon briefly zooms in on several topics, such as the relation between Borges, Caillois, and Ibarra, the French translations of Borges's work, critics such as Valéry Larbaud, Gérard Genette, and Paul Bénichou, the attitude of French universities towards criticism of Borges's work, and Borges's impact on a film such as *Paris nous appartient* (1961) by Jacques Rivette, paying attention to the institutional particulars of the French literary field. He also adds some of his own memories as a reader of Borges, and, later, as a Borges scholar. His study does not intend to give an exhaustive discussion of the reception in a certain time period or on a particular topic, instead examining some general directions and themes in the reception in France. In my chapters on France, I will comment on some of these directions and themes, such as the idea that translators, and consequently critics, did not perceive Borges's humor, and compare them with my own findings.

¹⁹ Louis, "Borges mode d'emploi français."

²⁰ Lafon, "Borges y Francia, Francia y Borges."

3. A review of the literature on the reception of Borges's work in the United States

Two types of publication are relevant to the reception of Borges's work in the United States. Reception studies analyze Borges's reception in its broadest sense by focusing on mediators, organizations, institutions, translations, and criticism that contributed to the dissemination of the author's work in the United States, although most of these studies concentrate on the critical reception. A second type of study does not focus specifically on Borges, but analyzes institutional aspects such as translation programs and cultural organizations involved in publishing Latin American fiction in the 1960s and 1970s. Other studies relevant to the reception of Borges's work in the United States, such as studies on specific mediators, descriptive translation studies, and studies on the creative reception of Borges in US fiction, will be dealt with directly in the relevant sections of my chapters on Borges in the United States.

Jaime Alazraki has devoted two publications to the reception of Borges. In "Reflexiones sobre la recepción de la obra de Borges en los EE.UU." from 1999, Alazraki mentions several early magazine translations of Borges's work and observes two factors that influenced the visibility of Borges's work in the English-speaking world: the awarding to Borges of the Prix International des Éditeurs (which Alazraki calls the Premio Formentor) in 1961 and Borges's first visit to the United States in that same year, when he lectured at the University of Texas in Austin. Alazraki goes on to distinguish three phases in the reception of Borges's work: a first phase (1950-1962) in which the circulation of Borges's work was mainly restricted to universities; a second phase (1962-1980) in which the first book translations appeared and in which Borges's work had a wider impact on journalism, universities, and literature; and a third phase (1980 onwards) in which Borges's work was hailed as a classic. Although the distinction between the second and third phases does not appear to be well founded, Alazraki discloses and examines much important reception material such as magazine and book translations, Borges's visits to the United States, academic conferences and criticism, book reviews, and studies by prominent critics such as Morris Dickstein, George Steiner, Tony Tanner, John Updike, John Barth, and Paul de Man. In his earlier 1987 study, an introduction to *Critical Essays on Jorge Luis Borges*, Alazraki had already considered similar aspects of the reception of Borges's work in the United States along with its dissemination in Argentina, Latin America, and

France. In this publication he studies texts by some of the aforementioned critics, as well as by Robert Scholes, William Gass, and Alfred Kazin.²¹

Both studies by Alazraki are intended to give a first taste of the vast field of the reception of Borges in the United States, as the author himself indicates, and in my thesis I therefore aim to extend Alazraki's results with a thorough and systematic collection of sources such as translations, criticism, and archive material. His focus on well-known critics (who were often also writers), raises the question of how they are related to other mediators such as translators, publishers, editors, and to more peripheral critics. And whereas Alazraki mainly explores the texts of certain critics in order to draw attention to their contribution to Borges scholarship, in my view it is also relevant to consider these texts for what they show about the norms of critics on the various individual, institutional, national, and international levels at which Borges's works were received.

In Alazraki's publications, the study of the critical reception of Borges's work is rarely combined with an analysis of the institutional positions of mediators, with their poetical norms and the organizations and institutions that mediate these norms in the literary field. These elements are revealed in studies that take institutions (rather than the reception of Borges) as their principal research theme. An example of one of these studies is Irene Rostagno's 1997 book on the promotion of Latin American literature in the United States: *Searching for Recognition*. Rostagno examines some of the same criticism studied by Alazraki, but provides more institutional background information by referring to the role of publishing houses (the matter of sales, translation, etc.). Moreover, she looks at the role of the Center for Inter-American Relations—a New York-based cultural organization supported by the Rockefeller Brothers Fund—in translating, publishing, and promoting Borges's *The Book of Imaginary Beings* (1969) and *The Aleph and Other Stories, 1933-1969* (1970).²² Deborah Cohn's 2006 article also studies Borges's book translations that were issued with the support of the Center, but she contrasts them with the earlier translations of the subsidy program administered by the Association of American University

²¹ Alazraki, "Recepción de la obra de Borges en los EE.UU."; and introduction to *Critical Essays on Jorge Luis Borges*. See also Alazraki, introduction to *El escritor y la crítica*. In general, Alazraki's main interest is in the critical reception of Borges's work, and he discusses journalistic as well as more academic criticism. Two other publications are devoted exclusively to academic criticism: Jean Ann Bowman's master's thesis, "Jorge Luis Borges: A Study of Criticism in the United States" and an article published by Emir Rodríguez Monegal, "Borges en U.S.A." These studies are, however, not focused on the role of mediators and how they operate on an individual, institutional, national, and international level.

²² Rostagno, "Casa de las Américas and the Center for Inter-American Relations."

Presses (AAUP, 1960-1966) and funded by another Rockefeller family fund, the Rockefeller Foundation.²³ In her study of both translation programs, Cohn states that the translations of the AAUP program did not fare as well as the Center's translations—principally because of differences in marketing and the circumstances in the literary field at the moment of publication—and cites the quantity of reviews of *Dreamtigers* (AAUP, 1964), *Other Inquisitions, 1937-1952* (AAUP, 1964), and *The Book of Imaginary Beings* (Center for Inter-American Relations, 1969) as an example. Although Cohn is probably right about the varied success of the different translations, her claims about the number of book reviews should be supplemented with a qualitative analysis of these early reviews, a form of analysis I will use in my study. The dominance of certain book translations in the critical reception of Borges's work can be further explained by the roles of key critics, and their relation to more peripheral critics.

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Chapter 2. The study of mediators of Borges's work

1. Individual mediators and their (key) positions

In analyzing how various mediators came to play a role for Borges's work, this study stresses reception, first and foremost, as an active process. The mediators involved in the dissemination of Borges's work acted at several levels—individual, institutional, national, and international—that will be discussed successively in this methodological chapter. These levels exist, of course, only for methodological purposes and cannot always be distinguished easily: they will be used, however, as analytical steps in studying the complexity of the reception process and the interaction between mediators. I will use theoretical insights from Pierre Bourdieu's work to analyze these levels, and the hierarchical relations that exist on each of them. My approach will differ from his, however, in the attention I pay to the norms of individual mediators as they become clear in actual selections and classifications.

I will start at the level of the individual, using the term mediator for the individual agent who plays a role in the reception process by bringing an author's work and potential readers closer together. Several studies emphasize the institutional roles that a mediator can take on: as translator, director of a book collection, book editor, publisher, preface writer, reviewer, critic, scholar, literary historian, fiction author, and journal editor.¹ As these institutional roles regulate the actions of a mediator, the particular evaluation of a literary text takes place not only in a specific institutional context but also in the context of the combination or conflict between different roles, as Renate von Heydebrand and Simone Winko have remarked:

Roles, to the sociologist, are institutionalized cultural schemata: their function is to ensure that people's scope for action in a group or society remains sufficiently restricted to be manageable. They are linked even more closely than norms to social situations and functions. Thus an individual can assume a variety of roles in different situations and in respect of different literary functions, and can therefore also evaluate texts in different ways.²

¹ See Broomans, "Ethnolinguistic Nationalism and Cultural Transfer," 40; Grave, "Literarische Vermittler in Theorie und Praxis," 50; and Wilfert-Portal, "Cosmopolis et l'homme invisible," 34.

² Heydebrand and Winko, "Qualities of Literary Evaluation," 231.

In this thesis, I will analyze how individual mediators presented Borges's work in their different institutional roles. In the parts on Borges in France and in the United States, I will look at early translations and publications of Borges's books in one chapter and then move on to early criticism of Borges's work in the next. Apart from partly dividing the reception temporally, this division points to the different roles of the mediators: in the first chapter of each part, emphasis will be placed on a number of mediators who were institutionally linked to publishing houses, such as publishers, editors, and translators; in the second, I will focus on mediators who were institutionally linked to literary magazines and newspapers, such as reviewers, essayists, and authors. As some mediators combined various roles, which I will consider in their combination or conflict, the division between the two chapters will not be strict in this regard.

In addition to fulfilling one or various institutional roles, each mediator also takes a particular institutional position in the literary field, in terms of the relative amount of prestige he or she possesses. For Bourdieu, a sociologist who applied his studies to the developing literary field in nineteenth-century France, texts, institutions, and individual agents take certain positions within a national literary field. This field is a relatively autonomous space that acts according to its own rules and laws:

The field is a network of objective relations (of domination or subordination, of complementarity or antagonism, etc.) between positions—for example, the position corresponding to a genre like the novel or to a subcategory like the society novel, or from another point of view, the position locating a review, a salon, or a circle as the gathering place of a group of producers. Each position is objectively defined by its objective relationship with other positions.³

The objective relations explored by Bourdieu differ from the manifest relations studied in social network analysis, in that they refer to the differential possession of types of capital. The positions of (and between) texts, individual agents, and institutions depend on the relative amount of capital specific to a field, which for the literary field is mostly cultural capital. Bourdieu defines this as cultural knowledge,

³ Bourdieu, *Rules of Art*, 231.

educational credentials, skills, abilities, sensibilities, and other cultural acquisitions.⁴ For him, the possession of cultural capital can apply to texts as well as to individual agents and institutions, and it can (as with other types of capital) function as symbolic capital: the “degree of accumulated prestige, celebrity, consecration or honour [that] is founded on a dialectic of knowledge (*connaissance*) and recognition (*reconnaissance*).”⁵

Bourdieu does not indicate exactly how the amount of capital possessed by an individual, and thus his or her institutional position in the literary field, can be determined. For a study of the hierarchies governing mediators of Borges's work, a more concrete definition of a mediator's position is therefore needed. The position of each mediator changes continuously and should be considered in relation to the positions of others. The relative amount of capital a mediator possesses can be determined by taking into account a number of aspects that the Bourdieusian scholar Kees van Rees refers to when discussing the position of the critic:

His level of education; his professional activities beside that of reviewer or critic; the frequency of his publications and the period during which he has been active as a critic (beginning vs. experienced); the importance of the review media which usually publish his assessments; the scope of his repertory and the number of genres he discusses. Also highly relevant is his use of a conception of literature, either a current one or a variant that he has helped to develop and that he gradually manages to get adopted through his reviews or essays.⁶

Although Van Rees was writing specifically about the institutional position of a critic, the criteria can, to a certain extent, also be applied to other types of mediator. For instance, one could judge the position of a translator or author by their combination of several professional activities, the frequency of their works, the prestige of the publishing houses for which they work, and the period during which they have been active. Van Rees's last criterion for the position of a critic—success in having a particular conception of literature adopted—also applies to other types of

⁴ Bourdieu, *Distinction*, 82; and Bourdieu, “Forms of Capital,” 243-48; See also Johnson, “Pierre Bourdieu on Art,” 7.

⁵ Johnson, “Pierre Bourdieu on Art,” 7. See also Bourdieu, *Field of Cultural Production*, 75.

⁶ Van Rees, “How Reviewers Reach Consensus,” 283.

mediator, as their publications, such as peritexts of book translations, translations, and fiction, can have an impact on the conceptions of other people. The success of a mediator in expressing his or her conception of literature or set of literary norms is therefore crucial to his or her position.

My research will be limited to a number of mediators who took key positions in the reception process of Borges's work. At the start of the four chapters on early translations and publications of Borges's work, and on early criticism in France and the United States, I will choose these key mediators upfront by using various selection criteria. I will detail five selection criteria here, among which is the institutional position of a mediator. One could assume that mediators with an established institutional position—that is, with relatively much capital—are more likely to play key roles in the reception of an author's work. The selection of mediators based on their institutional position is a complicated one, as there is no absolute way of measuring the prestige or amount of symbolic capital that a particular mediator had at a particular time. Moreover, this recognition also depended on the particular institutional setting in which the mediator operated, as it may have differed according to literary group, movement, magazine, publishing house, etc.

I will therefore operationalize this concept by focusing on the prestige of the publishing houses for which a publisher, editor, or translator usually worked and published Borges's work or the prestige of the review media (newspapers, magazines, weeklies) for which a critic usually worked and published on Borges. Moreover, I will look at the mediator's artistic seniority (beginner vs. experienced) and the recognition that he or she gained through publications or through other professional activities. By prestige of the publishing houses and review media, I mainly refer to the dominant versus dominated pole in the literary field. Publishing houses and media can also be situated on the autonomous versus heteronomous pole, and in some cases the heteronomous position of a mediator will have a negative effect on his or her recognition, but this aspect will receive little attention in my thesis.⁷ A practical way of measuring institutional position is thus to compare mediators as far as the prestige of their publishing houses or review media, their artistic age, and the recognition of their professional activities are concerned.

⁷ See Sapiro, "Autonomy Revisited."

My second criterion for selecting key mediators is the extent to which they determined the material presentation (selection of texts, title, preface and other peritexts, and translation) of the book translations of Borges's work. For the translation and publication processes at publishing houses, some mediators played a key part in making decisions about the presentation of a book translation. This was of course determined by the nature of their relationship with the publishing houses (whether they worked there or were external translators or editors, whether they carried out a request to translate a text or did so on their own initiative, etc.).

While this last criterion shows the impact of mediators involved in publishing houses, a third criterion shows the impact of critics. The specific impact a critic may have had in the reception of Borges's work can only be studied by looking at the reception material itself, and this is a question I will only be able to study within the chosen time period for France and the United States. This impact can, however, also be measured in a more quantitative way by examining whether the critic's publication was reprinted or anthologized. I will use reprints as a concrete selection criterion that can be used beforehand. The repeated publication of a text on Borges could either have had an impact on the critical reception or indicate that the first publication already had an impact. A fourth criterion for selecting key mediators deals with whether a mediator combined various institutional roles (publisher, editor, translator, and critic) to mediate Borges's work. The institutional roles and activities that a mediator combined in relation to Borges's work is essential in determining the impact that he or she had in the early reception phase.

Lastly, the frequency with which mediators translated Borges's work or wrote reviews or other texts on Borges is important for mediators at publishing houses and in criticism. It offers a quantitative measure to limit my corpus. Estimating and comparing the frequency of publications and translations is straightforward for the relatively small number of mediators involved in the publishing houses that issued Borges's work. Owing to the large number of critics and amount of criticism, however, it is necessary to draw frequency graphs with the number of publications for each critic in both France and the United States. In order to draw these frequency graphs in the respective chapters, I started by compiling a corpus and counting all types of publication by each mediator. Apart from articles in journals, magazines, weeklies, books, etc., critics also published interviews, books, and PhD theses, which were included in the corpus. Publications issued in French or English but outside France or the United States, such as articles in exile magazines and texts published in

other French or English-speaking countries, were not taken into account as they would have made the corpus too vast and heterogeneous, although texts by the selected key critics that were published elsewhere will be included in the qualitative analysis. Prologues and epilogues to the book translations of Borges's work were also excluded from the frequency count, as they were part of the book translations discussed in the chapters on translations and publications in France and the United States. Critics who co-published articles, interviews, or books were counted as having one publication each; critics who published a text that was later reprinted in a different medium within my period of study were counted as having one publication.

References to Borges in texts on other authors or topics were also counted for my period of study and taken up separately in the frequency graphs. These so-called "mentions," a term borrowed from Karl Rosengren, may be regarded as an association made by a critic and can show that Borges had some relevance for a given critic.⁸ The compilation of the corpus of mentions was somewhat difficult, as it depended on the rare availability of digital databases or on casual discoveries. In some cases, it was also hard to make a clear division between mentions of Borges in a review of another author and reviews of a number of briefly discussed authors including Borges. In order to reduce the risk of overemphasizing the role of these mentions, I only included critics with at least one article, interview, or book (including PhD theses) in the frequency counts. For the selection of key critics I used the frequency of articles, interviews, books, and mentions as a relational criterion: a critic who published three articles, for instance, was considered more dominant in the reception than a critic with only one article and two mentions.

With the help of these five criteria, I will study the position of the mediators involved in the reception of Borges's work at the start of the relevant chapters. In the chapters on early translations and publications of Borges's work in France and the United States, my first and foremost selection criterion for key mediators is (1) the extent to which mediators determined the material presentation of the book translations. Three other selection criteria that I will apply to mediators include (2) the frequency with which they wrote peritexts or other texts on Borges, or translated his work, (3) their institutional positions, and (4) their combined fulfillment of various institutional roles to mediate Borges's work. The position of a mediator in the

⁸ Rosengren, "Literary Criticism," 298.

translation and publication process will be determined mainly with the help of archive material. In the chapters on early criticism in France and the United States, I will look at (1) the impact of critics through repeated publication, (2) the frequency with which they wrote articles, interviews, or books, or referred to Borges's work, (3) their institutional positions, and (4) their combined fulfillment of institutional roles. The position of a mediator in the critical reception will mostly be examined with the help of studies on criticism and information about the mediators and their publications.

After this selection process, I will introduce the key translators, editors, and publishers of Borges's work in one chapter and key critics in the other. In some cases, I will also discuss more peripheral or secondary mediators in order to show similarities and differences between mediators. In my definition of peripheral mediators, these individuals simply match less criteria for selecting key mediators, even though most of my selection criteria are relative rather than purely quantitative. Similar to the institutional position of a mediator, his or her (key) position in the reception of Borges's work should be considered in relation to other mediators.

The selection of key mediators based on previously established criteria is not a straightforward process and presents a number of problems. First, the criteria I selected are in a sense arbitrary, as many other selection criteria were excluded. The lengths of the mediators' publications (or translations) or their reputations in our time could have been used as well. Second, and especially for the mediators involved in translation and publication, selection is dependent on the availability of archive and other material to help determine their positions. Third, the key role of some mediators usually becomes clearer when studying actual reception materials. Fourth, the dominant position of a mediator, and the criteria to establish it, are only relative, as the restricted time period does not allow for an analysis of the long-lasting impact of a mediator. I was not able to study whether the selections, classifications, and norms the key mediators applied to Borges's work were reproduced by other mediators after the chosen time period for France and the United States. Last, when concentrating on a number of key mediators there is a danger of overemphasizing the actions of some to the detriment of others, or of seeing all reception processes as teleological or intentional. There is the risk that the selection in advance of a number of key mediators can become a self-fulfilling prophecy, as selected key mediators, by necessity, turn out to be the key mediators in my analysis. Some of these problems can be solved by studying the actual reception and comparing the behavior of

dominant mediators to that of their peripheral counterparts. In this sense, the selection of key mediators at the start of each chapter is only tentative: the findings of my research, and further research into later reception phases, will shed more light on their actual positions in the reception process.

2. Mediators and their norms: The selection and classification of Borges's work

Key mediators arrived at evaluating and presenting Borges's work in various ways that can be discussed theoretically. I will briefly examine how aesthetic perception and practice is discussed by Bourdieu in terms of concepts such as distinction, position-taking, and habitus, and evaluate to what extent and in what ways these concepts can be used for the present research. Bourdieu's principle of distinction refers to the fact that agents in the artistic field try to distinguish themselves from others in their aesthetic judgments, in order to gain a better position in the field. In Bourdieu's words, "social subjects, classified by their classifications, distinguish themselves by the distinctions they make, between the beautiful and the ugly, the distinguished and the vulgar, in which their position in the objective classifications is expressed or betrayed."⁹ Although aesthetic perception and practice can be a way of claiming a position, this position-taking is also largely dependent on the mediator's existing institutional position. In Bourdieu's work, a homology between the agent's position and position-taking is supposed:

Aux différentes *positions* [. . .] correspondent des *prises de positions* homologues, œuvres littéraires ou artistiques évidemment, mais aussi actes et discours politiques, manifestes ou polémiques, etc. [. . .] Le réseau des relations objectives entre les positions fonde et oriente les stratégies que les occupants des différentes positions engagent dans leurs luttes pour défendre ou améliorer leur position: en effet ces stratégies dépendent dans leur force et leur forme de la position que chaque agent occupe dans les rapports de forces.

⁹ Bourdieu, *Distinction*, 6.

En phase d'équilibre, l'espace des positions tend à commander l'espace des prises de position.¹⁰

The internal (e.g. thematic, stylistic) and external (e.g. political) position-takings thus depend on the institutional position occupied by an agent, but also on the whole structure of positions and position-takings in the field.¹¹ To a certain extent, position-takings can even be predicted on the basis of certain types of position, according to Bourdieu:

Ceux qui, dans un état déterminé du rapport de force, monopolisent (plus ou moins complètement) le capital spécifique, fondement du pouvoir ou de l'autorité spécifique, caractéristique d'un champ, sont inclinés à des stratégies de conservation—celles qui, dans les champs de production de biens culturels, tendent à la défense de l'orthodoxie—, tandis que les moins pourvus de capital (qui sont aussi souvent les nouveaux venus, donc, la plupart du temps, les plus jeunes) sont enclins aux stratégies de subversion—celles de l'hérésie.¹²

For my study on the reception of Borges's work, I will move away from Bourdieu in the supposition that there is a general rule for the behavior of mediators with certain types of position. In my view, orthodoxy (compliance with dominant norms) can also be a conscious or unconscious strategy for those on the periphery, and heterodoxy (innovations with respect to dominant norms) can be initiated by mediators with relatively much literary or cultural capital. Orthodoxy and heterodoxy may also occur simultaneously, as mediators use different strategies in each institutional role or situation. As I will focus on the (key) positions of mediators in the reception of Borges's work rather than on their institutional positions *per se*, I will try to unlock the univocal relationship between the institutional positions of mediators and their position-takings.

¹⁰ Bourdieu, "Le champ littéraire," 18-19.

¹¹ Bourdieu, *Field of Cultural Production*, 30; and "Le champ littéraire," 19. See also Johnson, "Pierre Bourdieu on Art," 17.

¹² Bourdieu, "Quelques propriétés des champs," 115. For a discussion and critique of this aspect in Bourdieu's work, see Sela-Sheffy, "Canon Formation Revisited," 153; and "How to Be a (Recognized) Translator," 5. Itamar Even-Zohar's discussion of innovatory ("primary") and conservatory ("secondary") repertoires is more flexible, but unlike Bourdieu he relates these norms to the positions of translated literature rather than to the positions of agents. See Even-Zohar, "The Position of Translated Literature within the Literary Polysystem."

Bourdieu also uses the concept of habitus to mediate between the behavior of individual agents and their positions: this consists of schemes of perception, appreciation, and action that are the products of a lengthy process of inculcation. A position-taking therefore not only depends on the position of an agent (and the space of possible positions and position-takings), but also on his or her individual habitus or, to use a synonymous concept, dispositions.¹³ Bourdieu's concept of habitus stresses the idea that individual action is regulated and orchestrated through shared schemes that become internalized:

The conditionings associated with a particular class of conditions of existence produce *habitus*, systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles which generate and organize practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary in order to attain them. Objectively "regulated" and "regular" without being in any way the product of obedience to rules, they can be collectively orchestrated without being the product of the organizing action of a conductor.¹⁴

The concept of habitus mitigates the emphasis on strategic actions by mediators, as it does not necessarily generate calculated, deliberate, or conscious practice. Calling it strategy, Bourdieu refers to the fact that the behavior of agents is not random, but dependent on their habitus and position.¹⁵ I will therefore assume that mediators can also distinguish themselves unconsciously or unintentionally, but these motives cannot easily be uncovered in the research itself.

Bourdieu's habitus is useful because it specifies the social schemes that mediate between the individual's actions and collectively held beliefs. However, the concept cannot be introduced easily into my methodological framework. It has received considerable criticism, particularly for being deterministic. Although it was originally conceived as a means to stress the creative and active capacities of an

¹³ Bourdieu, *Distinction*, 100-101. See also Sela-Sheffy, "Models and Habitus," 40. As others have done, I take the concept of dispositions to be synonymous with habitus. See Suderland, "Disposition (*disposition*)," 73-75.

¹⁴ Bourdieu, *Logic of Practice*, 53.

¹⁵ Bourdieu, "Quelques propriétés des champs," 119-20. See also Johnson, "Pierre Bourdieu on Art," 17-18; and Boschetti, "How Field Theory Can Contribute," 16.

agent, and does leave room for improvisation and variability, Bourdieu's conceptualization of habitus has been criticized for assuming a one-directional imprint of social structure on the actions of an agent.¹⁶ Scholars have criticized the concept for offering an overall explanation for everything without accounting for the ways in which individual agents can threaten social norms with their intentionality, self-reflection, or creativity. Agents govern norms as much as their behavior is governed by them, and can play a role in maintaining and creating norms. Moreover, some critics have remarked that habitus is activated or used according to different social contexts, and is thus plural and dynamic. According to that view, cultural behavior is not unified on the level of social groups, or on the level of the individual.¹⁷

The question, therefore, is how the normative schemes of a mediator can be analyzed without the internal and external social structure of the agent being emphasized to the point of predictability or determinism. Instead of using habitus, I will use and define the idea of norms as underlying beliefs and patterns of behavior. The perceptions, appreciations, and actions of agents are always governed or regulated by normative schemes, as translation scholar Theo Hermans has stated:

The term "norm" refers to both a regularity in behaviour, i.e. a recurring pattern, and to the underlying mechanism which accounts for this regularity. The mechanism is a psychological and social entity. It mediates between the individual and the collective, between the individual's intentions, choices and actions, and collectively held beliefs, values and preferences. [. . .] Norms contribute to the stability of interpersonal relations by reducing uncertainty. They make behaviour more predictable by generalizing from past experience and making projections concerning similar types of situation in the future. They have a socially regulatory function.¹⁸

¹⁶ Bourdieu, "Genesis of the Concepts of *Habitus* and of *Field*," 13. For a deterministic conceptualization of habitus offered by Bourdieu himself, see Bourdieu, *Distinction*, 170. For criticism, see Guillory, "Bourdieu's Refusal," 20; Kumoll, "Strategie (*stratégie*)," 227; Rehbein and Saalman, "Habitus (*habitus*)," 115-16; Sela-Sheffy, "Models and Habitus," 37-38; and Verdaasdonk, "Valuation as Rational Decision-Making."

¹⁷ See Lahire, "Towards a Sociology at the Level of the Individual"; and "Individual and the Mixing of Genres." See also Bennett, "Habitus Clivé," 201-5; and Sela-Sheffy, "Models and Habitus," 38.

¹⁸ Hermans, *Translation in Systems*, 80.

Following Hermans and other scholars, I consider norms to be prescriptive and closely linked to social conventions (which are weaker and less prescriptive) and values (which are descriptive and on which norms are generally based).¹⁹ In this sense, my focus on norms is indebted to recent conceptualizations of Itamar Even-Zohar's polysystem theory, in which the concept of a literary repertoire is redefined as mental equipment comprising, among other elements, "sets of strategies and conventions that govern production, reception, and communication," and "sets of internalized values and interests that determine selections, classifications, and judgments."²⁰ Apart from norms, the behavior of mediators is also shaped by values, conventions, objectives, motives, interests, and strategies. While values and conventions can be included in a broad definition of norms—after all, they can hardly be distinguished from norms in the reception material—objectives, motives, interests, and strategies are deliberate intentions. As calculated or conscious practices are difficult to deduce from reception material, and as, according to Bourdieu, actions are never purely or fully a matter of conscious deliberation, I prefer to use the term norms.²¹ Where possible, however, I will try to distinguish norms from strategies and other intentions.

For the reception of literary works by key mediators, it can be assumed that most norms are poetical; that is, that they refer to ideas on how literature (or art) should be—thematically, stylistically, etc. This assumption follows from Bourdieu's description of the relatively autonomous literary field that came into being in the second half of the nineteenth century, although I will later also show how political, economic, and social factors are mediated within institutions.²² For the reconstruction of poetical norms, it may be useful to distinguish between what are usually called the internal and the external poetics. Both of these concepts refer to norms, but make a distinction between the types of document studied, as is clear from the following statements by Hermans: "The external poetics is the cluster of ideas which the researcher constructs on the basis of statements about literature [. . .]. The internal poetics is the researcher's attempt to figure out the principles underlying the primary

¹⁹ See Hermans, *Translation in Systems*, 81; and Heydebrand and Winko, "Qualities of Literary Evaluation," 230.

²⁰ Andringa, "Penetrating the Dutch Polysystem," 526; and Andringa, Levie, and Sanders, "Het buitenland bekeken." For the role of normativity in descriptive translation studies and systems theory, see respectively Toury, *Descriptive Translation Studies and Beyond*; and de Geest, *Literatuur als systeem*.

²¹ See Bourdieu, "Le champ littéraire," 46; and *Field of Cultural Production*, 112-41.

²² Bourdieu, *Field of Cultural Production*, 112-141.

texts, in our case the translations themselves."²³ The internal poetics thus refers to the set of norms internal to the primary work of a mediator, which in my case can be deduced from actual translations, criticism, and fiction. Conversely, all kinds of criticism (reviews, peritexts, programmatic texts on translation, criticism, and fiction), interviews, and personal correspondence contain pointers to the external poetics of a mediator. While the internal and external poetics can be deduced from texts if such material is available, the poetical norms of some mediators have already been studied. In cases where studies of the norms of certain mediators are available, I will take them into account in my analysis. Although the norms of some mediators are partially known, they have to be complemented with an analysis of the norms they used to evaluate an author's work.

Norms thus govern the behavior of the individual, in which case the concept refers to internalized norms that determine perceptions, appreciations, and actions. Norms are also mediated at the external, collective level. In this section I will focus on how norms operate at the level of the individual mediator, and turn later to how norms are transmitted by mediators within institutions and organizations, and at the national and international levels at which works are received. Straightforward expressions of norms in reception documents are difficult to find, as they usually remain implicit. An author, literary movement, or genre can be explicitly approved or rejected with reference to the norms guiding this evaluation, but normativity is generally articulated in a more ambiguous, indirect way. In addition, the norms that are articulated by a mediator are usually not limited to his or her comments on one author or within a limited time frame, which makes it difficult to fully grasp the norms a mediator uses to evaluate Borges's work. I will therefore focus on how key mediators express norms in specific selections and classifications regarding Borges's work, rather than study norms directly.²⁴ The selections and classifications by key mediators help to highlight the mediators' norms, even though they may not always present an unambiguous or consistent idea thereof, since individual norms change according to institutional role and context and may also change over time. My thesis offers a form of close reading that is not always common in studies with a literary

²³ Hermans, *Translation in Systems*, 90.

²⁴ In different translation and reception theories, there is a somewhat similar division of actions. Bernd Kortländer, for instance, speaks of selection, transport, and integration. Kortländer, "Begrenzung-Entgrenzung." See also Andringa, "Penetrating the Dutch Polysystem." These forms, however, do not coincide with mine, and I will therefore define the selection and classification of Borges's work in my own terms.

sociological framework, many of which focus more on statistical analysis. But I do not conduct a full discursive analysis, as I analyze selections and classifications in texts in order to conduct an institutional analysis of key mediators. I will now deal with how selections and the beliefs underpinning them can be analyzed, then move on to classifications.

The selections by key mediators of Borges's work can be reconstructed by focusing on the decision to publish his work in the importing country and on the selection of source texts. Several early book translations were anthologies of stories, essays, and poems from different Argentine publications, and these selections of course had to exclude some works. Moreover, as the contents of some of Borges's original titles changed over time (for instance, in the 1944 and 1956 Argentine versions of *Ficciones*), the choice of the source publication imposed itself with every new edition of a book translation. While these selections were mainly made by mediators involved in publishing houses (such as translators, editors, and publishers), other mediators (such as authors, members of editorial boards, and critics) made selections as well, for instance by choosing to review Borges's work or by reviewing a particular text of his.

The selections by mediators involved in the book translations and publications are also visible in the practice of translators and their external poetics of translation. Translators choose or reject particular options, both in their actions and in their programmatic declarations, within a normative context that determines this selectivity. The attitude that a translator takes in the actual process of translation is frequently described as being governed by norms tending towards adequacy or acceptability, and foreignization or domestication.²⁵ For the French and US literary spaces, it could be assumed that Borges translators were perhaps inclined to comply with domestic norms, a tendency Daniel Simeoni and others have described for central national spaces in the hierarchically structured world literary space.²⁶ This does not, however, necessarily need to have been the case, as the translation norms and positions of the individual translators also played a role, as did the position of

²⁵ The first pair of concepts comes from Gideon Toury's *Descriptive Translation Studies*. See also Hermans's critical comments on Toury's concepts in *Translation in Systems*, 76-77. The opposition between foreignization and domestication is from Lawrence Venuti, *Scandals of Translation*; and *Translator's Invisibility*. Clem Robyns, for whom the translator's attitude towards a foreign text is also important, offers a similar, but more refined categorization. Robyns, "Translation and Discursive Identity."

²⁶ Simeoni, "Translator's Habitus." See also Berman, *L'épreuve de l'étranger*; Sela-Sheffy, "How to Be a (Recognized) Translator," 5; Venuti, *Scandals of Translation*; and *Translator's Invisibility*.

Argentine literature, the prestige of the short-story genre, and the position of Borges's work in the national fields. While studying the relative amount of capital of Argentine literature or the genre of the short story in France and the United States is beyond the scope of this thesis, I will be able to discuss the translation norms of Borges translators and relate these to their positions in the reception of the author's work, and also to the position of Borges's work itself.

The concepts of adequacy or acceptability, and foreignization or domestication, come from different research traditions and apply only to translations. For my analysis, however, it is more relevant to explore and compare the normative tendency of selections by mediators in their different institutional roles. The norms that mediators articulated in these roles can then be seen as conflictive or contradictory: the orthodox or heterodox choices that guided the translation practices for Borges's work, for instance, may have contrasted with the selections of texts by Borges to be anthologized, with the selection of a book title, or with classifications and norms expressed in programmatic texts on translation and texts on Borges. For practical reasons, I will focus on this combination of roles and norms by analyzing studies about translations of Borges's work as well as correspondence, interviews, and programmatic texts, rather than carrying out a full study of the translations themselves. Translators who did not publish studies about Borges will therefore receive little attention in my research.

Classifications by mediators are specific terms used to label an author, and usually associate him with a larger group of authors or texts.²⁷ Classifications can be considered normative, as they group an author or his work under a certain label. Each mediator may define and apply a classification differently, and it is worth uncovering its implicit meanings and norms. The classifications by mediators of Borges's work can be found in reviews and essays on Borges's work, which mostly appeared directly after the book translations, but also in prefaces and other peritexts of the book translations.

I will pay attention to five types of classification that refer to the author himself, to the themes, genre, and style of his work, and to the literary movement to which his work belongs. These five types of classification "emerged" from the reception material as they appeared frequently in peritexts and criticism of Borges's work, although they were also theory-driven as they were listed in studies on the

²⁷ For a more limited definition of classifications as statements on literary movements only, see De Nooy "Social Networks and Classification in Literature."

specific vocabulary used in literary criticism.²⁸ As for classifications of the author, I will show in my study that Borges was repeatedly labeled as author, writer, translator, poet, novelist, librarian, intellectual, philosopher, moralist, mystic, and so on, or specifically associated with other authors such as Franz Kafka. The classifications used to refer to Borges's texts included themes such as fear, time, and philosophy, and genres such as the novel, short story, parable, fable, poem, myth, romance, tale, epic, and allegory. There were also classifications of Borges's style of writing, which were mainly represented by adjectives such as baroque or concise, and of names of literary groups, schools, theories, or movements, which could vary so widely as to take in both realism and surrealism.

This last classification, of a literary group or movement, deserves more detailed attention, as it can refer to specific groups or movements within the national cultural production of the importing country. These classifications by reviewers, essayists, and writers could then form part of poetical programs through which mediators tried to distinguish themselves. Bourdieu, for instance, has underlined the importance of names of schools, movements, and other classifications in the process of distinction:

*False concepts, practical instruments of classification which make resemblances and differences by naming them, the names of schools or groups which have flourished in recent painting [. . .] are products in the struggle for recognition by the artists themselves or by their appointed critics, and they fulfil the function of signs of recognition distinguishing galleries, groups and painters, and by the same token, the products that they fabricate or put on offer.*²⁹

Contrary to (very) early classifications, in which critics and other mediators mainly ascribed capital to Borges by writing about his work, for these classifications the attribution of capital also started to function the other way around. This applied in particular to mediators who not only used Borges's work for their own poetical

²⁸ I refer in particular to the types of "concepts" that appear in Aschenbrenner, *Concepts of Criticism*; and to the "categories" studied in Laborde-Milaa and Paveau, "L'ancrage médiatique des normes littéraires." In various models for studying literary reviewing, more extensive lists of types and classifications are offered, such as in Heydebrand and Winko, *Einführung in die Wertung von Literatur*; Worthmann, *Literarische Wertungen* and, more recently, Linders's and Op de Beek's "Evaluatiedomeinen in de Nederlandse literatuurkritiek." These models, however, usually refer to the evaluation criteria or values that affect literary evaluation rather than to specific classifications in language itself.

²⁹ Bourdieu, *Rules of Art*, 157; italics in the original.

programs but also in their own fiction, which I will call creative reception. I will refer briefly to a number of fictional texts in order to show how they related to certain selections and classifications in translations and criticism. Although this excludes a full study of the creative reception, it ties in well with my literary sociological focus on more explicit forms of reception.

In each of the two parts on the reception of Borges in France and the United States, I will distinguish a first chapter on early translations and publications and a second chapter on early criticism of Borges's work. While I will use these two chapters in order to structure my study and distinguish the different mediating roles and activities, they do not represent two well-delineated forms of reception. The same goes for the selection and classification of Borges's work: while the mediators involved in the translation and publication process were more occupied with selections, and mediators involved in literary criticism with classifications, these two actions did not occur in a separate, clear-cut manner. Mediators sometimes combined several institutional roles and therefore played a role in the translation and publication process as well as in the critical reception and for the selection as well as for the classification of Borges's work. Since I will give preference to dealing with individual mediators in their combination of different institutional roles, I will sometimes also study literary criticism by mediators who mainly occupied themselves with translations and publications of Borges's work, and vice versa. In both chapters, I will analyze how a number of key mediators selected and classified Borges's work, and how these selections and classifications were governed by norms.

3. Organizations, institutions, and national fields: The transmission of norms

Mediators can articulate the selections and classifications they use to evaluate Borges's work as individual preferences, but there is also a collective dimension. This becomes clear in contexts that both shape and become shaped by mediators. Here, I will look at these contexts at the national level, before examining the international level in the next section. My main focus will be on how norms are transmitted within and across institutions. I will consider institutions such as the publishing trade or literary criticism not as a collective consisting of individual agents, but as, in line with the cultural sociologist Anton Zijderveld's definition, "collective and objective

pattern[s] of behavior [. . .] [that exert] a stimulating and controlling influence on subsequent individual and subjective actions, thoughts and feelings" through the values and norms they contain.³⁰ Institutions produce sets of norms and values that limit individual behavior, but these sets have a degree of flexibility that also enables individuals to develop their originality.³¹

The institutional contexts in which mediators receive an author's work, and the ways in which norms are regulated at the institutional level, are poorly conceptualized in literary sociology. In spite of Bourdieu's focus on the collective elements in the habitus of an agent, and his case studies on institutions such as the theatrical world and the publishing trade, he takes little interest in defining the concept of institution and problematizing its relationship with the concepts of field and autonomy.³² This relative neglect is all the more remarkable given that his theoretical framework is sometimes referred to as an "institutional" approach. In Bourdieu's work, the underconceptualization of the term institution can be explained by his idea of the weak degree of institutionalization of the literary field in comparison with other fields, such as the political or the academic field. According to him, this incomplete institutionalization is visible in "l'absence totale d'arbitrage et de garantie juridique ou institutionnelle dans les conflits de priorité ou d'autorité, et plus généralement dans les luttes pour la défense ou la conquête des positions dominantes."³³ As a clarification of the role of institutions in Bourdieu's theory, Jacques Dubois shows in *L'institution de la littérature* that Bourdieu's autonomous field of restricted production can be seen as the field where the institutional scheme or set of norms prevails, whereas in the field of large-scale production the economic scheme is dominant.³⁴ The individual behavior of mediators in the reception of Borges's work is governed by the (literary) norms of institutions such as the publishing trade and literary criticism. More concretely, these norms can be situated at the level of literary circles, salons, publishing houses, literary prizes, literary magazines, and newspapers around which mediators are grouped, and for which Bourdieu reserves the term of not fully institutionalized organizations.³⁵

³⁰ Zijderfeld, *Institutional Imperative*, 32.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 133.

³² For this relative neglect of institutions within field theory, for instance in comparison with new institutionalism, see Benson and Neveu, "Field Theory as a Work in Progress," 12.

³³ Bourdieu, "Le champ littéraire," 18-19, note 35.

³⁴ Dubois, *L'institution de la littérature*, 39-40.

³⁵ Bourdieu, *Field of Cultural Production*, 121. See also Zijderfeld, *Institutional Imperative*, 34-37.

Following Bourdieu, Dubois thus makes a distinction between an autonomous and a heteronomous pole; that is, a pole of restricted, avant-garde production and a pole of large-scale, commercial literary production. Even in the pole of restricted production, however, where what Dubois calls the institutional scheme is dominant, this autonomy is relative, as there is political, mercantile, and mediatic pressure on institutions. Gisèle Sapiro's work on the different political and economic constraints on literary activities is useful in explaining this relative autonomy for national spaces. Sapiro has shown how, in an economically liberalist system, the autonomy of the pole of restricted literary production is threatened by mercantile constraints.³⁶ She has also demonstrated how the French state nowadays promotes literary activities, which helps to preserve a certain degree of autonomy from the market. Sapiro stresses that external constraints in the autonomous space are not direct, but nonetheless exist through institutional mediations between text and context:

In relatively autonomous spaces, external constraints are refracted through more or less institutionalized bodies: training institutions (academic training, specialized schools), social spaces (literary circles, learned societies), instances of consecration (prizes, academies, salons), professional bodies (associations, trade unions).³⁷

Socio-economic and political constraints also have an impact on the critical reception of works, as the criteria for judging a literary work are related to the autonomous or heteronomous, dominant or dominated position that a mediator, group, or institution occupies in the field. Heteronomy therefore plays a role in the reception process, according to Sapiro, particularly through economic expectations and moral or political judgments of literary texts.³⁸ External, political, economic, and social constraints are thus mediated within more or less institutionalized organizations such as publishing houses, cultural organizations, and magazines. For the reception of Borges in my period of study, one could, for instance, think of the role of the Paris-based magazine *Cuadernos del Congreso por la Libertad de la Cultura* (1953-1965), which voiced the norms of the anti-communist Congress for Cultural Freedom (CCF) for a Latin American audience, and of the Center for Inter-American Relations in the

³⁶ Sapiro, "Literary Field between the State and the Market," 455.

³⁷ Sapiro, "Autonomy Revisited," 35. See also her article "L'autonomie de la littérature en question."

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 43-44.

United States, the activities of which were also linked to the anti-communist politics of the Cold War.

For my study, the publishing trade and literary criticism are the most important institutions that facilitate or inhibit the activities of individual mediators. I will first look at these two institutions and then go into the transmission of norms between mediators within and across these institutions. As far as publishing is concerned, Bourdieu considers the field of publishing to be relatively autonomous, and thus as an institution that imposes its own norms and values, although economic and media-related factors also have an impact.³⁹ The publishing houses that form part of this institution occupy their own positions in the literary field, which, again according to Bourdieu, depend on their possession of economic, technical, and symbolic capital, the last of which mainly refers to artistic seniority and the importance and quality of the house's backlist.⁴⁰ In turn, literary prizes can be institutionally linked to publishing houses, which was the case for the 1961 Prix International des Éditeurs that was awarded to Borges at Formentor by publishers from six different countries. Although publishing houses are, as a rule, situated in specific national fields, published books can cross borders easily, especially within the same language area. Within a language area, a number of publishing houses from one country may centralize the literary production. As Laurence Malingret has shown for French translations of Spanish-language literature between 1970 and 2000, for instance, the publishing trade in French was very centralized, so that large Parisian publishing houses dominated the publication of translations, with few translations issued in Belgium, Quebec, and Switzerland. This was, in fact, also the case for the French translations of Borges's work, which were published almost exclusively by the Parisian publisher Gallimard.⁴¹

Within publishing houses, mediators who contribute to the publication of literary works also occupy their own positions. Bourdieu has therefore called attention to the importance of the objective relations between agents such as the publisher and his or her closest colleagues, advisers and members of reading committees, directors of collections, and translators.⁴² All mediators involved in a particular publishing house with its own formal structures share, at least partly, a set

³⁹ Bourdieu, "Une révolution conservatrice dans l'édition," 6.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 3-4.

⁴¹ Malingret, *Stratégies de traduction*, 55.

⁴² Bourdieu, "Une révolution conservatrice dans l'édition," 3.

of norms that regulate their behavior. For a study of the translation and publication process of Borges's work, the following should thus be taken into account: the institutional positions of those mediators, their positions in the publication process itself—which do not necessarily coincide with the institutional positions—and the norms that were at the basis of their selections and classifications.

With regard to literary criticism, this institution fulfills a special role in the literary field in formulating norms implicitly or explicitly, and applying them to literary production, especially by means of classifications of the author, themes, genre, style, and literary movement pertaining to the literary work. Literary criticism is institutionally connected to formal organizations such as newspapers, literary magazines, and scholarly journals, in which different types of literary criticism are performed. One could distinguish three complementary branches of criticism that differ in when and how they review a particular text and the scope of the field from which they select it, but that together form one institution: journalistic, essayistic, and academic criticism. Journalistic criticism (primarily in newspapers), essayistic criticism (in literary magazines), and academic criticism (in scholarly journals and books) are usually consecutive and have increasingly limited selection filters.⁴³

Karl Rosengren studies this threefold selection mechanism by statistically analyzing what he calls “mentions”—references to authors other than the one under review—in the three branches of criticism. He examines the diachronic hierarchy of fame in a specific cohort of writers born in the first half of the nineteenth century, by counting the mentions in representative samples of criticism in Swedish newspapers, essays in Swedish literary magazines, and academic histories of literature (and also measuring the amount of attention proportionally dedicated to each writer). From a quantitative and causal analysis at two moments, in the 1880s and the postwar period, Rosengren concludes that the cohort's hierarchy in the literary frame of reference of twentieth-century daily reviewers (i.e. journalistic critics) was very similar to the one established by nineteenth-century reviewers. The influence of the early journalistic reviewers was mainly due, according to Rosengren, to their impact on the decisions of the other two types of literary critic (essayists and academic critics), who arrived later and relayed their hierarchy of fame to the modern reviewers.⁴⁴

⁴³ See Van Rees, “How a Literary Work Becomes a Masterpiece,” 400-403; and Janssen, *In het licht van de kritiek*, 21-22.

⁴⁴ Rosengren, “Literary Criticism,” 320-21.

I will take up Rosengren's "mentions" concept in order to study brief references to Borges in texts by key mediators, and follow his idea of the importance of early critics by limiting the reception of Borges's work to the early phase. Unlike Rosengren, however, I will make a distinction between two forms of criticism rather than use his triad. In my analysis of criticism in France and the United States, I will focus on criticism in newspapers and literary magazines, and pay less attention to criticism in academic journals and books. These two forms of criticism can be distinguished, for one thing, because journalistic and essayistic criticism is usually about relatively new books that the reader has not read, whereas academic criticism offers an in-depth study of a work of literature that is better known and has already earned a place in the canon. In addition to this, value judgments are more explicit in newspapers and literary magazines, which fits in well with my interest in the norms that mediators used to evaluate Borges's work. Academic criticism, on the other hand, has increasingly become non-evaluative, at least within Anglophone criticism after the New Critics.⁴⁵ These differences are related to the distinction that some scholars make between reviewing and criticism, although essayistic criticism is not consistently classified as either.⁴⁶ In my thesis I will use the terms reviewing and criticism interchangeably, to refer to both journalistic and essayistic criticism.

This distinction between non-academic and academic criticism, mainly based on the moment and medium of publication, and on the presence of explicit value judgments, is not strict. Some critics combined different institutional roles to comment on Borges's work, and those who reviewed for both journalistic or essayistic and academic media did not "switch off" their academic expertise while writing for a newspaper or literary magazine; they simply adapted their style to the medium. The presence of these two types of criticism and their idiosyncrasies may also have differed between national fields. Various essays on the US literary field of the 1960s, for instance, suggest that academic criticism increasingly lost its close connections to the wider reviewing culture under the impact of theoretical movements.⁴⁷ Among Borges criticism in the United States was a large amount of academic criticism, whereas no French academic criticism of Borges's work was published within my period of study.

⁴⁵ See, for instance, McDonald, *Death of the Critic*, ix.

⁴⁶ See Pool, *Faint Praise: The Plight of Book Reviewing in America*; and McDonald, *Death of the Critic*, 80-88.

⁴⁷ See, among other studies, Peyre's "What is Wrong with American Book-Reviewing." For a full discussion of this matter, see my chapter on Borges in early criticism in the United States.

Within and across the publishing trade and criticism, mediators interacted by transmitting norms, sometimes through personal contact but mostly through texts. I will refer to the institutional level in the reception process when there is interaction within institutions, and I will speak of the national level where there is inter-institutional contact. The role of the national level in the reception of an author's work also becomes clear when comparing different national spaces, as I will discuss in the next section. Part of the interaction in the literary field has already been covered by Bourdieu's concept of distinction, although it has to be noted that Bourdieu is more focused on objective relations than on forms of interaction between mediators. Unlike Bourdieu, for whom distinction is closely linked to social class, I will use the term distinction to describe how mediators distinguish themselves consciously or unconsciously from others by means of selections and classifications. Interaction is, however, not limited to competitive relations. The concept of norms, in particular, mitigates the emphasis on how mediators set themselves apart from others by also emphasizing what they share. Rosengren's study of the ways in which journalistic critics influence the classifications of later critics, for instance, points to the fact that critics, as well as distinguishing themselves, reach some consensus concerning the values that should be attached to a particular text. In other words, mediators reproduce the norms of other mediators, and these forms of interaction should be taken into account when studying the reception of an author's work.

Bourdieu refers to the "orchestration of categories of perception"⁴⁸ that structures the behavior of agents, and to the existence of an "orchestrated habitus"⁴⁹ in which collectively held beliefs and values that are institutionally regulated by norms become manifest, but without studying this process in detail. In several case studies, Dutch scholars Kees van Rees and Susanne Janssen test this more concretely for the relations within and between publishing and criticism. They show how critics take the evaluative statements of other critics, or names of publishing houses, into account in order to reduce the risk that stems from a lack of an objective method for judging literary texts. They define this process as orchestration.⁵⁰ Van Rees and Janssen measure indicators of (positive) attention and evaluation, such as the number of reviews, percentage of mainly positive reviews, percentage of reviews exclusively

⁴⁸ Bourdieu, *Distinction*, 471.

⁴⁹ Bourdieu, *Field of Cultural Production*, 90.

⁵⁰ Van Rees, "How Reviewers Reach Consensus." This article was published earlier in a similar, Dutch version entitled "Consensusvorming in de literatuurkritiek." Janssen, *In het licht van de kritiek*.

devoted to an author, and the mean number of words per review. While these scholars hold a specific and partly quantifiable definition of orchestration as a form of reproduction of previous choices and critical judgments, I will use the concept of reproduction for those instances of consensus formation in which mediators attune specific selections and classifications or, more broadly, reproduce norms. I will also assume that there is a third form of interaction: when two or more mediators (or organizations) gradually get closer together in their viewpoints as part of a process of negotiation. Although this need not be conscious or intentional, mediators can be considered to be continuously varying between divergence (distinction), convergence (reproduction), and something in between (negotiation). I will thus study the extent to which the selections and classifications articulated by key mediators are governed by these processes of interaction, which can be found by paying particular attention to the differences and similarities in mediators' selections and classifications.

Some selections and classifications by key mediators can be seen as part of an individual project. They may be used by translators, editors, publishers, or critics to legitimize their set of personal norms on literature, and to distinguish themselves. I will compare selections and classifications applied to Borges's work, and the norms underlying them, to similar selections and classifications in other work by the same mediator. In cases where the evaluation of Borges's work is linked to a mediator's other poetical statements, I will therefore explore a broader corpus of texts by one mediator in order to grasp the norms underpinning certain selections and classifications. In these cases, I will focus on the internal dynamics of mediators rather than on the social, external dynamics.

The selections and classifications of key mediators can also be compared with those of other mediators. Classifications, in particular, belong to a collective vocabulary that is transmitted, and can be used to help reach a consensus about an author's work.⁵¹ They form part of a shared frame of reference or set of norms, which can be uncovered by looking for specific terms in digital versions of texts. Mediators can distinguish themselves with their selections and classifications, or adapt themselves by reproducing or negotiating the selections and classifications of others. A critic can, for instance, debate a particular classification or its definition. This transmission can also take place on the more general level of norms. For these cases, in which norms are transmitted collectively, I will relate texts on Borges by one key

⁵¹ In a similar way, Dorleijn and Van den Akker claim that jargon can be an important indicator for collective norms and conceptions. "Literatuuropvattingen als denkstijl," 98.

mediator to the large corpus of criticism on Borges. It is in this way, in particular, that I will deal with the role of more peripheral mediators. Certain selections and classifications in the book translations of Borges's work, for instance, were due to processes of interaction between mediators with different positions at a particular publishing house. Other forms of interaction may have taken place at the institutional level of the publishing trade in general. Critics who evaluated book translations of Borges's work may also have reproduced selections and classifications by mediators who were responsible for these same translations, which is a form of interaction between institutions and thus on the larger, national level.

In practice, I will therefore take two different but complementary approaches to studying the selection and classification of Borges's work: first, I will study how the Borges publications of a key mediator relate to his or her other work, in order to uncover the articulation of individual poetical preferences. Second, I will show how the Borges publications of a key mediator relate to those of others, in order to reveal the collective transmission of selections, classifications, and norms. This will enable me to show the existence and use of norms on various levels of reception. By taking the selections and classifications by key mediators in the reception of Borges's work as a starting point and comparing them with their own works and with the works of other mediators from the same or other organizations, institutions, or national fields, I will illustrate the different levels inherent to the reception. The comparison of selections and classifications within a mediator's work reveals how norms are internalized at the individual level. The differences and similarities in how various mediators "made" Borges's work shows the collective transmission at the institutional, national, and international levels. Other levels in the reception of Borges's work may also appear that are not excluded a priori: processes of transmission may be found, for instance, to take place within or between language areas or capital cities such as Paris and New York.

These comparisons between mediators, and the identification of processes of interaction on the basis of these comparisons, carry a clear risk of teleological interpretation: in some cases, the articulation of a norm may seem to be a reaction, but the relationship may in reality be very indirect or even coincidental. In fact, even though clear relations between selections and classifications by mediators may be observed, the direction of these relations is not always clear. In a study of the reception of one author within a particular time period, the interaction between mediators is not always visible in the material. In some cases, it can be assumed that

similar selections and classifications articulated by mediators are not causally related, or only related to each other on the level of more general norms.

Despite this, it may be relevant to look more closely at the particular cases where processes of interaction can be clearly observed. These processes may have been dependent on institutional hierarchies, such as the institutional positions of the mediators, but new hierarchies can also be discovered in the material. Mediators can become important in the reception of Borges's work when they distinguish themselves from others by means of their selections and classifications, and subsequently become the first in expressing certain evaluations of the author's work. More importantly, mediators can gain a dominant role in the reception when the selections and classifications they apply to Borges's work are taken up by other mediators, or their translation or review is reprinted or anthologized. In this discussion of "initial" key mediators and how they provoke processes of distinction, reproduction, or negotiation, the role of more peripheral mediators in the reception of Borges's work also comes to the surface. Peripheral mediators may reproduce the selections and classifications of key mediators and therefore contribute to consolidating certain interpretations of Borges's work.

In summary, there are many factors that should help to explain how mediators affected the early reception of Borges's work. These factors are all causally related, but the causation is not unilateral. An individual mediator, for instance, gains prestige by translating Borges's work, but also gives prestige to Borges by means of his own institutional position. However, one direction of causation usually has more weight and some factors are more likely to have an impact. Some factors will, for practical reasons, receive less attention in my thesis. Processes of transmission could have taken place, for instance, in relation to ideas that were not directly connected to Borges's work itself: the relative prestige attributed to Argentine literature in the specific national spaces and contexts may have influenced early mediators. This could also have been the case for the prestige of the genre of the short story within organizations, institutions, and national spaces. Other, more circumstantial factors regarding the mediators themselves, such as their proficiency in Spanish or their personal contacts with other mediators, may also have played a part.

4. The international literary field: The diffusion of translated literature

Up to now I have mainly focused on processes of transmission within and on a national level, but these processes also take place internationally. For my questions about the international diffusion of Borges's work, several more top-down approaches exist, such as that of Pascale Casanova's *The World Republic of Letters*. These models focus on the hierarchical relations between national fields and the position of translated literature within the hierarchically structured international literary field. They do not work with the more qualitative data in which I am interested for the reception of Borges's work, but offer a good starting point for reflecting on various criteria that determine the centrality of national spaces and, in particular, of national spaces in the reception of Borges's work.

Casanova's *The World Republic of Letters*, which was translated from French in 2004, has contributed to taking Bourdieusian sociology of literature above the level of the nation state to which it was previously confined. The world republic of letters is the arena of a permanent and violent struggle between central and peripheral nations, in which authors with unequal resources compete for legitimacy. In Casanova's work, literary struggles between national spaces, and also between individual mediators, are an important explanatory factor for the functioning of the literary field and the way reception processes come about.⁵² In this sense, she tries to go against "reception studies," which in her view neglect the hierarchical aspect of both the international field and its subspaces, as she claims in a case study of the introduction of Henrik Ibsen in France, England and Ireland:

As against the assumptions made by a dehistoricised and thematic comparativism, I will attempt to use comparison in order to disclose the structures acting in different fields; to see how the same work, producing different effects (by being interpreted in different or even divergent terms in the three countries studied here), makes possible a systematic investigation of the structures, i.e. the un-thought, the aesthetic and literary evidence in the three spaces, their resemblances as well as their irreducible differences. This will lead to showing how it is impossible to describe the import of a play from

⁵² Casanova, *World Republic of Letters*. For two of Casanova's case studies in which the struggle between mediators becomes evident, see Casanova, "Kafka en France"; and "Ibsen Battle."

one country to another, its acclimatization, recognitions, translations and productions, without taking into account, on the one hand, the structure of relations of force governing the entire space of world literature, and, on the other, the struggles specific to each national space, in which the imported text is deployed as a new weapon to permit the appearance of a new position.⁵³

The international hierarchies that Casanova describes are situated in a world literary field in which national literary spaces compete for literary capital—a specific form of Bourdieu’s cultural and symbolic capital.⁵⁴ Within this field, the position of each national space depends on its relative degree of autonomy, which is in turn related to its volume of literary capital. Casanova describes a center with spaces that have the most literary resources, and a periphery with relatively deprived literary spaces at early stages of development.⁵⁵ The oldest national literary spaces—in Casanova’s work, these are France, England, perhaps Germany, and, a more recent one, the United States—have collected more and more literary capital and have gradually constituted an autonomous literature relatively independent of political and national issues.⁵⁶ These national spaces have thus become, according to Casanova, depoliticized and partially denationalized as their languages have gained literary capital. Casanova also adds that these endowed spaces dominate certain other national spaces through language and culture. Countries such as Belgium, French-speaking and German-speaking Switzerland, and Austria started their process of autonomization later and therefore take, according to Casanova, a dominated position.⁵⁷

As has been remarked in Latin American academic criticism in particular, Casanova’s idea of the relationship between central and peripheral national spaces is related to her own conception of autonomous and modernist literature, the latter of which refers to the formal experimentalism of authors such as James Joyce and Samuel Beckett. In an edited volume published in the United States on Casanova’s

⁵³ Casanova, “Ibsen Battle,” 215.

⁵⁴ Casanova’s notion of literary capital seems to be a subform of Bourdieu’s cultural capital. On some occasions, however, her definition is closer to Bourdieu’s idea of symbolic capital. See Casanova, *World Republic of Letters*, 358, note 11.

⁵⁵ Casanova, *World Republic of Letters*, 108. In a later article, Casanova prefers to label the dichotomy as dominant and dominated. Casanova, “Literature as a World,” 80, note 14. In another article, Casanova adds what in her view is a more important distinction: between combative and pacified or non-engaged literatures. As I have reservations about Casanova’s competitive view of the literary field, I will hereafter not refer to this opposition. “Combative Literatures,” 133.

⁵⁶ Casanova, *World Republic of Letters*, 37.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 84.

book and Franco Moretti's proposal for a distant reading of the rise of the modern novel, Abril Trigo states that Casanova assumes that "real" or "authentic" literature is always modernist, idealist, and apolitical or even contrapolitical.⁵⁸ For Hugo Achugar, Casanova's notion of "universalism" is also an a priori assumption based on her aesthetic perspective. As Achugar underlines, her conception of the universal is determined, like that of every subject, by her own aesthetic (and also economic, cultural, and geographic) point of view.⁵⁹ Another polemical aspect of Casanova's framework that follows from this center-periphery division is the idea that central spaces have a unifying and consecrating power to unilaterally decide on the meanings of works, and redistribute these meanings across peripheral fields.⁶⁰ Her concept of the Greenwich meridian of literature, which measures literary time and determines the aesthetic present, exemplifies this thinking in terms of a synchronous, unilateral literary development at the center of the international literary field.⁶¹ As a study of the reception of Borges's work in France and the United States, this thesis will avoid following the lines of the diffusionist meridian for which Casanova is criticized. Without passing over the hierarchies in the international field, I will suggest in this section that the center-periphery relations do not exclusively determine the line along which reception processes of Borges's work take place.

For a study of the international reception of Borges's work, the position of translated literature within the international literary field and its national spaces merits close scrutiny. In an article titled "Consecration and Accumulation of Literary Capital: Translation as Unequal Exchange," Casanova applies her model of the unequal exchange in world literary space to translated literature. In a similar way to how scholars in translation studies, such as Lawrence Venuti, have done,⁶² Casanova claims that translation must be described as "one of the specific forms that the relationship of domination assumes in the international literary field."⁶³ It is again literary capital, the accumulated prestige of a language, that determines this hierarchical relationship. According to Casanova, the positions of the source and

⁵⁸ Trigo, "Algunas reflexiones acerca de la literatura mundial," 98. For criticism of Casanova's conception of autonomy, see also Beecroft, "World Literature," 88-91; Boschetti, "How Field Theory Can Contribute," 20; Franco, "Nunca son pesadas," 189-90; Frassinelli and Watson, "World Literature," 198; Perus, "La literatura latinoamericana ante *La República mundial de las Letras*," 158; Sánchez Prado, "Hijos de Metapa," 26-27; and Vidal, "Derechos humanos," 236-39.

⁵⁹ Achugar, "Apuntes sobre la 'literatura mundial,'" 202.

⁶⁰ For this criticism, see Frassinelli and Watson, "World Literature," 199-200.

⁶¹ Casanova, "Literature as a World," 75. For criticism of this aspect, see Klinger, "World Literature Beyond Hegemony," 262-69; and Frassinelli and Watson, "World Literature," 197.

⁶² Venuti, *Scandals of Translation*; and *Translator's Invisibility*.

⁶³ Casanova, "Translation as Unequal Exchange," 288.

target languages, as well as those of the author and translator, must be taken into account when studying translation as an unequal exchange. In the case of a dominated (peripheral) language that is translated into a dominating (central) language, translation functions as a form of literary consecration.⁶⁴

Casanova's view on central-peripheral relations for translated literature does not offer a concrete model for determining the relative positions of source and target languages and literatures. Casanova's definition of centrality in terms of literary capital is not tested empirically, which is one of the reasons why it is prone to controversy. In fact, Casanova's description of certain spaces as being peripheral or central in *The World Republic of Letters* has received much criticism. Christopher Prendergast, for instance, voices the much-heard critique that Casanova's story is Paris- or French-centered and does not properly account for the roles of London and New York after the 1960s. For Latin America, Prendergast rightly asserts that Casanova pays most attention to those writers who lived in Europe at some point: her relative neglect of Borges, who unlike other Latin American writers was not fascinated by Paris, is a case in point.⁶⁵ Although Casanova slightly modifies her focus on the role of Paris and France in a later article, and speaks of the centrality of Europe instead,⁶⁶ the centrality of these spaces in her work is still closely linked to her own normative aesthetic conceptions of autonomy and literary modernism. It is therefore desirable to follow studies that use other, more empirical or quantitative models to define centrality, especially with regard to the relationship between the national fields of Argentina, France, and the United States. I will discuss a number of studies that determine hierarchical relations in terms of translation flows (by Johan Heilbron and Gisèle Sapiro) and the degree of international orientation in newspaper coverage (by Susanne Janssen).

In his 1999 article "Towards a Sociology of Translation: Book Translations as a Cultural World-System," Johan Heilbron studies international flows of translated books in order to detect hierarchies between linguistic groups and nations. He describes an international translation system that is unevenly distributed and in which the central, semi-peripheral, and peripheral positions of language groups and nations change over time. According to Heilbron's definition of centrality, a language

⁶⁴ Ibid., 290.

⁶⁵ Prendergast, "World Republic of Letters," 8-9. See also Sánchez Prado, "Hijos de Metapa," 30-35.

⁶⁶ Casanova, "Literature as a World," 83. In another article, Casanova refers to London, Paris, New York, and Frankfurt as central capitals. "Literary Greenwich Meridian," 9.

is more central in the translation system when it has a larger share in the total number of translated books *from* its language and when it has a lower share of translated books *into* its language worldwide. The latter part of this definition is also used in a joint article with Gisèle Sapiro.⁶⁷ Both scholars see the number of primary speakers or the size of the national book production as weaker indicators for explaining power relations between languages and nations.

Heilbron uses data from around 1980 to determine the proportions of book translations from certain languages: these percentages show that English can be seen as a language with a hyper-central role, and French, German, and Russian as languages with a central, though significantly smaller, role. Six other languages turn out to be semi-peripheral: Spanish, Italian, Danish, Swedish, Polish, and Czech.⁶⁸ While these data distinguish between language areas and not between countries, on the level of importation Heilbron does describe the structure of the postwar world system of translation for importing countries:

In the UK and the US less than 5 percent of all published books are translations, a figure that has hardly changed since 1945. In France and Germany, the proportion of translations is consistently higher, fluctuating between 10 percent and 12 percent of national book production during the postwar period. In Italy and Spain the relative weight of translation is more important, at approximately 12-20 percent.⁶⁹

In another study by Sapiro, on the position of French literature in the world system of translations, she demonstrates that French hegemony declined in the second half of the twentieth century, although French remained the second most central language after English.⁷⁰ And in another article she observes that, between the 1960s and 1970s, the center of the English-speaking space slowly shifted from London to New York.⁷¹ Heilbron and Sapiro's results would thus provisionally indicate that, in the reception of Borges's work, the source language Spanish was less central than English and French; and according to the second criterion of

⁶⁷ Heilbron, "Book Translations as a Cultural World-System"; and Heilbron and Sapiro, "Outline for a Sociology of Translation," 96.

⁶⁸ Heilbron, "Book Translations as a Cultural World-System," 434.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 439.

⁷⁰ Sapiro, "French Literature in the World System of Translation," 303-7.

⁷¹ Sapiro, "Mondialisation et diversité culturelle," 277.

importation, France was less central than the United Kingdom and the United States. As translations usually flow from the center to the periphery, and as central languages usually function as intermediaries between peripheral or semi-peripheral language groups,⁷² this would emphasize the importance of the English and, to a lesser extent, the French book translations in the international reception of Borges's work.

In an article on differences in the coverage of foreign literature in French, US, German, and Dutch elite newspapers between 1955 and 2005, Susanne Janssen uses a different criterion for determining centrality. She links the degree of international orientation in literary journalism of the four countries to the centrality of their literary production, which she considers an inverse relation. In this way, centrality is (somewhat reductively) seen as quantitatively measurable by means of a single criterion of international orientation. The results of Janssen's study reveal a clear internationalization of literary coverage in French newspapers between 1955 and 2005, from around 20% to almost 50% of the total coverage, which she relates to the declining dominance of French literature in this period. During this same period, and still according to Janssen, *The New York Times* continued to devote around one quarter of its coverage to foreign literature. The coverage of foreign literature in German and Dutch newspapers also remained fairly constant throughout the research period: around half of the total coverage. The position of Argentine literature in the four countries was marginal: the mean percentage of covered items from Argentina was less than 0.1 percent in 1955 in all four countries, and grew to 0.4 percent in 1975, after which it remained fairly stable through to 1995 and 2005.⁷³

The previously discussed empirical models for determining centrality are a useful substitute for Casanova's more metaphorical conceptualization of literary capital. Although they dedicate little attention to Latin America, or Argentina in particular, they show that, in very broad terms, the relationship between Argentina on the one hand, and France and the United States on the other, can be assumed to have been unequal. However, in the works of Heilbron, Sapiro, and Janssen, hierarchical relations between national spaces are designated on the basis of one or two criteria for centrality that are measured quantitatively. It remains doubtful whether the centrality of certain national fields or languages in the world literary field can be measured only by translation flows or newspaper coverage. Conversely,

⁷² Heilbron, "Book Translations as a Cultural World-System," 435.

⁷³ Janssen, "Foreign Literatures in National Media," 364-67.

hierarchical relationships between the national fields in this study can also be found in international differences in the translation history and critical reception of Borges's work. Rather than to the centrality of certain literatures in general, the history of the reception of Borges's work will point to the dominant role of specific national fields in this reception process.

At a quantitative level, indicators of the dominant role of certain national spaces could be found by comparing the years of publication of a number of early translations of Borges's work.⁷⁴ Hierarchies are then no longer exclusively based on the centrality of certain national spaces in terms of literary capital, but also in terms of temporalities in the international reception process. In the tables below, the years of publication of six book translations of Borges's work are given, as well as of their Argentine originals. In addition to Argentina, France and the United States, three other countries that were early in translating Borges's work in book form—Italy, Germany, and the United Kingdom—are also included. The publication data were compiled with the help of Horacio Becco's *Jorge Luis Borges: Bibliografía total, 1923-1973* and the online catalogues of the national libraries of the respective countries.

<i>Ficciones</i>	<i>Fictions</i>	<i>La biblioteca di Babele</i>	<i>Labyrinthe</i>	<i>Ficciones</i>	<i>Ficciones</i>
1944	1951	1955	1959	1962	1962
Argentina	France	Italy	Germany	United States	United Kingdom

<i>El Aleph (complete edition)</i>	<i>L'Aleph</i>	<i>Labyrinthe</i>	<i>L'Aleph</i>	<i>The Aleph and Other Stories, 1933-1969</i>	<i>The Aleph and Other Stories, 1933-1969</i>
1949	1959	1959	1967	1970	1971
Argentina	Italy	Germany	France	United States	United Kingdom

<i>El Aleph (partial anthology)</i> ⁷⁵	<i>Labyrinthes</i>	<i>Labyrinths</i>	<i>Der Zahir und andere Erzählungen</i>	<i>Labyrinths</i>
[1949]	1953	1962	1964	1970
[Argentina]	France	United States	Germany	United Kingdom

<i>Otras inquisiciones, 1937-1952</i>	<i>Enquêtes, 1937-1952</i>	<i>Altre inquisizioni</i>	<i>Other Inquisitions, 1937-1952</i>	<i>Das Eine und die Vielen</i>	<i>Other Inquisitions, 1937-1952</i>
1952	1957	1963	1964	1966	1973
Argentina	France	Italy	United States	Germany	United Kingdom

⁷⁴ For a similar study on the introduction of Spanish American Boom literature in the United States, England, Germany, Italy, and Holland, see Steenmeijer, "How the West Was Won."

⁷⁵ The actual publishing history of *El Aleph* is more complex than my distinction between a partial anthology and a complete edition suggests, as the selections of texts for the anthologies differed in each country. This distinction, however, serves here to give a general outline.

<i>El hacedor</i>	<i>L'artefice</i>	<i>Borges und ich</i>	<i>Dreamtigers</i>	<i>L'auteur et autres textes</i> ⁷⁶	<i>Dreamtigers</i>
1960	1963	1963	1964	1965	1973
Argentina	Italy	Germany	United States	France	United Kingdom

<i>Antología personal</i>	<i>Antologia personale</i>	<i>A Personal Anthology</i>	<i>A Personal Anthology</i>
1961	1962	1967	1968
Argentina	Italy	United States	United Kingdom

The chronological order of the countries that published these six book translations shows that, in general terms, France was the first to translate Borges's books, followed by Italy, Germany, the United States, and finally the United Kingdom. This is particularly the case for the various translations of *Ficciones* (and also for *Otras inquisiciones*): the impact of the French translation *Fictions* in 1951 on the Italian translation in 1955 and the German version in 1959 has already been shown in reception studies for these countries.⁷⁷ As I will show in my chapter on early translations and publications in the United States, the relationship between the French translation and the English-language translation, in 1962, was less univocal. Other countries excluded from these tables, such as Sweden, Norway, and the Netherlands, followed quickly after 1962.⁷⁸ The tables for other book translations, however, tell different stories. Although a number of national spaces published a partial anthology of *El Aleph*, the complete edition of this volume was published first in Italy and Germany, later in France, and then in the United States and the United Kingdom. For *El hacedor*, Italy, Germany, and the United States were first, followed by France and the United Kingdom. The *Antología personal* appeared in Italy, the United States, and the United Kingdom, but was not published as a separate volume in France and Germany. It is therefore clear that national spaces such as Italy and Germany reproduced certain choices made in France, but also took an independent course in the translation and publication process of Borges's work. Something similar could be said for the United States. As the United Kingdom followed the United States in all the translations included in the tables, it is likely that the United States had a dominant role within the English-language area. In fact, for several other book translations not included in the tables, there is a clear division between France, Germany, and Italy on the one hand, and the United States and the United Kingdom

⁷⁶ This book translation included texts from the *Antología personal*, which was not published separately in France.

⁷⁷ Santos Unamuno, "Borges en Italia: Perfil de una recepción"; and Broyles, *German Response to Latin American Literature*, 114.

⁷⁸ See Becco, *Jorge Luis Borges: Bibliografía total, 1923-1973*, 93-104.

on the other. A number of book translations—*Historia de la eternidad*, *Discusión*, and *Manual de zoología fantástica*—were only published in these first three national spaces and not (or only partially) in the English-speaking area. In contrast, *El libro de los seres imaginarios*, an extended version of *Manual de zoología fantástica*, appeared in the United States and the United Kingdom in 1969 and 1970 respectively, and only more than a decade later in the other three importing countries. This makes the idea of the existence of at least two centers (France and the United States) in the reception of Borges's work more probable.

These temporal hierarchies between the different national spaces in the translation of Borges's work, together with the center-periphery relations for these spaces in general, account for my choice of studying the reception of Borges's work in France and the United States. Similar to the risk of selecting key mediators beforehand, the selection of two literary spaces limits my findings. The ideal of an inductive approach in which the key roles of certain mediators and literary spaces are allowed to emerge completely from the material is, however, beyond the scope of any research project. The history of the six translations listed in the table above justifies the selection of France, Italy, the United States, and perhaps also Germany as key spaces in the reception of Borges's work, and I have limited this selection to France and the United States because of their possible central role in the French- and English-speaking areas. Of additional interest is that these spaces centralized the literary translation of Borges's books in the French- and English-language areas. Paradoxically, while early book translations may have reinforced the key role of a particular literary field, a low number (or a late year of publication) of Borges translations could prove the centrality of certain spaces, at least when Heilbron and Sapiro's empirical models are applied to Borges's translation history. As well as the temporal hierarchies, another reason for selecting France and the United States is their dominant position within the international field, as becomes clear in studies by Heilbron, Sapiro, and Janssen.

Parting from these ideas about the different hierarchies between the national spaces involved in the reception of Borges's work, several more qualitative research questions can be raised. While hierarchies between Argentina, France, and the United States, or between the other mentioned countries, can be assumed beforehand by using studies on centrality in translation flows and newspaper coverage, and by studying temporal hierarchies between translation histories, the analysis of actual reception materials may uncover other lines. One could question whether the

temporal line detailed above is also the line according to which certain interpretations of Borges's work were (re)distributed. To what extent was France central in spreading its selections and classifications to the United States, and to what extent did the United States take an independent course? Did literary mediators in the United States refer to French book translations as an indicator of prestige? What was the role of the reception of Borges's work in Argentina, and perhaps of Borges himself in the reception in France and the United States? By focusing in particular on the differences and similarities between the selections and classifications that mediators of Borges's work articulated, possible dependencies or influences can be perceived. It is possible, for instance, that an international consensus on parts of the interpretation of Borges's work has been reached by processes of negotiation or reproduction. These forms of interaction thus mitigate the competitive model on the international level. On the other hand, Borges's work could also have been "made" in processes of competition in which mediators tried to distinguish themselves internationally. In cases where processes of interaction between the countries are less evident, the differences and similarities are also important for understanding structural differences or similarities between France and the United States, which were also "made" by the mediators who are the topic of this thesis.

5. An account of the selected material and time period

Reception material was collected without genre restrictions for the given period in each country. For the study of translations and publications of Borges's work, I will use all magazine, anthology, and book translations as a first exploration of the temporal factors and the names of the translators involved. The analysis of the selections and classifications by key publishers, editors, and translators will be based on the paratexts of the book translations, according to Gérard Genette's definition situated around the actual text, either within the same volume or outside of it.⁷⁹ As for the texts published in the same volume, i.e. the peritexts, I will study titles, book covers, blurbs, prologues, and introductions to the book translations. Regarding the elements located outside the book, such as private communications and messages from the media, i.e. the epitexts, the focus will be placed on the internal

⁷⁹ Genette, *Paratexts*, 4-5.

correspondence (and other files) on Borges, usually located at the publishing houses that published his work, and on advertisements of the book translations in publishers' catalogues. If a key mediator combined his or her role as translator, editor, or publisher with a role as critic, this criticism will also be examined. Matters of translation will be taken into account, especially by studying the external norms that translators articulated in programmatic texts, interviews, and correspondence.

As for literary criticism, all different forms of criticism (journalistic, essayistic, and academic criticism, literary theory and literary histories) on Borges were included in the initial corpus. Press files present at publishing houses proved to be a useful starting point for collecting this criticism and, especially for the United States, full-text databases of criticism were available within my period of study, such as the ProQuest database of national newspapers in the United States. Criticism of Borges's work not only included articles (reviews and book sections), but in some cases also interviews, books, PhD theses, and some radio and television items. As well as texts exclusively devoted to Borges, mediators also briefly referred to Borges in texts on other authors. Where possible, for instance by means of full-text databases, I included these references or "mentions" in the corpus. As there were hardly any interviews or books written by key mediators in my period of study, and as academic criticism was almost non-existent in my period of study in France, emphasis will mainly be placed on journalistic and essayistic articles, and mentions by key mediators of Borges's work. For the analysis of criticism written by these key mediators, the large amount of academic criticism in the United States will be excluded, partly because it is probable that journalistic critics of Borges's work had a bigger impact than their academic counterparts. I will discuss this choice further in my chapter on early criticism of Borges's work in the United States.

For each key mediator, other sources such as (auto)biographical documents, correspondence, and related studies will be used when available. General information about the publications of key mediators (types of publication, frequency, review medium, time period, etc.) will be used to gain insight into their institutional positions and their positions in the reception of Borges's work. For France, most biographical and bibliographical information is found in paper sources; for the United States, I will also use information from Gale's Literature Resource Center. Alphabetical works cited lists included at the end of each of the two chapters on the translation and publication, and critical reception of Borges's work, thus reflect the variety of primary and secondary sources used to analyze the reception in France

and the United States. The chronological bibliographies included at the end of this study represent a complete list of reception documents—that is, of individual translations, book translations, and criticism of Borges’s work in France and the United States. Unless otherwise stated, I will refer to the first editions of the translations and critical texts I examine.

Some additional publications, such as criticism about other authors, are taken into account when I analyze the individual poetics of the key mediators. Contrary to my analysis of the primary sources (translations and criticism), which is limited to the early phase of the reception, my use of these secondary sources will not be restricted to the early years. This will enable me to explore a broader corpus of texts by one mediator in order to grasp the (continuity of) norms underlying certain selections and classifications. Texts by key mediators that were published outside the two national fields will, where relevant, be included. The selections and classifications in these texts will also be related to those of the larger corpus of paratexts and criticism on Borges, in order for me to study the collective transmission of norms.

The reception material, and my analysis thereof, will be limited to the early phase of Borges’s work: between 1923 and 1964 for France, and between 1934 and 1968 for the United States. Although the exact years of this first phase are provisional and can never be pinpointed exactly—as there is never an exact moment of first entrance or literary recognition, and literary “facts” could change as more (digital) material becomes available—I will use these periods because reception material from the time can feasibly be collected and studied. The initial years are when individual translations of Borges’s work first appeared in the importing countries. In France, the first translation was a 1923 bilingual version of a poem published in the avant-garde magazine *Manomètre*; in the United States, bilingual versions of two poems in the 1934 anthology *The Modernist Trend in Spanish American Poetry* were the first to appear.⁸⁰ While my study will focus on the period from these first two appearances in French and English onward, most attention will be paid to the period in which Borges was translated in book form: from 1951 in France and from 1962 in the United States.

The years 1964 and 1968 will be chosen to mark the end of the early phase of Borges’s work in the French and US literary fields, respectively. Although the

⁸⁰ Borges, “Atardecer: Le soir tombe”; and Borges, “Calle desconocida: An Unknown Street. La guitarra: The Guitar.”

establishment of this period has a sense of arbitrariness, there are four reasons to see these moments as breaking points in the reception of Borges's work. First of all, for France, the years until 1964 comprise the period in which book translations were almost exclusively issued by Gallimard. Between 1951 and 1958, four book translations of Borges's work were issued—*Fictions* (1951), *Labyrinthes* (1953), *Enquêtes, 1937-1952* (1957), and *Histoire de l'infamie. Histoire de l'éternité* (1958)—and only the last was published by Éditions du Rocher.⁸¹ After 1964, most of Borges's work was still published by Gallimard, but other translations were acquired by Julliard, Denoël, Éditions Christian Bourgois, Éditions du Seuil, Fata Morgana, and La Différence in the 1960s and 1970s, thus ending the almost exclusive relationship in France between Borges and Gallimard. For the United States, the early phase until 1968 is the period in which book translations of Borges's work appeared on a more or less individual scale—that is, on the initiative of translators, editors, and publishers, who differed for every book and did not plan to translate a complete *œuvre*. The five book translations in question are *Labyrinthes* (1962) at New Directions, *Dreamtigers* (1964) and *Other Inquisitions, 1937-1952* (1964) at the University of Texas Press, and *Ficciones* (1962) and *A Personal Anthology* (1967) at Grove Press.⁸² From 1969 onwards, many translations became available through the joint translation venture of Borges and his collaborator-translator Norman Thomas di Giovanni, and many books were issued under contract with the commercial publishing house E. P. Dutton. In this sense, and despite differences in the translation and publication process, the publishing history in the United States moved towards “centralization”: the direct opposite of what happened in France.

Second, in 1964, Borges's work received much critical attention when a special issue of the French literary magazine *L'Herne* was dedicated to Borges.⁸³ This was the first book-length publication exclusively devoted to Borges, and featured many new French translations of individual texts by Borges and studies of his work by French, Argentine, US, German, and other critics. Its publication thus marked the moment at which Borges became more widely known in France. In 1968, his work similarly became known to a wider public in the United States when it was published in the high-circulation weekly *The New Yorker* as part of a “first reading” contract, with new

⁸¹ Borges, *Fictions; Labyrinthes; Enquêtes, 1937-1952; and Histoire de l'infamie. Histoire de l'éternité*.

⁸² Borges, *Labyrinthes; Ficciones; Dreamtigers; Other Inquisitions; and A Personal Anthology*.

⁸³ Roux and de Milleret, eds., “Jorge Luis Borges,” special issue, *L'Herne* 4 (March, 1964).

translations by di Giovanni.⁸⁴ The contract meant that *The New Yorker* was the first to receive all translations of Borges's texts and subsequently the first to decide on publishing them. Borges, Vladimir Nabokov and Isaac Bashevis Singer were the first authors to appear in translation in *The New Yorker*. Many translations followed and, in 1970, Borges's first extensive autobiographical piece was published in the same magazine.

A third reason for choosing 1964 and 1968 as end points for the early reception phase is that the first book-length publications about Borges's work started to appear around these years. In France, the first book publications about Borges, after the *L'Herne* issue, were interview books, first in 1967 by Georges Charbonnier and Jean de Milleret. In the following years, other genres such as (unpublished) PhD theses, book studies, and even a documentary film started to appear.⁸⁵ In the United States, Ana María Barrenechea's book based on her PhD thesis, *Borges the Labyrinth Maker*, had already been published in 1965. Two other published theses followed in 1968 and, the year after, Richard Burgin's interview book *Conversations with Jorge Luis Borges* and two other published theses initiated a reception phase in which books on Borges were published almost every year.⁸⁶

Lastly, it can be inferred that, in the 1960s, Borges's work became a point of reference for literary critics. To be precise, instead of his work being compared with that of other writers, Borges became a point of comparison, as is evidenced by the use of the adjectives "borgesien(ne)," "borgien," "borgesian," and "borgian." In France, with the help of a word search in digital versions of all reception documents, the words "borgesien(ne)" and "borgien" are mainly found from the start of the 1960s onwards, and repeatedly in the 1964 *L'Herne* issue. This indicates that his work had by then entered the repertoire of many critics.⁸⁷ Some uses of these adjectives can be

⁸⁴ The first translation was entitled "The Other Death" and was published on November 2, 1968.

⁸⁵ Borges, *Entretiens avec Jorge Luis Borges*, interviews by Charbonnier; Borges, *Entretiens avec Jorge Luis Borges*, interviews by de Milleret; Ibarra, *Borges et Borges*, interviews by *L'Herne*; Thérien, "Essai sur l'éternité et de temps dans l'œuvre de Jorge Luis Borges"; Berveiller, "Le cosmopolitisme de Jorge Luis Borges"; Rodríguez Monegal, *Borges par lui-même*; Sucre, *Jorge-Luis Borges*; and Camp and Berzosa, *Borgès*, vol. 1 & 2, *Un passé qui ne menace pas. Les journées et les nuits*.

⁸⁶ Barrenechea, *Borges the Labyrinth Maker*; Gertel, *Borges y su retorno a la poesía*; Murillo, *Cyclical Night: Irony in James Joyce and Jorge Luis Borges*; Borges, *Conversations with Jorge Luis Borges*, interviews by Burgin; Christ, *Narrow Act: Borges' Art of Allusion*; and Wheelock, *Mythmaker: A Study of Motif and Symbol in the Short Stories of Jorge Luis Borges*.

⁸⁷ "Le dictionnaire des responsables: Jorge Luis Borges," *Planète*, no. 8 (1963); Doreste, "Analyse de Borges," 233; Genette, "La littérature selon Borges," 327; Ibarra, "Borges et Borges"; Lefebvre, "Qui a écrit Borges," 224; Maurois, "Un livre par mois: *Labyrinthes* de J.-L. Borges," 1; Ocampo, "Vision de Jorge Luis Borges," 22; Réda, "Commentaire de *L'immortel* de Jorge-Luis Borges," 438; Réda, "Borges

found in the 1950s as well.⁸⁸ In a similar search in the United States, "borgesian" and "borgian" appear for the first time in 1961, and become frequent in 1967 and 1968.⁸⁹ This not only indicates that Borges had become known in both countries, but also that a certain idea of his work had already been established by the start and end of the 1960s, respectively, in France and the United States.

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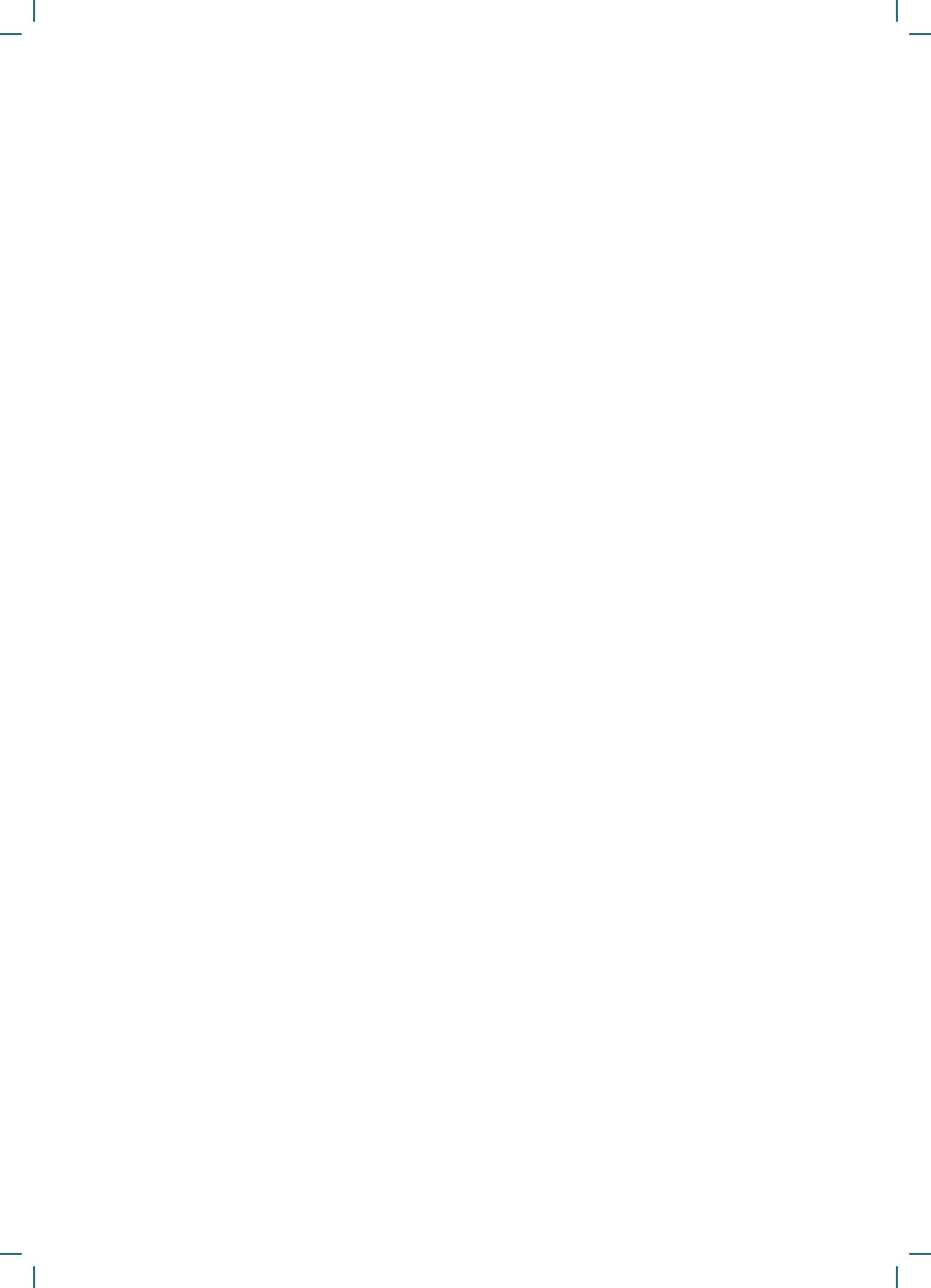
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PART II: BORGES IN FRANCE (1923-1964)



Chapter 1. Early translations and publications of Borges's work in France

The early translation and publication process of Borges's work in France owes much to the French author, sociologist, and literary critic Roger Caillois, as Borges himself has acknowledged on various occasions. In a 1964 interview published in the special Borges issue of *L'Herne*, Borges states:

Je crois que je dois beaucoup à quelqu'un qui n'est pas lié d'une grande amitié avec moi, à Roger Caillois. Je crois que si Caillois, avec lequel j'étais brouillé à ce moment-là—je dis ceci en l'honneur de Caillois—n'avait pas songé à me traduire en français, on n'aurait jamais songé à me traduire en suédois, en italien, etc.¹

While Borges refers in this fragment to his difficult relationship with Caillois, something to which I will return further on in this chapter, he also points to Caillois's role, and the role of France in general, in the international reception of his work. This chapter discusses how mediators made Borges's work available in France until 1964. I will pay much attention to Caillois, who, as a translator and a critic, had a decisive but certainly not exclusive hand in selecting and classifying Borges's work for translations and publications in book form for Gallimard and Éditions du Rocher. I will also look at the selections and classifications of Borges's work by other key mediators, and how these are related to their norms and positions in the translation and publication process. In the second chapter, I will turn to key mediators in French literary criticism. First, though, I will look at the individual translations that were published in France before Borges's work became available in book form, and at how Caillois came into contact with Borges's work.

Caillois's role as a mediator did not inaugurate the reception of Borges's work in France. Already, in the 1920s, two poems by Borges had been published in the Lyon-based avant-garde magazine *Manomètre*. This little magazine, founded by Émile Malespine, published articles and poems in several languages, and in its first issue included a programmatic text for *ultraist* poetry in Spanish. The first poem by

¹ Borges, "Entretien avec Napoléon Murat," interview by Murat, 379. See also Borges, *Entretiens avec Jorge Luis Borges*, by de Milleret, 55.

Borges to appear in France, "Sábado," was published in Spanish in the second, 1922 issue of *Manomètre*; the second poem, "Atardecer: Le soir tombe," was published in Spanish and in a translation by Malespine a year later.² First discovered and studied by Donald Shaw, these publications probably came about thanks to Malespine's international contacts, including Tristan Tzara, Hans Arp, Vicente Huidobro, and Guillermo de Torre.³ Even before these publications, Borges had written a text directly in French for *Dadaglobe*, an international Dadaist anthology that was never put into print.⁴ Although this text, together with a collective letter addressed to Tzara and a piece of automatic writing transcribed by Borges, probably all written around the start of 1921, was, for unknown reasons, never published, it does show that Borges was involved in an international network of avant-gardists while living in Spain and later in Argentina. In 1923, Georges Pillement translated a poem from *Fervor de Buenos Aires* for his review of this volume in *Revue de l'Amérique latine*.⁵

In the 1930s, several of Borges's prose texts were published in *La revue argentine*, a magazine founded and directed by the Argentine Octavio González Roura (pseudonym Edmond de Narval) to make Argentine history, culture, and literature known in France. Borges gained little visibility through this magazine.⁶ His work did find a larger audience in 1939 when "El acercamiento a Almotásim" was translated by Néstor Ibarra for the literary magazine *Mesures*.⁷ *Mesures* was put together by Henry Church, Henri Michaux, Giuseppe Ungaretti, Bernard Groethuysen, and Jean Paulhan, among others. Contentwise, the magazine was close to *Commerce* (under the direction of Paul Valéry, Léon-Paul Fargue, and Valéry Larbaud) and to Paulhan's *La nouvelle revue française*.⁸ As Alban Cerisier has indicated in a study of *La nouvelle revue française* that also deals with *Mesures*, Borges's text was offered to Paulhan thanks to the mediation of Victoria Ocampo and Henri Michaux.⁹

² Borges, "Sábado" and "Atardecer: Le soir tombe."

³ Shaw, "Manomètre (1922-28) and Borges's First Publications in France." For the magazine and its network, see Bonnike, "Manomètre et l'avant-garde internationale à Lyon, 1922-1928."

⁴ See Borges, *Ceuvres complètes*, vol. 1, 842-43, 1712-13.

⁵ Borges, "Les livres: Hispano-américains."

⁶ Borges, "Paul Groussac"; "La prison de l'enfant, par Gloria Alcorta"; "Lettres étrangères: H.-G. Wells et les paraboles"; and "Luis Greve, muerto."

⁷ Borgès [sic], "L'approche du caché."

⁸ See Paulhan, "Henry Church et la revue *Mesures*"; and Levie, "Het tijdschrift *Mesures*, een literair netwerk van de jaren dertig."

⁹ Cerisier, *Une histoire de "La Nrf"*, 559. See also Borges, *Ceuvres complètes*, vol. 1, lxxii.

Caillois's role in the translation of Borges's work started not long afterwards, during his stay in Argentina between 1939 and 1945. In the 1930s, Caillois had graduated from the prestigious *École Normale Supérieure*, had been briefly linked to the surrealists, and, in 1938, had founded the *Collège de Sociologie* together with Georges Bataille and Michel Leiris. Caillois was then invited by Victoria Ocampo to give a lecture series in Buenos Aires, and was forced to extend his visit because of the



Figure 2: Roger Caillois in Córdoba, Argentina, 1940

outbreak of the Second World War. During his prolonged stay, Caillois lived in Ocampo's house in Buenos Aires, became her lover, contributed to her literary magazine *Sur*, and, under the wings of *Sur*, founded *Lettres françaises*, a French-language exile magazine.¹⁰ This antifascist magazine, which would publish two of Borges's stories in 1944, translated by Ibarra,¹¹ aimed to keep francophone readers up to date on French intellectual life and to inform them about certain Latin American writers. In a politically motivated move in favor of *la France libre*, the Free French Forces headed by Charles de Gaulle, Caillois also founded the *Institut Français d'Études Supérieures* of Buenos Aires, together with Robert Weibel-Richard, in 1942. At this French institute for higher education, which was partially supported by the *Comité de la France libre*, Caillois taught sociology and history of religion. Several Frenchmen who would translate or publish about Borges's work, such as Néstor Ibarra, Paul Bénichou, and René Marill Albérès, also taught at the institute.¹²

It was in Buenos Aires that Caillois met Borges: an encounter that would lead to a *desencuentro* rather than a friendship, as Jean-Pierre Bernès and Borges himself have described.¹³ Both Borges and Caillois contributed to *Sur*, and became embroiled in a struggle for symbolic capital that was to erupt in a public polemic in 1942 on the

¹⁰ See Ayerza de Castilho and Felgine, *Victoria Ocampo*, 194.

¹¹ Borges, "Assyriennes: La loterie à Babylone. La bibliothèque de Babel."

¹² Ayerza de Castilho and Felgine, *Victoria Ocampo*, 227-31.

¹³ Bernès, "Jorge Luis Borges et Roger Caillois."

occasion of the publication of Caillois's *Le roman policier*.¹⁴ A year earlier, Caillois had sharply criticized, in private letters, the *Antología de la literatura fantástica*, which was edited by Borges, Adolfo Bioy Casares, and Silvina Ocampo.¹⁵ This turbulent relationship between the two men in Buenos Aires was reflected in relations between Caillois and Victoria Ocampo on the one hand, and the "trio infernal" of Borges, Bioy Casares, and Silvina Ocampo on the other. This has been widely studied by Borges scholars.¹⁶ Despite the *desencuentro* between Caillois and Borges, and the somewhat disruptive role Borges played in his own reception in France, Caillois would come to play a dominant role in the French reception of Borges's work.

On his return to France in 1945, Caillois undertook various translation and publication initiatives for Latin American literature in general and for Borges's work in particular. During the war, Gaston Gallimard had already shown an interest in Caillois's activities in Argentina. Directly after his return, Caillois entered Gallimard's *comité de lecture* and agreed to create a collection of contemporary Latin American novels, which would become *La Croix du Sud*.¹⁷ In March of the following year, the contract for the French translation of *Ficciones* within this book collection was signed, although the publication itself was postponed until 1951, probably because of the difficult conditions for selling foreign books in France at that time, as can be deduced from the correspondence of the publishing house.¹⁸ Around the same time, Caillois started working for Unesco, where he founded the interdisciplinary journal *Diogenes* and set up a program for translations into French and English: the *Collection d'œuvres représentatives*. Within this program, he also created the *Série ibéro-américaine*, which published Latin American classics such as *Martín Fierro* by José Hernández (translated by Paul Verdevoye, translator of Borges's *Ficciones* into *Fictions*) in 1955, and *Facundo* by Domingo Faustino Sarmiento in 1964. The *Série ibéro-américaine* also published more contemporary fiction, such as the *Anthologie de*

¹⁴ Borges, *Œuvres complètes*, vol. 1, 1539-63. See, among other studies, Capdevila, "Una polémica olvidada."

¹⁵ Caillois to Ocampo, April 7, 1941, in *Correspondance Roger Caillois, Victoria Ocampo (1939-1978)*, 114-15.

¹⁶ Felgine, *Roger Caillois: Biographie*, 199; Felgine, "Jorge Luis Borges, Victoria Ocampo et Roger Caillois"; Bernès, "Jorge Luis Borges et Roger Caillois"; Borges, *Œuvres complètes*, vol. 1, 1539-63; Louis, "Caillois-Borges ou qu'est-ce qui s'est passé?"; and Louis, *Borges ante el fascismo*, 111-55.

¹⁷ Felgine, *Roger Caillois: Biographie*, 250; and Fell, "La Croix du Sud," 176.

¹⁸ Dionys Mascolo (head of the foreign service, Gallimard) to Borges, January 24, 1949; and Mascolo to Borges, April 13, 1951, Gallimard Archives.

la poésie ibéro-américaine, edited by Federico de Onís in 1956, which included translations of Borges's poetry.¹⁹

Around this time, Caillois also helped publish individual translations of Borges's work in literary magazines. In fact, between the publication of "La lotería en Babilonia" and "La biblioteca de Babel" in his magazine *Lettres françaises* in 1944 and the first book translation of Borges's work in France in 1951, all French translations were published thanks to Caillois's mediation. Borges's stories were issued in *Confluences*, the French magazine of Caillois's friend René Tavernier that he co-edited; in *La France libre*, the exile magazine edited by Raymond Aron in London, temporarily edited by Caillois between 1945 and 1946²⁰; in *La Licorne*, the Montevidean literary magazine of his close friend Susana Soca that he co-directed in Paris between 1947 and 1948; and in *Les cahiers de la Pléiade*, the work of his friend Paulhan. Most of these translations were made by the first translators of Borges's *Fictions*—Ibarra and Verdevoye—although Caillois himself took care of the translation for *Les cahiers de la Pléiade*.²¹ Later, during the 1950s and 1960s, many individual translations of Borges's stories, essays, and poems appeared thanks to Caillois's efforts in *La nouvelle revue française*, in *Preuves*, and in anthologies Caillois edited on the fantastic and on dreams, this time mostly translated by Caillois himself.²²

1. Publishing houses and the positions of key publishers, editors, and translators in the early reception of Borges's work in France

One of the main reasons for the key role that Caillois played in the reception of Borges's work in France is that Caillois was partly responsible for choices in the publication of Borges's books at Gallimard and, in turn, the fact that Gallimard took a dominant position in the translation and publication of Borges's books. Until 1964, all books were published by Gallimard—namely *Fictions* (1951), *Labyrinthes* (1953),

¹⁹ Borges, "Un patio: Un patio. El general Quiroga va en coche al muere: Le général Quiroga va en coche à la mort."

²⁰ Ayerza de Castilho and Felgine, *Victoria Ocampo*, 216-19; and Felgine, *Roger Caillois: Biographie*, 229-30.

²¹ Borges, "Assyriennes: La loterie à Babylone. La bibliothèque de Babel"; "Les ruines circulaires," *Confluences* 6, no. 11 (April, 1946); "La mort et la boussole"; "Fictions: Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius"; and "Histoire du guerrier et de la captive."

²² For these translations, which number more than forty in total, see the final, chronological bibliography.

Enquêtes, 1937-1952 (1957), and several further editions of these book translations—except for *Histoire de l'infamie. Histoire de l'éternité*, which appeared at Éditions du Rocher in Monaco in 1958.²³ This last translation, by Laure Guille and Caillois, went into print at Le Rocher in accordance with Borges's wishes and thanks to Caillois's contacts with the publishing house.²⁴ The almost exclusive relationship between Borges's work and Gallimard was not caused by a lack of interest from other publishers, but by an informal agreement of priority that the publishing house demanded. When Le Rocher started the publication process for *Histoire de l'infamie. Histoire de l'éternité* in 1956, Gaston Gallimard requested that Borges guarantee his publishing house first refusal on all of his future books.²⁵

After these four book translations, most of Borges's work continued to be published by Gallimard. In the 1960s and 1970s, however, some translations were also acquired, among others, by Maurice Nadeau for his collection *Les lettres nouvelles* at Julliard and Denoël, by Dominique de Roux at Éditions Christian Bourgois, and by Claude Durand at Éditions du Seuil. These mediators were in some cases prevented from putting certain books to print because of Gallimard's agreement with Borges, and were only able to publish works not taken by Gallimard, such as Borges's titles written in collaboration with Margarita Guerrero, María Esther Vázquez, and Adolfo Bioy Casares.²⁶ De Roux prepared the special 1964 issue of *L'Herne* in cooperation with Jean de Milleret, but neither he nor Durand ever published on Borges themselves. Maurice Nadeau, however, published several reviews of Borges's work, as well as publishing individual translations in his magazine *Les lettres nouvelles* as early as 1953, and will therefore be dealt with in the chapter on early criticism.

²³ Borges, *Fictions; Labyrinthes; Enquêtes, 1937-1952; and Histoire de l'infamie. Histoire de l'éternité*. A special and limited edition of "La biblioteca de Babel" put into print by Raymond Gid in 1963, about which I have found little information, will not be dealt with here.

²⁴ Cariguel, *Histoire des Éditions du Rocher*, 146.

²⁵ For the priority agreement and the publication of *Histoire de l'infamie. Histoire de l'éternité* see the letter by Gaston Gallimard to Borges, January 25, 1956, Gallimard Archives. For later discussions about the priority agreement, see also Gaston Gallimard to Paul Flamand (Seuil), October 8, 1969, SEL2 S3 B277 D4, Le Seuil Archives.

²⁶ See Nadeau, *Grâces leur soient rendues*, 462; Claude Gallimard to Emecé, September 16, 1963; and Sofía E. L. de Álvarez (publishing house Sur) to Maurice Nadeau, October, 24, 1963, Gallimard Archives. Dominique de Roux to Carlos V. Frías (Emecé), July 22, 1963; Dominique de Roux to Concepción Zea Abdelnur (Fondo de Cultura Económica, México D.F.), July 22, 1963; and Carlos V. Frías to La Table Ronde, November 13, 1963, LTR 108.3, La Table Ronde Archives. Internal report on *Evaristo Carriego* by Severo Sarduy; internal report on *Crónicas de Bustos Domecq* by Severo Sarduy; Claude Durand to Borges, September 1, 1967, SEL2 S3 B277 D4, Le Seuil Archives.

The priority agreement points to the interest that the French publishing house took in Borges's work, and the prestige of Gallimard and its publisher's list was, of course, crucial to the reception of Borges's work in France. As Borges's work was mainly published at Gallimard, it became bound to the profile of this publishing house. Gallimard entered the postwar period as a weaker house and lost *La nouvelle revue française* temporarily, but quickly recovered to become the main publisher of avant-garde and modernist literature in France, as Pierre Assouline and others have shown.²⁷ As well as launching the magazine *Les temps modernes*, Gallimard published existentialist authors such as Albert Camus, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Simone de Beauvoir; other writers such as Maurice Blanchot, Jean Giono, René Char, Henri Michaux, and Raymond Queneau; and, somewhat later, authors of the *nouveau roman* who were first discovered by Éditions de Minuit, such as Michel Butor and Nathalie Sarraute. Gallimard also published a rich collection of foreign literature, *Du monde entier*, featuring authors including Franz Kafka, Truman Capote, John Dos Passos, William Faulkner, Ernest Hemingway, and, later, writers of the Beat generation such as William Burroughs and Jack Kerouac. In the 1950s, in addition to *La Croix du Sud*, Gallimard also produced a collection of Russian literature called *Littératures soviétiques* and directed by Louis Aragon. In comparison with Gallimard, Éditions du Rocher from Monaco was a more peripheral, relatively young publishing house. Founded during the Second World War, it published Jean Cocteau, and, mostly only once, works by Pierre Reverdy, Henri Michaux, Ernst Jünger, Virginia Woolf, Carlo Coccioli, and Aldous Huxley.²⁸

Various mediators were involved in the publication process of the four Borges translations at Gallimard and Le Rocher. With the help of unpublished correspondence from publishing houses, mainly Gallimard, the positions of these mediators within the translation and publication process can be determined more precisely. My main criterion for selecting key mediators is the extent to which they determined the material presentation (selection of texts, title, preface and other peritexts, and translation) of the book translations. Three other selection criteria that I take into account but that are less important than the first one are: the frequency with which the mediators wrote peritexts or other texts on Borges and translated his work; their institutional positions; and their combined fulfillment of various institutional

²⁷ See Assouline, *Gaston Gallimard: Un demi-siècle d'édition française*; and Simonin, "L'édition littéraire."

²⁸ See Cariguel, *Histoire des Éditions du Rocher*.

roles to mediate Borges's work. I will first look into Caillois's position and then turn to that of other mediators, who are mostly translators such as Néstor Ibarra, Paul Verdevoye, Paul and Sylvia Bénichou, and Laure Guille. I will also briefly refer to other mediators, such as Borges himself.

Although Caillois was never listed as an editor in the peritexts of the three translations of Borges's work at Gallimard, his role in the publishing house amounted to that of an editor: he was, at least partially, responsible for the choice of books to be published, the selections of texts to be included in the books, and the choice of peritexts including title, prologues, and epilogues. This responsibility was, in my opinion, due to Caillois's role as director of La Croix du Sud: *Fictions* and *Enquêtes* were published in this collection, as was the second edition of *Labyrinthes*. In all these cases, Caillois was named as the director of La Croix du Sud on the front covers. Although there was contact about the book translations between Gaston Gallimard, Claude Gallimard, Dionys Mascolo (head of the foreign service at Gallimard), Borges, and Caillois, it is Caillois who seems to have made the decisions, without many institutional constraints from within the publishing house, as can be deduced from correspondence that I will later analyze more in detail.²⁹ This does not exclude the possibility that these or other mediators played a part in the decisions made at Gallimard, as the interaction may have taken place outside written correspondence and I was not granted access to the reading reports (*fiches de lecture*) at the publishing house. Moreover, the early correspondence I consulted at Gallimard is still situated at the publishing house and has not been organized and described in a finding aid or catalogue, so the complete size of the Borges archive at Gallimard remains somewhat unclear.

Caillois also interacted with many other mediators outside Gallimard in the deployment of his different roles of editor, director of La Croix du Sud, translator, and critic. After his return to France, for instance, he stayed in contact with Victoria Ocampo. For the translation and publication of Argentine or Latin American literature in general, Ocampo helped Caillois to build the list of authors for La Croix du Sud and to contact some of them, as is clear from the available correspondence.³⁰ For Borges's work in particular, however, the correspondence is limited to a number

²⁹ See, for instance, Borges to Claude Gallimard, December 7, 1964; and Caillois to Claude Gallimard, December 15, 1964, Gallimard Archives.

³⁰ Caillois and Ocampo, *Correspondance Roger Caillois, Victoria Ocampo (1939-1978)*; and Felgine, "De l'américanité à la médiation."

of details on the publication of Borges's books in France that Caillois wanted to pass on to Borges via Ocampo, and to some translation issues in Borges's work, for which Caillois requested Ocampo's help. This correspondence thus shows that Ocampo played a role via Caillois, similarly to how she would operate for publishers in the United States. Because most of the postwar letters from Ocampo to Caillois did not survive, however, the correspondence does not give much insight into the precise intellectual impact that Ocampo had on Caillois's actions. Where possible, I will thus refer to Caillois's comments on Borges in the correspondence—Ocampo's comments being scarce—and try to relate them to his selections, classifications, and norms, but I will be unable to relate these in turn to the possible impact of Ocampo.

As for Caillois's relationship with other Borges translators, there was a clear hierarchy. Caillois acted as an independent translator for Gallimard, making his own choices in translating authors such as Gabriela Mistral, Antonio Porchia, and Pablo Neruda, as well as several volumes of Borges's work. Caillois translated *Labyrinthes*, a selection of stories from *El Aleph*, parts of *Histoire de l'infamie. Histoire de l'éternité*, and, later, *L'auteur et autres textes* (1965, *El hacedor*) and parts of *L'Aleph* (1967). He also took charge of the prologues and epilogues for these volumes. By contrast, the translators of the other volumes—Néstor Ibarra and Paul Verdevoye for *Fictions*, Paul and Sylvia Bénichou for *Enquêtes*, and Laure Guille for parts of *Histoire de l'infamie. Histoire de l'éternité*—translated Borges's texts and wrote peritexts at Caillois's request. For *Histoire de l'infamie. Histoire de l'éternité*, Caillois's role in the publication process at Éditions du Rocher remains unclear because of a lack of archive and other material. Caillois was, in any case, responsible for maintaining contact between Borges and the publishing house, supervising translator Guille's work, and writing the translator's postface. But he later distanced himself, for instance, from the elimination of the word "universal" in the French title of *Histoire de l'infamie*, claiming he had played no role in that decision.³¹

As part of his work for Gallimard, Caillois also played a role for Borges's oeuvre internationally. He once wrote in a letter to Ocampo that he had recommended Borges to (not explicitly named) German and Italian publishers, and his work for Borges in France also had an impact on the choices of US publisher James Laughlin, who published *Labyrinthes* in 1962, and British editor Barley Alison,

³¹ Cariguel, *Histoire des Éditions du Rocher*, 146; and Caillois, "Visita a Roger Caillois," interview by Orphée, 57.

who published *Ficciones* in the same year.³² Borges correspondence in the Gallimard archives shows the early interest of many more German, US, and British publishing houses.³³ Moreover, as a member of the jury for the Prix International des Éditeurs, Caillois was able to defend the awarding of the prize to Borges in May 1961. The deliberations for this prize, in which publishers from France (Gallimard), Spain (Seix-Barral), Italy (Einaudi), the United Kingdom (Weidenfeld & Nicholson), the United States (Grove Press), and Germany (Rowohlt) participated, were held at the Formentor Hotel in Mallorca.³⁴ It was after hours of discussion, and just before the final decision was made, that Caillois delivered a decisive speech on Borges, which led to the *ex aequo* awarding of the prize to Samuel Beckett for his novels and to Borges for *Ficciones*, as Carlos Barral has stated in his autobiography.³⁵

Caillois's key position in the translation and publication of Borges's work was supported by a fairly well-established institutional position in the French literary field. When Caillois started editing Borges in the 1950s, he had already been contributing regularly to *La nouvelle revue française* since 1935, had published more than ten books, was an important figure at Unesco, and filled various posts at Gallimard as a member of the *comité de lecture* and the director of a book collection. His work as an author and critic, however, was not always well received, meaning that his position was somewhat eccentric. As Maurice Blanchot has claimed, Caillois was "toujours un peu à part, il n'entrait pas dans la société de ceux qui détiennent un savoir reconnu."³⁶ This was perhaps due to the fact that Caillois, after his short

³² Caillois to Ocampo, August 29, 1952, in *Correspondance Roger Caillois, Victoria Ocampo (1939-1978)*, 329; For the English-speaking publishing houses, see my chapter on early translations and publications of Borges's work in the United States.

³³ Joseph Barnes (Simon and Schuster) to Gallimard, February 18, 1955; G. Fischer (Carl Hanser Verlag) to Gallimard, May 8 and May 21, 1959; Herbig Verlag (no personal name) to Gallimard, February 1, 1961; Oxford University Press (no personal name) to Gallimard, May 29, 1961; and Barley Alison (Weidenfeld & Nicholson) to Monique Lange (Gallimard), July 5, 1961, Gallimard Archives. For the impact of the French Gallimard translations on the publication of Borges's work in Italy and Germany, see Santos Unamuno, "Borges en Italia: Perfil de una recepción"; and Broyles, *German Response to Latin American Literature*, 114.

³⁴ Members of the jury, the first ten of which were from the French delegation, were: Marcel Arland, Dominique Aury, Jean Blanzat, Michel Butor, Roger Caillois, François Erval, Jacques Lemarchand, Michel Mohrt, Jean Paulhan, Raymond Queneau, Carlo Levi, Alberto Moravia, Elio Vittorini, Cesare Cases, Pier Paolo Pasolini, Italo Calvino, Angelo M. Ripellino, Carlo Fruttero, Vittorio Strada, Donald M. Allen, William Barrett, Jason Epstein, Alfred Kazin, Mark Schorer, Max Aub, José María Castellet, Camilo José Cela, Emilio Lorenzo Criado, Jaime Gil de Biedma, Octavio Paz, Juan Petit, Antonio Vilanova, Beda Allemann, Walter Jens, Hans Mayer, Hans Magnus Enzensberger, Adolf Frisé, Angus Wilson, Iris Murdoch, Peter Quennell, John Weightman, Allan Ross, Melvin Lasky, Moura Budberg, and Richard Wollheim. See Pohl, *Bücher ohne Grenzen*, 480.

³⁵ Barral, *Los años sin excusa*, 255.

³⁶ Blanchot, *Michel Foucault tel que je l'imagine*, 10-11.

affiliation with the surrealists and the Collège de Sociologie, never formed part of any French artistic or philosophical movement, as is clear from this description by Hector Bianciotti: "Roger Caillois? Une sorte de présocratique égaré dans le XX^e siècle, qui n'a suivi ni laissé aucun système, inconciliable avec l'un de ces 'ismes' qui ponctuent [...] l'histoire de la pensée et de l'art français."³⁷

The relationship that Ibarra, one of the first translators of Borges's work, had with Borges was very different from Caillois's. Ibarra, a Spanish Basque of Argentine lineage who was born in France and lived in Buenos Aires, was a friend of the Argentine author. He published on Borges in 1930 in his *La nueva poesía argentina: Ensayo crítico sobre el ultraísmo, 1921-1929*. And in the 1930s, Borges wrote the prologue to Ibarra's Spanish translation of Paul Valéry's *Le cimetière marin*, and Borges and Ibarra planned a joint book publication, *Descubrimiento de Buenos Aires*, which never materialized.³⁸ In the 1940s, Ibarra taught at the Institut Français d'Études Supérieures of Buenos Aires, founded by Caillois. Ibarra once stated that he always sought Borges's advice when translating his work,³⁹ and this exchange is visible in at least one of his translations of Borges's work: the 1939 French rendering of "El acercamiento a Almotásim" as "L'approche du caché" in *Mesures*, later included in *Fictions*. With Borges's consent,⁴⁰ Ibarra included a note on the reception of the apocryphal book *The Approach to Al-Mu'tasim* in France, and changed the ending of the story by comparing *The Approach of Al-Mu'tasim* with Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* instead of with the work of cabalist Isaac Luria. Apart from this rewriting, it is also telling for the relationship between Borges and Ibarra that the latter, unlike Caillois, appears as a character in "Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius," as well as in a dedication in the "Etcétera" section of *Historia universal de la infamia*.

Ibarra also translated three other stories, two of which, "La lotería en Babilonia" and "La biblioteca de Babel," first appeared in Caillois's *Lettres françaises* and were later included in *Fictions*. The other, "La secta del Fénix," was only published in the Belgian avant-garde magazine *Le disque vert*.⁴¹ As a French translator who produced these four translations while living in Buenos Aires, his position was somewhat different from other French translators, as he exported rather than imported the translations to France. This situation later changed, though, when he

³⁷ Bianciotti, "Roger Caillois," 74.

³⁸ See Vaccaro, *Borges*, 279-81.

³⁹ Alifano, "Néstor Ibarra, amigo y traductor de Borges," 181.

⁴⁰ See Borges, *Œuvres complètes*, vol. 1, 1537.

⁴¹ Borges, "Assyriennes: La loterie à Babylone. La bibliothèque de Babel"; and "La secte du Phénix."

moved to Paris in the 1950s or 1960s and started translating Borges's poetry.⁴² Ibarra also wrote a preface to Borges's work that was first published in *Lettres françaises* and later in *Fictions*, making him a key mediator for this first book translation in France.⁴³ As the preface expressed some rather harsh criticism of Borges's work, Ibarra's relationship with Borges reportedly deteriorated after its first publication in 1944,⁴⁴ although Borges would continue to show his loyalty to Ibarra and his (later) translations in spite of this. In the 1960s, Borges asked Claude Gallimard and Caillois to allow Ibarra to translate *El hacedor*, *Discusión*, and *El Aleph*, and, when this request was not granted, perhaps because the translations had already been assigned to others, to let Ibarra render his *Obra poética, 1923-1964* into French.⁴⁵ Ibarra would eventually translate several poetry volumes for Gallimard: *Œuvre poétique, 1925-1965* (1970), *L'or des tigres. L'autre, le même 2. Éloge de l'ombre. Ferveur de Buenos Aires* (1976), and *La rose profonde. La monnaie de fer. Histoire de la nuit* (1983). In the 1960s, Borges repeatedly talked about his close relationship with Ibarra and about Ibarra's translations, both in interviews and in a preface to one of his poetry translations in France.⁴⁶ Ibarra himself also commented on his Borges translations and those of others, and I will analyze these discussions, in which Caillois and Paul Bénichou were also involved, in a separate section in this chapter.

Paul Verdevoye took charge of the translation of the other stories from *Fictions* and finished around 1946. As a French translator of peninsular Spanish fiction, such as of Garcilaso de la Vega and Federico García Lorca, Verdevoye was at that time not familiar with Argentina and Argentine literature. In one article, he describes how he came to translate *Fictions* at Caillois's request and how he was too late to correct the translations of some *argentinismos* before the publication of *Fictions* when he travelled to Argentina for the first time in 1950.⁴⁷ Verdevoye was in contact with Borges in Buenos Aires between 1950 and 1955, mainly to discuss his translation of *Martín Fierro* for Unesco.⁴⁸ In these years, and also after Verdevoye returned to France to become a university professor in 1955, he took little part in debates on Borges's work,

⁴² These two decades can be inferred from Woodall, *Borges: A Life*, 205. I have not been able to find more exact information.

⁴³ Ibarra, "Jorge Luis Borges"; and preface to *Fictions*.

⁴⁴ Alfieri, "La repercusión de Borges en Francia," 38.

⁴⁵ Borges to Claude Gallimard, December 7, 1964, Gallimard Archives; Borges to Caillois, January 29, 1965, in Caillois, *Roger Caillois*, 230; and Borges to Caillois, February 11, 1965, Fonds Patrimoniaux Roger Caillois.

⁴⁶ Borges, *Entretiens avec Jorge Luis Borges*, interviews by Charbonnier, 14; Borges, *Entretiens avec Jorge Luis Borges*, interviews by de Milleret, 132-33; and Borges, preface to *Œuvre poétique*.

⁴⁷ Verdevoye, "Ficciones de Jorge Luis Borges y *Fictions* de Paul Verdevoye," 40-42.

⁴⁸ Verdevoye, "Jorge Luis Borges, écrivain argentin," 79; and Verdevoye, "Paul Verdevoye," 133.

although he did supervise what was probably the first French PhD thesis on Borges, by Gilles Thérien.⁴⁹ Verdevoye thus did not become central to the translation and critical reception of Borges's work in France, at least not in the early period, and will not be discussed as a key mediator, but he did become important for Latin American studies in France. His scholarly work showed an interest in classical Argentine literature—he published his 1963 thesis on Domingo Faustino Sarmiento—and in more contemporary authors such as Ricardo Güiraldes and Ernesto Sábato, focusing particularly on the formation of Argentine identity. Much later he would also publish on the “Argentine” and folkloric side of Borges's work.

After the first book translation of *Fictions*, rendered by Ibarra and Verdevoye, and the second, *Labyrinthes*, translated by Caillois, the third book translation was published in 1957, translated by Paul Bénichou and his daughter Sylvia Bénichou (later Roubaud). During the war, Paul Bénichou, a philologist and critic of French classicist and romantic literature and of Judeo-Spanish *romances*, was prevented from teaching at public secondary schools in France because of his Algerian-Jewish origins. This prompted him to leave for Buenos Aires, where he taught French literature at the Institut Français d'Études Supérieures between 1942 and 1949.⁵⁰ Bénichou interacted thus in the same circles as Caillois, Ibarra, and a critic I will discuss later, René Marill Albérès. Bénichou also contributed several articles to *Sur*. It was in fact at the Institut Français that Bénichou first heard about Borges, via Caillois, and would eventually meet him in 1945 (he would later also meet Borges in Cambridge when he worked at Harvard University between 1958 and 1979).⁵¹ I will return later to the impact that this stay in Argentina had on the actions of Bénichou, and of Caillois, Ibarra, and Albérès, in the reception of Borges's work in France.

After his return to France, Paul Bénichou translated *Otras inquisiciones* as *Enquêtes* together with Sylvia Bénichou, one of her first translations. In the 1950s and 1960s, mostly without his daughter, Paul Bénichou also published individual translations from *Otras inquisiciones*, *El hacedor*, and *El Aleph* in the prestigious literary magazines *Les temps modernes*, *Les lettres nouvelles*, and *Mercure de France* before they appeared in book form.⁵² The translations from *El hacedor* and *El Aleph* were not taken

⁴⁹ Thérien, “Essai sur l'éternité et de temps dans l'œuvre de Jorge Luis Borges.” PhD diss., Paris 10, 1969.

⁵⁰ Ayerza de Castilho and Felgine, *Victoria Ocampo*, 227-31.

⁵¹ Roubaud and Bénichou, “Souvenirs sur Borges”; and Bénichou, “Post-scriptum (avril 1995),” 263.

⁵² See Borges, “Le rêve de Coleridge. Magies partielles du Quichotte. Le Biathanatos. La langue analytique de John Wilkins. Le miroir des énigmes. Note sur le 23 août 1944. De quelqu'un à

up in the book versions at Gallimard and were therefore duplicated in versions by Caillois (*El hacedor, L'Aleph*) and René L.-F. Durand (*L'Aleph*); the correspondence and other sources do not reveal who took the initiative for including and excluding these different translations in the magazines and books. Paul and Sylvia Bénichou wrote the translator's foreword to *Enquêtes*, and Paul Bénichou played a role as a critic, writing three essays on Borges that were published in France in the 1950s and 1960s. His daughter did not publish on Borges in the period of study. I will analyze Paul Bénichou's texts in more depth in the chapter on French criticism; for now, I will examine his translations and contrast them with those of other translators, only briefly referring to his criticism.

The translator of the last book publication of Borges's work during the early phase is Laure Guille, who translated *Histoire de l'infamie. Histoire de l'éternité* at Éditions du Rocher together with Caillois. Guille (later Guille-Bataillon) had little translation experience when she started translating Borges's work. On Caillois's advice, she contacted Julio Cortázar in 1957 about Borges's use of "le langage des voyous stylisés" and translated "Hombre de la esquina rosada" from *Historia universal de la infamia* with Cortázar's help.⁵³ She would later become a prolific translator of Julio Cortázar's work, and also of Javier Marías, Juan José Saer, Juan Carlos Onetti, and Manuel Puig. As she only played a minor role in the publication process, at least in comparison with Caillois, did not publish on Borges or on translation matters within the period of study, and published her translation at a publishing house with far less prestige than Gallimard, she will not be further discussed here.

The final mediator in the early book translations who needs to be discussed here is Borges himself. Except for his possible interaction with Ibarra for the latter's four individual translations, and his consent to some changes in the selection of texts for *Enquêtes* and *El hacedor*,⁵⁴ Borges was scarcely involved in the translation and publication process and criticism in France until 1964. In his sparse correspondence with Caillois, he limited himself to thanking Caillois repeatedly for his mediating activities, leaving the editorial choices to Caillois (and perhaps also to Gaston and

personne"; "Le temps et J. W. Dunne. Avatars de la tortue. Nouvelle réfutation du temps"; "La maison d'Astérion"; "Le Zahir"; "L'Aleph"; and "Ragnarök. Delia Elena San Marco."

⁵³ Guille-Bataillon, "L'ami inépuisablement vivant." See also the editor's note on the copyright page of Borges, *Histoire de l'infamie. Histoire de l'éternité*.

⁵⁴ See Bénichou and Bénichou, translator's foreword to *Enquêtes*, 9; and Borges to Roger Caillois, February 27, 1963, Fonds Patrimoniaux Roger Caillois.

Claude Gallimard). This is clear, for instance, from Borges's 1962 comments to Caillois on the publication of *El hacedor*, a translation that would not appear until 1965:

Gracias, de nuevo, como le decía en mi anterior, mi destino es siempre agradecer cuando le escribo; en cuanto a la forma en que se publiquen sus traducciones, hágalo como mejor le parezca y convenza al editor y a ese público, y suprime de El Hacedor todo lo que a él no interese y si le cree necesario o correcto envíe una línea a Emecé Editores.⁵⁵

Borges's first visit to Paris as an author was in 1963, so it is perhaps not surprising that no interviews were issued before that period. The first interviews, most of which were carried out for the special Borges issue of *L'Herne* in 1964, were thus published after four book translations had already been issued⁵⁶: a very different situation from that in the United States, where Borges was already present—physically and in criticism—before his first books appeared in 1962. After Borges's visit to France, and at a time when Gallimard had not issued translations of his work since 1957, the author also became somewhat more active in steering his own translation and publication process at Gallimard. Although Borges still wrote to Caillois in 1965, "Je laisse les choses en vos mains comme avant,"⁵⁷ in 1964 and 1965 he informed Caillois and Claude Gallimard that he would prefer Ibarra to translate his future book volumes, and also made suggestions about the selection of texts and peritexts for the volumes.⁵⁸ These more "private" attempts were combined with a growing number of public comments that tried to influence the reception: especially in later, 1967 interview books in France, Borges commented on Ibarra and Caillois and on the reception of his work.⁵⁹ I will refer to Borges's role in several sections,

⁵⁵ Borges to Caillois, November 18, 1962, Fonds Patrimoniaux Roger Caillois.

⁵⁶ Borges, "Jorge Luis Borges," interview by Chapsal; "Jorge Luis Borges: Le plus grand écrivain argentin croit que ses livres ne valent rien," interview by de Saint-Phalle; "Entretien: Jorge-Luis Borges," interview by Chapsal; "Entretien avec Napoléon Murat," interview by Murat; "Entretien avec James E. Irby," interview by Irby; "Entretien avec Gloria Alcorta," interview by Alcorta; "L'électricité des mots," interview by Peralta; *Jorge Luis Borges*, television interview by Dumayet; and "Jorge-Luis Borges à Paris," interview by Piatier.

⁵⁷ Borges to Caillois, January 29, 1965, in Caillois, *Roger Caillois*, 230.

⁵⁸ Borges to Claude Gallimard, December 7, 1964, Gallimard Archives; Borges to Caillois, January 29, 1965, in Caillois, *Roger Caillois*, 230; and Borges to Caillois, February 11, 1965, Fonds Patrimoniaux Roger Caillois.

⁵⁹ Borges, *Entretiens avec Jorge Luis Borges*, interviews by Charbonnier, 14; Borges, *Entretiens avec Jorge Luis Borges*, interviews by de Milleret, 132-33.

especially the one on translation, but will not devote a separate section to his actions, as they mainly took place at a later stage in the reception. While some of the references to Borges's role in the translation and publication process at Gallimard that I discuss may seem to mitigate Caillois's role, it has to be remarked that these references are mostly from 1964 or later, and therefore mainly apply to later book editions. These comments and references will serve to illustrate and contextualize the reception in my period of study.

In the following sections I will study and compare selections and classifications by the different key mediators for the translations and publications of *Fictions*, *Labyrinthes*, *Enquêtes*, and *Histoire de l'infamie. Histoire de l'éternité*. I will also discuss how these selections and classifications were related to the mediators' norms. Roger Caillois, Néstor Ibarra and, to a lesser extent, Paul Bénichou and Borges himself played a key role in the translation and publication processes. As most unpublished archive material deals with *Fictions* and *Labyrinthes*, and as the changes in these two volumes—that is, the selection of texts and peritexts other than those of the original volume—were far-reaching, in particular those by Caillois, I will dedicate three sections to *Fictions* and *Labyrinthes*, and refer more briefly to *Enquêtes* and *Histoire de l'infamie. Histoire de l'éternité*. A fourth section will discuss translations and translators of Borges's early book volumes.

2. Néstor Ibarra and the origins of Borges's "Hispano-Anglo-Portuguese" origins

One of the most visible and influential elements of the first book translation of Borges's work in France was the preface to *Fictions*. Written by Néstor Ibarra for *Lettres françaises* and included in the 1951 book volume, its introductory lines have become well known:

Hispano-anglo-portugais d'origine, élevé en Suisse, fixé depuis longtemps à Buenos-Aires où il naquit en 1899, personne n'a moins de patrie que Jorge Luis Borges. Ce n'est qu'en lui-même qu'il doit être considéré, non pas en fonction d'un pays, ou d'un continent, ou d'une culture dont il ne relève point et qu'aucunement il ne représente. L'état-civil de ce dissident-né importe peu:

Borges est un homme de lettres européen qui serait à sa place à Londres, à Paris aussi ou du moins, plus largement, à la N.R.F.⁶⁰

These contradictory lines, in which Borges is presented without a homeland but classified simultaneously as European and, somewhat more tentatively, as British and French, place Borges outside Argentina and Argentine literature. Ibarra underlines this when he criticizes Borges's earlier *criollismo*: "Son 'créolisme' des années 25 ou 30 fut une attitude modeste, parfois touchante, désintéressée d'ailleurs, mais d'un si outrageux artifice qu'elle n'a jamais pu faire illusion même à un Prix National."⁶¹ Ibarra's preface also presents a number of other classifications. It uses the genres of the "récit fantastique" and "récits métaphysiques" to describe Borges's work and relate the author to Herbert George Wells and Franz Kafka on the common basis of "un monde de peurs subtiles et de curieuses délivrances."⁶² In accordance with his negation of Borges's Argentine heritage, Ibarra devotes the remainder of the preface to listing other negations: without elaborating on the author's prose from *Ficciones*, he judges that Borges is not a good poet, not an essayist, not a perfect stylist, and that his work is not solid or erudite, creating therefore, as Sylvia Molloy has also claimed, the idea of an unclassifiable writer.⁶³

It is especially because of this harsh criticism that Borges scholars have seen Ibarra's preface as the product of a concerted action with Caillois, or even with Borges himself. Borges critic Jean-Pierre Bernès sees the text as Caillois settling his account with Borges, as he supposes that Caillois participated in the composition of the text.⁶⁴ While Odile Felgine makes a similar point, Annick Louis suggests that Borges may have participated in the repetition and parody of opinions that already existed in Argentina.⁶⁵ According to Louis, Ibarra, possibly in conjunction with Borges, took up and parodied the opinions of opponents and defenders who saw Borges's poetics as not representative of contemporaneous Argentine reality. Louis refers especially to the discourse of the critics who participated in the 1942 "Desagravio a Borges," which *Sur* organized on the occasion of Borges not receiving

⁶⁰ Ibarra, preface to *Fictions*, 7.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 7-8.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 11-12.

⁶³ Molloy, *La diffusion de la littérature hispano-américaine*, 206.

⁶⁴ Bernès, "Jorge Luis Borges et Roger Caillois," 217-19; Borges, *Ceuvres complètes*, vol. 1, lxxv, 1576.

⁶⁵ Felgine, "De *Lettres Françaises* à la collection 'La Croix du Sud,'" 75; Felgine, "Jorge Luis Borges, Victoria Ocampo et Roger Caillois," 69; Louis, "Borges mode d'emploi français," 316-31; and Louis, *Borges ante el fascismo*, 146-47.

the Premio Nacional de Literatura in 1941, although she does not give textual examples to prove this point.⁶⁶ I will briefly focus on Ibarra's other Borges criticism and on the way his views were related to other mediators such as Caillois and Bénichou, and then return to Louis's suggestion that Ibarra's views were related to (other) Argentine Borges criticism.

Ibarra's comments on Borges's representativeness date from a period long before the "Desagravio a Borges" and Caillois's foundation of *Lettres françaises*. Already in his early study of Borges's poetry, in *La nueva poesía argentina: Ensayo crítico sobre el ultraísmo, 1921-1929* (1930), Ibarra distinguishes poems of the "cantor del Buenos Aires criollo" and poems "que nos transportan fuera de toda localización," both in the poetry of *Fervor de Buenos Aires* and elsewhere.⁶⁷ Although Ibarra does claim in his conclusions that Borges is more *criollista* than *criollo*, he also criticizes the limitations of questioning the national concerns of an author by parting from a pre-set idea of *lo criollo*:

Más de lo que lo criollo puede informar nuestra literatura, nuestra literatura constantemente enriquece, plasma, engendra lo criollo. Casi es absurdo deplorar que tal o cual gran espíritu argentino no responda a nuestra concepción de lo criollo: es error idéntico en carácter, efectivamente mucho más indefendible aún, que el de los críticos franceses declarando, cuando apareció *A l'Ombre des Jeunes Filles en Fleurs*, que el estilo, la mentalidad de Proust no eran francesas: eran francesas puesto que debían serlo ulteriormente; puesto que Proust es ahora confesado como uno de los más grandes escritores de Francia, y ha sido inmensa su influencia. Lo mismo—en mucho mayor proporción por nuestra juventud—ocurre con la Argentina.⁶⁸

Whereas some of Ibarra's criticism of Borges's poetry and essays in his 1930 book comes close to the views he expressed in the preface of the translations in *Lettres françaises* and in *Fictions*, these earlier statements seem different in tone from those in the opening lines of the preface. Ibarra's book claims that the "national" is a literary construction, confirming implicitly that Borges and other young writers could create a representative or national character in Argentine literature in the future. In this

⁶⁶ Louis, "Borges mode d'emploi français," 316-31; and *Borges ante el fascismo*, 146-47.

⁶⁷ Ibarra, *La nueva poesía argentina*, 27.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 129.

sense, Ibarra's book also differs from another text that he wrote in French, an introductory note to his own 1939 translation of "El acercamiento a Almotásim" for *Mesures*, in which Caillois was not involved:

G. L. Borges a un peu moins de quarante ans. D'origine anglaise et espagnole, il est de nationalité argentine et, depuis des études à Genève, vit à Buenos Aires. Ce n'est d'ailleurs qu'en lui-même qu'il doit être considéré, et non pas en fonction d'un pays—ou d'un continent—dont il ne relève point et qu'aucunement il ne représente.⁶⁹

In this note, Borges still has the Argentine nationality but his lack of representativeness is already underscored by his being given the French initials G. L., and, on the title page of the translation, even a French *accent grave*, making his name Borgès, which critics would frequently use later on. Although Ibarra's views may have changed over time, as Borges's work also did, the difference between his earlier statements in Argentina on the *criollo* dimension in Borges's work and the absurdity of denying an author his nationality, and his later comments in French on Borges's lack of representativeness, points to a difference in audience. By stressing Borges's statelessness in *Mesures* and *Lettres françaises/Fictions*, Ibarra strategically draws the author closer to the French public, in the case of the preface more specifically to the audience of "Paris aussi ou du moins, plus largement, [. . .] la N.R.F."⁷⁰ His negative formulation of Borges not being an Argentine is thus used as a compliment: a rhetorical trick similar to his negative comments on Borges's poetry, essays, and style, which are perhaps employed to praise Borges as a prose writer.

Ibarra's opening lines on Borges's "Hispano-Anglo-Portuguese" origins caused, without doubt, a direct, widespread, and long-lasting impact in criticism. In early criticism in France, the different aspects listed by Ibarra, such as Borges's Hispano-Anglo-Portuguese origins, his lack of nationality or representativeness, and his classification as a European man of letters, were taken up, generally in an explicit manner.⁷¹ This was the case in reviews of *Fictions* and the following three volumes.

⁶⁹ Ibarra, "G. L. Borges." For later comments in the 1964 *L'Herne* issue, see also Ibarra, "Borges et Borges," 424.

⁷⁰ Ibarra, preface to *Fictions*, 7.

⁷¹ Among other reviews, [Pauwels?], "Un conteur de l'imaginaire: *Labyrinthes* par Jorge Luis Borges"; "Le dictionnaire des responsables: Jorge Luis Borges," *Planète*, no. 8 (1963); Albères, "Un Edgar Poe du

As Molloy has claimed about *Fictions* in her study on the reception of Borges's work, "devant *Fictions* on ne se demande pas—ou on se le demande à peine—si l'écrivain est ou non argentin. Borges 'passe' en France en se passant de nationalité, comme nul écrivain hispano-américain ne l'avait fait avant lui."⁷² Repeating Ibarra's introductory lines, Paul Bénichou claimed in a 1952 essay in *Critique* that the *couleur locale* in the author's work was not essential for understanding it:

Il ne faut rien chercher dans les *Fictions* de sud-américain ni d'argentin. [. . .] L'étranger, qui ne saurait y retrouver cette saveur particulière, parfois prenante, y perd pourtant peu de choses au regard de l'essentiel, et y gagne sans doute l'avantage de mieux sentir la portée vraie de l'œuvre. L'Amérique latine a, si je ne me trompe, peu produit d'ouvrages qui ne soient destinés à la raconter. Celui-ci est une notable exception.⁷³

René Marill Albérès, another French mediator who stayed in Buenos Aires in the 1940s and taught at the Institut Français d'Études Supérieures, claimed: "Ne cherchons pas en lui un 'écrivain argentin'—bien qu'il aime et évoque souvent son pays—Borges n'est pas un représentant de la littérature argentine, il est un monstre et un génie. Sa place internationale au XX^e siècle est nettement marquée."⁷⁴

This stress on Borges's statelessness among French critics is all the more remarkable coming from the mediators who spent time in Argentina—that is, Ibarra, Bénichou, and Albérès—the first two of which were also partly responsible for the presentation of two book volumes. Caillois himself did not explicitly refer to Borges's lack of nationality, but his selections and classifications also tended to neglect Borges's Argentine roots, as I will show later. That said, some critics such as Jean-Pierre Bernès are in my opinion inclined to overemphasize Caillois's role in this process by suggesting his collaboration in Ibarra's preface and his refusal to publish

XX^e siècle: Jorge Luis Borgès"; Arnoux, *Visite à Mathusalem*; Bastide, "L'Amérique latine dans le miroir de sa littérature"; Bénichou, "Le monde de José [sic] Luis Borges"; Blanchot, "L'infini et l'infini"; Brenner, "Nous avons lu pour vous: *Enquêtes, 1937-1952* de Jorge-Luis Borges"; Brion, "D'un autre hémisphère... Trois livres sud-américains"; Dumur, "Une sensibilité exténuée"; Duvignaud, "Hommes: Jorge-Luis Borgès"; [Étiemble], "Revue des revues"; Fabius, "Résurrection de Borges"; Furter, "Jorge-Luis Borgès, romancier fantastique"; Guez, "Le livre de la semaine: *Enquêtes* de Jorge Luis Borgès"; Hecht, "Jorge-Luis Borgès est mort"; Ibarra, "Borges et Borges," interview by *L'Herne*; Maurois, "Un livre par mois: *Labyrinthes* de J.-L. Borgès"; and Messadié, "Les lettres étrangères."

⁷² Molloy, *La diffusion de la littérature hispano-américaine*, 210.

⁷³ Bénichou, "Le monde de José [sic] Luis Borges," 675.

⁷⁴ Albérès, "Un Edgar Poe du XX^e siècle: Jorge Luis Borgès."

volumes such as *Fervor de Buenos Aires* and *Evaristo Carriego*.⁷⁵ Such claims are neither confirmed nor denied in Gallimard's Borges correspondence and other sources. The lack of (unpublished) sources on some mediators involved in the Borges book publications in France, such as on Ibarra, and the fact that some of the mediators' comments seem rather inconsistent, such as those of Caillois, are difficulties that cast doubt on the actions of these mediators. But in any case, there was certainly a consensus among mediators who stayed in Argentina in the 1940s that Borges was, to a minor or major extent, not representative of Argentine literature.

One could wonder how and to what extent the reception of Borges's work by Ibarra, Caillois, Bénichou, and Albérès interacted with the reception of Borges in the Argentine literary field in the 1940s. Before Borges's work was translated into French, his work had, of course, already found its audience in Argentina, and the somewhat polemical critical reception of his work there may well have influenced the French mediators. Although Borges himself famously claimed in 1965 that he was an invention of Caillois,⁷⁶ the Argentine discussions about Borges's work have to be considered in order to better understand how it was received by Ibarra and other French mediators. Interestingly, in a memoir of his encounters with Borges, Bénichou has indicated that their first conversations, in the 1940s, mainly revolved around the topic of the Allied forces: "je me souviens qu'au cours de nos rencontres et de nos promenades dans Buenos Aires nous avons surtout communiqué dans notre passion pour la cause des Alliés."⁷⁷ Bénichou even claims he was somewhat surprised by the discussions about the Argentine nature of Borges's work in Buenos Aires, although he did take these up in his early French review, perhaps because of his long-lasting friendship with Ibarra, to which he also refers in the same text. By contrast, Paul Verdevoye, a mediator who only travelled to Argentina after having translated Borges's *Ficciones*, and who did not publish any articles on Borges in my period of study, would later stress the "Argentine" and folkloric side of Borges's work.⁷⁸

In light of the discussion about Borges's nationality or representativeness in Argentina, it should be remarked that the original volumes of, for instance, *Ficciones* and *El Aleph* carried peritexts written by Borges that did little to situate himself in the

⁷⁵ Bernès, "Borges ou le vieil anarchiste paisible," interview by de Cortanze, 38.

⁷⁶ Bosquet, "Admirable Jorge Luis Borges." See also Borges and Caillois, "Diálogo fugaz: Jorge Luis Borges-Roger Caillois," 23.

⁷⁷ Roubaud and Bénichou, "Souvenirs sur Borges," 37-38.

⁷⁸ Verdevoye, "Jorge Luis Borges, écrivain argentin"; and Verdevoye and Bogliano, "Littératures hispano-américaines," 761. This latter fragment only appears in the 1968 and not in the 1956 edition.

Argentine literary, political, and historical context. These were also translated in France.⁷⁹ In fact, in the magazine *Sur* in the 1940s, Borges expressed much criticism of nationalist writers and critics.⁸⁰ Furthermore, a 1942 review of *El jardín de senderos que se bifurcan*, published in *Sur* by Borges's friend Adolfo Bioy Casares, shows that this important mediator in the reception of the author's work in Argentina also fiercely rejected the norm of representativeness:

Tal vez algún turista, o algún distraído aborigen, inquiera si este libro es 'representativo.' Los investigadores que esgrimen esta palabra no se resignan a que toda obra esté contaminada por la época y el lugar en que aparece y por la personalidad del autor; ese determinismo los alegra; registrarlo es el motivo que tienen para leer. [. . .] De la pampa nos quedan los viajes largos y algunas incomodidades. Estamos en la periferia de los grandes bosques y de la arqueología de América. Creo, sin vanagloria, que podemos decepcionarnos de nuestro folklore. Nuestra mejor tradición es un país futuro. [. . .] Podemos prescindir de cierto provincialismo de que adolecen algunos europeos. Es natural que para un francés la literatura sea la literatura francesa. Para un argentino es natural que su literatura sea toda la buena literatura del mundo. De esa cultura, en la que trabajan, o trabajaron, William James, Bernard Shaw, Wells, Eça de Queiroz, Russell, Croce, Alfonso Reyes, Paul Valéry, Julien Benda, Jorge Luis Borges, y de la Argentina posible y quizá venidera que le corresponde, este libro es representativo.⁸¹

This stance is comparable to Ibarra's criticism of applying a pre-set and static idea of *lo criollo* to literary works. Perhaps similarly to Ibarra's book and Borges's "El escritor argentino y la tradición," Bioy Casares situates the Argentine literary tradition in the future.

Whereas Bioy Casares did not feel obliged to claim that Borges was an Argentine writer, many other authors and critics did so in order to defend Borges's work against antinational criticism. This was the case for some of the participants in the discussion of the magazine *Megáfono* in 1933, and later also in the "Desagravio a Borges" after Borges failed to receive the Premio Nacional de Literatura in 1941,

⁷⁹ See Adriaensen and Wijnterp, "Borges leído a través de sus cubiertas," 6-11.

⁸⁰ See King, "Sur": A Study of the Argentine Literary Journal, 95-128.

⁸¹ Bioy Casares, review of *El jardín de senderos que se bifurcan*, 64-65.

when critics stood up for the idea that Borges was Argentine and universal at the same time. Although Annick Louis claims that Ibarra's preface for *Lettres françaises* and Caillois's later actions in France were partly derived from the critical interpretations of the *desagravio* that presented Borges's poetics as uprooted from reality,⁸² it is also true that the texts in the *desagravio* were very heterogeneous and certainly did not neglect to discuss Borges's intent to reflect on contemporaneous Argentine reality. The Argentine critic Amado Alonso, for instance, argued in the same Borges issue:

Es verdad que no se dedica en sus ficciones a describir aspectos sociales de su tiempo y de su tierra; no se embandera en partidos que le den apoyo a truce de servidumbre; ni siquiera—tan radical es su argentinismo—ni siquiera se ejercita en fraseologías o simbologías patrióticas; pero su literatura *es, ella* es un tema argentino de primer orden para estudios venideros; su sátira de la realidad social es tanto más valiosa cuanto más apunta a lo esencial por encima de los accidentes; sus libros, con sólo existir, por sus solas virtudes literarias, han conseguido para la Argentina en el mundo civilizado más honor que quienes creen que para hacer literatura argentina se requiere sin excepción la materia de los temas locales.⁸³

Based on this fragmented review of the discussions of Borges's nationality in Argentine criticism,⁸⁴ such discussions must have had an impact on Ibarra's opening lines. These lines responded, just as Bioy Casares, Alonso, and Borges himself did, indirectly to criticism that was already being leveled at Borges in Argentina. There was, however, a difference in these responses: while Bioy Casares, Borges, and Ibarra deemed the norm of representativeness not particularly relevant for Argentina and Argentine literature, and other critics and authors such as Alonso maintained it when stressing Borges's Argentine or both Argentine and universal nature, Ibarra's French texts reversed the norm. His inverse use of the norm of representativeness stressed Borges's statelessness as a positive asset. Ibarra and other French mediators involved in the circles of the Institut Français d'Études Supérieures and *Sur* in Argentina thus

⁸² Louis, *Borges ante el fascismo*, 146-47.

⁸³ Alonso, in "Desagravio a Borges," special issue, *Sur* 12, no. 94 (July, 1942): 16-17. For similar arguments, see also Sánchez Reulet, in "Desagravio a Borges," special issue, *Sur* 12, no. 94 (July, 1942): 19.

⁸⁴ For an in-depth discussion of early Argentine criticism, see Bastos, *Borges ante la crítica argentina*.

mediated Borges's work with prior knowledge of its critical reception in Argentina and tried to break clear of these discussions in the French context.

3. Roger Caillois and *Fictions*: Between the universal and the picturesque

Caillois's role in the translation and publication of the book volumes of Borges's work began in 1951 with his choice of *Ficciones* as the first book by Borges in France, and as the first book in the collection La Croix du Sud. Even though the French title of *Fictions* seems a direct rendering of the original title, Borges has claimed that the Argentine title of *Ficciones* was imposed by the editor of *Sur*, José Bianco, and has even suggested that Caillois played a role in this choice, although the time lapse between the publication of *Ficciones* and the interview in which Borges made these comments, just before his death in 1986, casts doubt on their reliability.⁸⁵ Caillois's choice for this relatively recent book of stories shows a preference for Borges's prose over his earlier poetry and essays, which can also be deduced from the fact that, before 1951, Caillois published only stories as individual translations in magazines. Borges's essays from *Discusión* and his poetry in *Fervor de Buenos Aires*, *Luna de enfrente*, and *Cuaderno de San Martín*, in which he redefined and gave a new function to *lo criollo*, were published by Gallimard in the 1960s and 1970s.⁸⁶ Some other early volumes that Borges himself did not want to see reprinted, such as *Inquisiciones*, *El tamaño de mi esperanza*, and *El idioma de los argentinos*, were never issued in France, and only some of their essays were taken up in the Pléiade editions of Borges's *Œuvres complètes*.

The choice of a Borges book and title, for which Caillois was mainly responsible, did not necessarily coincide with all of Ibarra's selections, classifications, and norms. Some of Caillois's classifications, however, do tie in relatively fluently with Ibarra's preface to the first edition of *Fictions*. Ibarra's comments on Borges's poetry and essays in a book translation of Borges's prose, for instance, are echoed in the presentation leaflet and presentation text in Gallimard's catalogue *Bulletin de la NRF*. Because of their style, these promotional lines on Borges's books seem to have been written by Caillois: "Peut-on appeler 'nouvelles' les quatorze pièces qui

⁸⁵ Bernès, preface to *Ficciones. Fictions*, 7-8; Borges, *Œuvres complètes*, vol. 1, 1542. For an earlier comment by Borges without a direct reference to Bianco and Caillois, see Borges, *Borges el memorioso*, interview by Carrizo, 221.

⁸⁶ For a discussion of *criollismo* in Borges's early work, see Olea Franco, *El otro Borges*.

composent ce recueil? Ce sont indiscutablement des nouvelles, et cependant il y a en elles quelque chose qui fait hésiter à les placer sous cette étiquette.”⁸⁷ This idea of the unclassifiable nature of Borges's fictions is underscored when Borges is compared to Franz Kafka and Edgar Allan Poe but nonetheless found to elude classifications: “on a comparé Borges à Kafka et à Edgar Poe [sic]. Il y a chez lui, sans doute, toute l'angoisse métaphysique et la logique la plus sévère; mais aussi un style éclatant et bref, une fantaisie brillante et une intelligence très aigüe en font un auteur inclassable.”⁸⁸ This text, later also published on the back cover of the 1961 translation of *Fictions*, reminds us of Ibarra's comparison of Borges to Wells and Kafka on the basis of subtle fear, although Caillois's pen can here be recognized. While the metaphysical anxiety is not further elaborated upon in these short texts on Borges, Caillois did include Borges in his 1958 anthology on fantastic literature, subtitled *Soixante récits de terreur*. In the preface of this anthology, which includes Borges and Poe but excludes Kafka, Caillois limits the fantastic to the effects of fear that are provoked by the intervention of the supernatural in the real world.⁸⁹ Similarly, in his 1962 anthology on dreams, in which he also includes Borges, Poe, and Wells, Caillois adds dreams to his definition of the fantastic because of their capacity to be terrifying.⁹⁰

Caillois was responsible for selecting the preface and other paratexts in and around the first edition of *Fictions*, but would later allow Ibarra to rewrite the preface, a change that was at least partially proposed by Borges himself. In an unpublished, 1964 letter to Claude Gallimard that has not been dealt with in other studies, Borges states:

En ce qui concerne ma prose on a annoncé en France la publication du “Hacedor,” de “Discusión” et du “Aleph,” mais je crois avoir entendu qu'on n'a pas encore commender [sic] ces travaux. S'il en est ainsi, je me permets de suggérer Ibarra comme la personne la plus indiquée. J'aimerais bien que

⁸⁷ Presentation of *Fictions*, *Bulletin de la Nrf*, no. 46 (April, 1951): 3. A very similar text is used as presentation leaflet (*prière d'insérer*) of *Fictions*, *Librairie Gallimard* (January, 1952). A revised version can be found as: presentation of *Fictions*, *Bulletin de la Nrf*, no. 54 (January, 1952): 2.

⁸⁸ Presentation of *Fictions*, *Bulletin de la Nrf*, no. 46 (April, 1951): 4.

⁸⁹ Caillois, preface to *Fantastique: Soixante récits de terreur*, 3. The included texts by Borges are “Les ruines circulaires”; and “Le miroir d'encre.” Caillois also published a second edition of the anthology: Borges, “Le Sud. Le miroir d'encre.”

⁹⁰ Caillois, preface to *Puissances du rêve*, 22. The included text by Borges is “Chacun et aucun.” See also Caillois's “Remarques sur le rêve.”

Ibarra eût aussi l'opportunité de modifier et compléter la préface de "Ficciones." On pourrait ajouter le récit "El sur," encore inédit en français.⁹¹

These requests, which make it less plausible that Borges collaborated in the composition of Ibarra's 1944 preface, were granted, not for the translator, but for the preface. In the 1968 edition of *Fictions* in the collection *Du monde entier*, Gallimard published a new and longer preface by Ibarra that partly reconfirms the previous version:

Il est difficile de moins ressembler à un gaucho, à un estanciero, à un Argentin moyen, à un Argentin cultivé—à tous ces Français nostalgiques... On sait (ou on apprend facilement) que Jorge Luis Borges naquit en 1899 à Buenos-Aires, [et] que ses origines sont hispano-anglo-portugaises.⁹²

The new text questions "à quel pays, à quelle époque il se sent appartenir,"⁹³ continuing the line of Borges's statelessness, and also the criticism does not disappear altogether. Ibarra now refers, as well as to Borges's poems and essays, to Borges's later poetry from *El hacedor* onwards, this time by implicitly showing his preference for this genre, although he already observes the course that Borges's reception in France had taken:

Au conteur de *Ficciones* et de *El Aleph*, à l'auteur des brèves proses de *El Hacedor*, il est encore permis de préférer le poète d'après 1958. Mais des récits comme *La Bibliothèque de Babel*, comme *La Loterie à Babylone*, comme *Le Miracle Secret*, mais les meilleures pages (les neuf monnaies, les "hrönir") de *Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius* nous avertissent assez de ne pas trop nous défendre contre l'histoire, qui a sans doute déjà choisi entre tous les Borges le créateur de la métaphysique-fiction.⁹⁴

In this version of *Fictions*, Ibarra's adaptations of the note in "El acercamiento a Almotásim," its ending, and its French title were also changed, as well as some

⁹¹ Borges to Claude Gallimard, December 7, 1964, Gallimard Archives.

⁹² Ibarra, preface to *Fictions* (Paris: Gallimard, 1968), 7.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 18.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 8.

details in his translations of "La lotería en Babilonia" and "La biblioteca de Babel." As these changes are not mentioned in the Gallimard correspondence, the initiator and underlying thoughts are unknown. In my view, the new edition made an attempt (only partial, as I will show below) to keep track of new editions in Argentina.⁹⁵

Borges's request to add "El Sur" to the selection of texts was, however, not taken up in the new version of *Fictions*. In fact, of the three stories that were added to the new and extended Argentine edition of *Ficciones* in 1956, only "La secta del Fénix" was included in the new, 1968 version of *Fictions*—in a translation by Verdevoye and not the one previously done by Ibarra—while "El Sur" and "El fin" were not published in the French editions of *Fictions* until at least the 1980s.⁹⁶ The exclusion of these stories can perhaps be explained by very practical or even casual reasons, as Caillois had added a number of texts that appeared in Borges's *Antología personal*, including both stories, to the 1965 edition of *L'auteur et autres textes* to prevent duplication between the anthology and existing book translations. Caillois's exclusion of "El Sur" was probably not based on his own preferences, given that he translated, included, and recommended it for various anthologies.⁹⁷ The idea that Caillois's choices were practical or circumstantial is underscored by some of the selections of texts and titles for two other book translations of Borges's work. From *Otras inquisiciones*, a study on Nathaniel Hawthorne was eliminated whereas three texts from the 1950s—"Destino escandinavo" from the magazine *Sur*, a chapter of *Evaristo Carriego*, and "Historia de los ecos de un nombre" from *Cuadernos del Congreso por la Libertad de la Cultura*—were added, probably in accordance with Borges's wishes.⁹⁸ The change of the title to *Enquêtes* was possibly due to the fact that *Inquisitions* was the title of a 1936 magazine produced by the leftist study group for human phenomenology that was directed by Caillois, Louis Aragon, Jules Monnerot, and Tristan Tzara. For *Histoire de l'infamie. Histoire de l'éternité*, the combination of the two Argentine books may have stemmed not just from the similarity in the titles but

⁹⁵ The translation of "La biblioteca de Babel" for *Lettres françaises* and the first editions of *Fictions*, for instance, was based on the 1941 version in *El jardín de senderos que se bifurcan*, while the 1968 edition followed the adapted version in *Ficciones*.

⁹⁶ Villegas briefly observes these changes in *Fictions*, and mentions others in *Enquêtes*, but does not study how these selections are related to specific mediators and their norms, as I will try to do here. Villegas, "Aux seuils d'une collection," 200-201.

⁹⁷ Borges, "Le Sud. Macedonio Fernandez"; Borges, "Le Sud. Le miroir d'encre." See Dominique de Roux to Michel Beaujour, Paris, April 17, 1963, in Barré, *Dominique de Roux*, 191.

⁹⁸ See Bénichou and Bénichou, translator's foreword to *Enquêtes*, 9; and Caillois to Ocampo, January 29, 1955, in *Correspondance Roger Caillois, Victoria Ocampo (1939-1978)*, 338.

from the fact that both original volumes had relatively few pages. The elimination of the word “universal” in *Historia universal de la infamia* on the cover and title page of the French translation was, according to Caillois, for typographical reasons only, and a change he had not agreed to.⁹⁹

Nevertheless, the specific choice and arrangement of texts and titles in the various book translations appeared to be related to strategic choices made by Caillois. The stories excluded from *Fictions*, for instance, can be more easily situated in a recognizable Buenos Aires (“El Sur”) or in the context of Argentine literature (“El fin”), and would therefore have been at odds with the negation of Borges’s nationality in Ibarra’s preface and with the presentation of an author with a metaphysical anxiety similar to those of Kafka, Wells, and Poe. The repeated exclusion of these stories from the later editions of *Fictions* can therefore perhaps be explained by Caillois’s idea of coherence for this particular book title. Rather than a subversion of the literary conventions of the time, Caillois’s efforts for *Fictions*, and also for later volumes, seemed an attempt to adjust Borges’s work to a norm of what Caillois thought the French reader might like. This norm can be deduced from an unpublished letter to Claude Gallimard in 1964, in which Caillois indicates that he wants to exclude from the French edition of *Discusión* “une conférence sur la poésie gauchesque trop spéciale pour le lecteur français.”¹⁰⁰ Borges also refers to Caillois’s idea of the French reader when he speaks of the translation of *El hacedor* in a letter to Caillois in 1965: “Je me rappelai ce que vous m’aviez dit à propos de certains textes que vous trouviez trop ‘criollos’ pour le goût français, etc.”¹⁰¹

As this perceived French taste obviously was not shared by all French readers but by a more specific group of possible buyers or readers of a Gallimard book, it is relevant to consider the way the presentation of *Fictions*—and of the first book translations in general—can be related to Caillois’s institutional affiliations: primarily Gallimard and its literary magazine *La nouvelle revue française*. For Caillois, *le goût français* favored a form of “universal” literature that should not be too attached to local or national issues. Caillois’s *Babel: Orgueil, confusion et ruine de la littérature*, issued by Gallimard directly after the war, takes a stance against political commitment without explicitly referring to any (French) authors, but by clearly expressing this norm of the universal in literature:

⁹⁹ Caillois, “Visita a Roger Caillois,” interview by Orphée, 57.

¹⁰⁰ Caillois to Claude Gallimard, December 15, 1964, Gallimard Archives.

¹⁰¹ Borges to Caillois, January 29, 1965, in Caillois, *Roger Caillois*, 230.

C'est une ferveur têtue et bornée, par où une conscience réduit volontairement son horizon et fausse sa perspective. Abandonnant son privilège fondamental, elle se détourne de l'universel. Elle embrasse le parti de certains hommes groupés par une condition de fait, qui les assemble sans égard à leur bonne ou à leur mauvaise volonté.¹⁰²

These preferences thus also excluded the political commitment that both Caillois and Borges had shown during the Second World War: Caillois did not publish individual translations of Borges stories that took a clear anti-totalitarian stance and were published in *Sur*, such as "El milagro secreto" and "Deutsches Requiem," in France. This shows that he was distancing himself from his committed actions in support of *la France libre* for the magazines *Sur*, *Lettres françaises*, and *La France libre*.¹⁰³ This position is mirrored in his preference for publishing in *La nouvelle revue française*, representative of "pure" literature as opposed to, for instance, in Jean-Paul Sartre's political and literary magazine *Les temps modernes*.¹⁰⁴

A second institutional affiliation that can be connected with Caillois's idea of French taste is his involvement in the Congrès pour la Liberté de la Culture and its cultural magazine *Preuves*. Caillois participated in an art festival in Paris in May 1952 and in other activities organized by the Congrès, the French version of the anti-communist Congress for Cultural Freedom that at the end of the 1960s was proven to be supported by the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA).¹⁰⁵ Although Caillois was not involved in the group's decision-making structures, he regularly published essays, short notes, and translations in *Preuves*, a magazine that claimed to defend "European" cultural values against all forms of totalitarianism, and that French leftist intellectuals perceived as right-wing propaganda from the United States.¹⁰⁶ While the anti-communist profile of the magazine was far from apolitical, *Preuves* did try to

¹⁰² Caillois, "Engagement," 295. See also one of Caillois's book publications on the war, in which he avoids referring to specific historical events, as he himself also indicates: Caillois, *Circonstanciennes*, 145.

¹⁰³ For the anti-Nazi context in which Borges's work was published in *Sur* and in *Lettres françaises*, see King, "Sur": A Study of the Argentine Literary Journal, 95-128; and Louis, *Borges ante el fascismo*. For the lack of a political and referential reading of Borges's *ficciones* in postwar France, especially in Caillois, see also Klengel, "'El universo (que otros llaman la biblioteca)' y *L'univers concentrationnaire*."

¹⁰⁴ For these two magazines, see Cerisier, *Une histoire de "La NRF"*; Boschetti, *Sartre et "Les temps modernes"*; and Boschetti, "Les temps modernes dans le champ littéraire."

¹⁰⁵ Saunders, *Cultural Cold War*, 120; and Grémion, *Intelligence de l'anticommunisme*, 80, 104. Caillois speaks about both this festival and Borges's *Fictions* in an interview: Caillois, "Caillois: 'Soldats de la liberté!'" interview by Parinaud.

¹⁰⁶ For Caillois and the Congress, see Grémion, *Intelligence de l'anticommunisme*, 166. For *Preuves* and its reception, see Grémion, "Une revue européenne à Paris," 16-20.

gain prestige among neutralist intellectuals, to avoid being seen as Cold War propaganda. Caillois's stance against political commitment and the attachment to national issues in literature, as implied by his presentation of Borges's work, could therefore find a place in *Preuves*. Not coincidentally, *Preuves* and *La nouvelle revue française* were the two magazines in which Caillois published most translations of Borges's work in the 1950s and 1960s. Caillois's actions may have affected the collective construction of literary norms within these magazines, but his affiliation with these two magazines may also have had an effect on his actions.

In addition to the particular presentation of *Fictions* and the other book translations of Borges's work at Gallimard, the books were also part of the presentation of Spanish American and Brazilian literature in *La Croix du Sud*, the Gallimard collection that Caillois directed. *Fictions* marked the start of the collection in 1951, and was followed by more than 50 other book translations until the dissolution of the collection in 1970. Until that year, all translations of Borges's work at Gallimard were included in *La Croix du Sud*, except for the first edition of *Labyrinthes*, which was published independently of the book collection. Borges's titles were—together with Alejo Carpentier's oeuvre—the most well-represented in

the collection. *La Croix du Sud* has been studied from different perspectives, most notably by French scholars Claude Fell and Jean-Claude Villegas, who look at the authors included in the collection and the way the collection was presented in its paratexts.¹⁰⁷ Fell mentions the fact that Borges's poetics was somewhat at odds with the poetics of other authors included in the selection, and Villegas briefly observes several changes in the titles and selections of Borges's book volumes, although he does not relate these to specific mediators, selections, or norms in the reception of Borges's work. Fell and Villegas are not principally concerned with the particular material presentation of Borges's volumes or how these relate to the presentation of

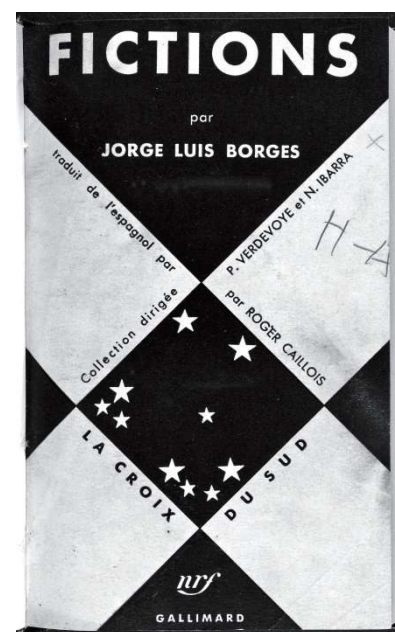


Figure 3: Book cover *Fictions*, 1951

¹⁰⁷ Fell, "La Croix du Sud"; and Villegas, "Aux seuils d'une collection."

La Croix du Sud. I will take this question up here, partly by using sales figures from the Gallimard archives and recently published correspondence.

Taking into account the already paradoxical emphasis on Borges's work as both stateless and European, and as both unclassifiable and metaphysical in *Fictions*, the inclusion of this volume in La Croix du Sud was at least somewhat paradoxical. In Caillois's selection of authors, and in the public presentation of the collection, La Croix du Sud explicitly contextualized the literature as Latin American. In his selection of authors such as Jorge Amado, José María Arguedas, Graciliano Ramos, Rómulo Gallegos, Alejo Carpentier, Ricardo Güiraldes, Miguel Ángel Asturias, and Armando Braun Menéndez, Caillois showed a preference for an exotic, telluric conception of Latin American literature, although it is true that he also included authors such as Julio Cortázar and Ernesto Sábato. Moreover, in one of the very first descriptions of the new book collection, which seems to have been written by Caillois,¹⁰⁸ Latin America is described as "un continent encore neuf, à peine dominé, où la lutte avec l'espace et avec la nature demeure sévère," a continent where the literature is "à la fois sauvage et raffinée."¹⁰⁹ In another, 1962 description of the collection in the *Bulletin de la Nrf*, Caillois relates Latin American literature to the large, indomitable spaces of Latin America:

Ce monde a été magnifiquement décrit par les deux dernières générations de romanciers et de poètes. Leurs œuvres donnent l'image d'un univers à une autre échelle que l'Europe ratissée et domestiquée. Non pas un monde de jardins, mais un empire vierge, où les forces naturelles demeurent disproportionnées à celles que peut lui opposer l'insecte humain.¹¹⁰

Similarly to this characterization in Gallimard's catalogue, and as Villegas has remarked in his study on the peritexts of the books, the titles were rather exotic in their maintenance of foreign names and their references to wild nature, and the back covers evoked a strange, hostile, baroque, violent, and perverted world.¹¹¹ This presentation therefore contrasted sharply with the particular presentation of Borges's

¹⁰⁸ For this supposition, see also Vásquez, "Petite chronique des incroyables Florides," 237.

¹⁰⁹ Presentation of the book series La Croix du Sud, *Bulletin de la Nrf*, no. 54 (January, 1952). See also: Presentation leaflet (*prière d'insérer*) of *Fictions*, *Librairie Gallimard* (January, 1952).

¹¹⁰ Caillois, "Espaces américaines," *Bulletin de la Nrf*, no. 171 (June, 1962).

¹¹¹ Villegas, "Aux seuils d'une collection," 198.

books, which in none of the peritexts and catalogue texts were presented in relation to Argentina or the Latin American continent.

Caillois himself confirmed his intention to show an unknown and foreign world in a 1966 interview with Elvira Orphée: “‘La Croix du Sud’ no publica poesía, ensayos, libros que vienen de España, libros que viniendo de América Latina no dan una idea de su esencia. Por eso no se ha publicado en esta colección *La región más transparente*, de Carlos Fuentes. Por eso se ha publicado *Chaves*, de Mallea.” Caillois’s “essence” mainly seemed to refer to the rural or exotic elements in Latin American literature. At the same time, he qualified this statement by asserting that good literature rises above local problems: “un movimiento literario para ser válido debe superar por su interés humano los problemas característicos del perímetro local de donde salió.”¹¹² Caillois was responsible for the publisher’s list of La Croix du Sud, and at one point criticized himself for the picturesque direction that his collection had taken. In a 1958 letter to Victoria Ocampo, he distanced himself from the turn that La Croix du Sud had taken and wondered whether it would not be better to publish Héctor A. Murena’s existential novel in the collection Blanche, which was dedicated to general literature. The novel was, much later, published in La Croix du Sud.

Oui, le roman de Murena (*Fatalidad de los cuerpos*) est pris par Gallimard. Je ne l’ai pas encore lu et me demande si je dois le prendre dans la Croix du Sud ou si sa place n’est pas plutôt dans la Collection Blanche. (La Croix du Sud, petit à petit, est devenue très “*costumbrista*,” ce qui est injuste pour toute une partie de la littérature ibéro-américaine, qui vaut bien l’autre). Dis-moi ce que tu penses personnellement de ce roman. Cela m’aidera dans ma décision (non seulement pour le livre de Murena, mais pour la question de principe).¹¹³

This letter, in addition to confirming the mediating role that Victoria Ocampo played via Caillois, shows that Caillois was somewhat inconsistent or paradoxical in his choices and justifications. The paradoxical position of Borges’s *Fictions* and the second edition of *Labyrinthes* was prolonged when Caillois published *Enquêtes* and *Discussion*, collections of essays, and *L’auteur et autres textes*, which contains poetry, in a collection that, according to his own words, did not include essays or poetry. The

¹¹² Caillois, “Visita a Roger Caillois,” interview by Orphée, 57.

¹¹³ Caillois to Ocampo, n.d., 1958, in *Correspondance Roger Caillois, Victoria Ocampo (1939-1978)*, 354-55.

ambiguity in Caillois's poetical choices and justifications applied to other writers as well, as more "cosmopolitan" authors such as Héctor Murena, Eduardo Mallea, Ernesto Sábato, and Julio Cortázar were also included in the collection. As Fell has stated, Caillois's emphasis on what he considered the specific Latin American essence in literature caused, at the end of the 1960s, Carlos Fuentes, Julio Cortázar, and Mario Vargas Llosa to refuse to be published in a collection they perceived as a "ghetto."¹¹⁴

Regarding Borges's work, I would argue that Caillois's contradictory actions were partly due to the different institutional roles he simultaneously fulfilled. The inclusion of Borges in *La Croix du Sud* may have had less to do with a picturesque or universal idea of Borges's work, or with Caillois's own poetics, than with his role as director of *La Croix du Sud* for Gallimard: the more positive reception of *Fictions* than of the second volume of the collection, *Doña Bárbara* by Rómulo Gallegos,¹¹⁵ and the sales figures of the translations, indicate that Borges's work was critically and commercially important for the collection. According to a study of Latin American literature in France, Borges's *Enquêtes* was the best-selling title by any of Gallimard's Latin American authors in the period between approximately 1957 and 1967.¹¹⁶ Based on the sales figures I was given at Gallimard, which cover the period from 1953 until approximately 1986, 9,746 copies of the 1957 edition of *Enquêtes* were sold; the figure for the 1968 edition of *Fictions* was 20,198.¹¹⁷ Although these numbers are not substantial in absolute terms—Borges was, for instance, not yet among the titles selling over 10,000 that were included in the 1955, 1956, and 1958 bestseller lists of *Les nouvelles littéraires*¹¹⁸—they may have influenced Caillois's choices for *La Croix du Sud*. This explains the importance of the continuous publication of Borges in the

¹¹⁴ Fell, "La Croix du Sud," 186.

¹¹⁵ See Kemp, "Vérités et fictions"; and Brion, "D'un autre hémisphère... Trois livres sud-américains."

¹¹⁶ Bareiro Saguier, "Literatura latinoamericana en Francia," 64. No further sales information on the first edition of *Fictions* is available, but based on this study and the Gallimard files it is possible that *Enquêtes* sold better than *Fictions* in the 1950s.

¹¹⁷ The figures for the earlier and later editions of *Fictions* and the later editions of *Enquêtes* were missing, as not all figures were included in the file I consulted. Those included were: *Fictions* (1968, but, probably erroneously, indicated under 1957): 20,198; *Labyrinthes* (1953): 2,368; *Labyrinthes* (1962): 2,903; *Enquêtes* (1957): 9,746; *L'auteur et autres textes* (1965): 3,625; *L'auteur et autres textes* (1971): 5,602; *L'auteur et autres textes* (1982): 9,3061; *Discussion* (1966): 3,407; *Discussion* (1979): 2,775; *L'Aleph* (1967): 14,144; *L'Aleph* (1977): 42,136; *Ceuvre poétique* (1970): 4,785; *Le rapport de Brodie* (1972): 14,838; *L'or des tigres* (1976): 3,836; *Le livre de sable* (1978): 23,242; *Livre de préfaces* (1980): 4,871; and *La rose profonde* (1983): 2,758.

¹¹⁸ "1945-1955: Les plus forts tirages de l'édition française depuis dix ans," *Les nouvelles littéraires*, no. 1440 (April 7, 1955); "Les plus forts tirages de l'édition française en 1955," *Les nouvelles littéraires*, no. 1485 (February 16, 1956); and "Les plus forts tirages de 1957," *Les nouvelles littéraires*, no. 1587 (January 30, 1958).

collection, but it does not account for the fact that *Fictions* was issued as the collection's first volume. A comparison with other Latin American authors shows, however, that in the 1950s Latin American literature at Gallimard was published in the collection with almost no exceptions, and thus perhaps regardless of the presentation of some particular early volumes.¹¹⁹ In this way, the more "universal" presentation of Borges's individual book volumes and their paradoxical inclusion in the more "picturesque" La Croix du Sud were part of Caillois's interests not only as a critic and an editor, but also as the director of the book collection.

4. Roger Caillois and *Labyrinthes*: Reflecting on the structure of the universe

The second Borges book translated in France, *Labyrinthes*, was published in 1953 in a limited edition without the mark of a collection. The anthology included four stories from *El Aleph*, "Historia del guerrero y de la cautiva," "El inmortal," "La escritura del Dios," and "La busca de Averroes," which were selected, translated and introduced by Roger Caillois. Both the selection of stories and the choice for the title show a reflection on the labyrinth in Borges's work, on which Caillois elaborates in his foreword:

[les quatre contes] me semblent participer d'une inspiration commune qui m'a paru justifier de les réunir et de leur donner le titre de *Labyrinthes*. Les uns compliquent, les autres amenuisent à l'extrême les jeux de miroirs où se complaît l'auteur. Le thème du labyrinthe n'y est pas toujours explicitement évoqué. En revanche, plusieurs autres contes du même recueil, que pourtant je n'ai pas cru devoir retenir, se passent dans des labyrinthes, mais ceux-ci ne sont que des décors, c'est-à-dire des labyrinthes réels, où s'égaré cette fois le corps, non la pensée du héros. Au contraire, les présents récits placent dans des symétries abstraites presque vertigineuses, des images à la fois antinomiques et interchangeables de la mort et de l'immortalité, de la barbarie et de la civilisation, du Tout et de la partie.¹²⁰

¹¹⁹ According to the catalogue on Gallimard's website (www.gallimard.fr), until 1960 all Latin American literature was published in the collection except for *Labyrinthes* and two titles by Alejo Carpentier. Carpentier's titles were, however, published in the collection, as becomes clear from Vásquez, "Petite chronique des incroyables Florides."

¹²⁰ Caillois, translator's foreword to *Labyrinthes*, 9-10.

The presentation of Borges's work, which in *Fictions* is mainly formulated in negative terms by Néstor Ibarra when Borges is introduced as a man without a homeland, who is neither a good poet nor an essayist, is complemented here by Caillois with a more positive formulation of various important themes in Borges's work, among which the labyrinth is predominant. Rather than focusing on "real" labyrinths, Caillois selects four stories in which abstract symmetries illustrate what Caillois calls Borges's attention for the finite and the infinite.¹²¹ As can also be deduced from the foreword, Caillois is less interested in the literary and geographical context of the stories, which is in keeping with his preference for a form of "universal" literature that he associates with French taste. In spite of this, Caillois does refer in the foreword to the classic opposition between civilization and barbarism in Argentine literature, presumably a reference to "Historia del guerrero y de la cautiva," which therefore places at least one of Borges's "labyrinths" in the context of Argentine literature.

In *Labyrinthes*, the coherence between the title, the selection of stories, the foreword, and even the book cover, which showed a grey labyrinth, was slightly interrupted when the volume was included in La Croix du Sud in a second edition in 1962, with the cover changed to the yellow and green of the book series and the paratexts also including presentation leaflets of the collection in general. While this inclusion of *Labyrinthes* in La Croix du Sud, and other choices for the book volumes in the Latin American book collection, can be related to publishing strategies that did not necessarily coincide with Caillois's own poetics, the particular presentation of *Labyrinthes* seems closely related to his poetical preferences. Caillois's fascination with the theme of the labyrinth in Borges's work is underscored by the fact that he continued to translate stories and essays by Borges for the magazine *Preuves* in the 1950s, and connected them to different types of labyrinth (*labyrinthe des sources*, *labyrinthe de la création*, *labyrinthe de la*

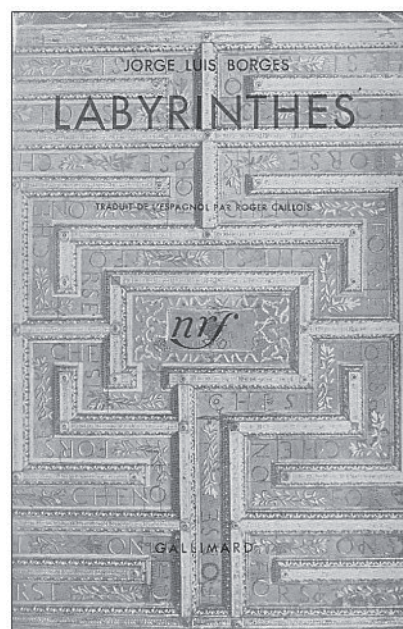


Figure 4: Book cover *Labyrinthes*, 1951

¹²¹ Ibid.

mythologie) in his introductions.¹²² Also, in the complete book translation of *El Aleph*, which was to follow in 1967, the division of texts between the two translators, Caillois and René L.-F. Durand, showed Caillois's interest in stories that could be related to labyrinths. Caillois translated, as well as the texts already included in *Labyrinthes*, several texts with an evidently labyrinthine theme such as "La casa de Asterión," "Abenjacán el Bojarí, muerto en su laberinto," and "Los dos reyes y los dos laberintos," partly already published in *Preuves*. Durand, an experienced translator and scholar, rendered the remaining texts. Although *L'Aleph* was issued much later than planned, probably, among other reasons, because the initial translator passed away in 1962, the reflections on the labyrinth were not altered in the book volume: *L'Aleph* was published with an almost identical foreword to that of *Labyrinthes*, which again confirms Caillois's lasting interest in this theme.¹²³

Caillois's poetical preferences become clear in his essay on Borges published in *L'Herne* in 1964. In "Les thèmes fondamentaux de J. L. Borges," Caillois studies what he finds to be the principal concern in Borges's oeuvre: the theme of circular time, which for him includes two other themes that are its projections in space and causality—that of the labyrinth and that of recurrent creation. Caillois lists Borges's texts in which the theme of circular time is most present, including his essays "El tiempo circular" and "Nueva refutación del tiempo," and illustrates this theme by quoting several classical and modern philosophers. Caillois also studied the conception of circular time, which supposes that history repeats itself at fixed intervals and finds its principle in the return of the seasons and the movement of celestial bodies, in a 1963 essay, "Temps circulaire, temps rectiligne." In this essay, published in Unesco's journal *Diogenes*, Caillois traces the conception of linear time in the West and that of circular time in the Orient. He observes that the belief in a historical, linear, irreversible time in Western philosophy and historiography is paramount from Herodotus to Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, but mentions some more contemporary exceptions such as Oswald Spengler and Arnold J. Toynbee.¹²⁴ In a similar way, in his essay on Borges he adds contemporary examples of a minority group of "eccentric" authors such as Borges, Jules Verne, and Saint-John Perse, who

¹²² For the translations, see Borges, "La demeure d'Asterión. Les précurseurs de Kafka. La création et P. H. Gosse"; and "Abenjacán el Bokhari mort dans son labyrinthe," *Preuves*, no. 102 (August, 1959); for the introductions, see Caillois, "Trois labyrinthes" (from which the three types of labyrinths are quoted); and "Quatre contes sud-américains."

¹²³ Contract for *L'Aleph*, February 10, 1959, Gallimard Archives. See also Caillois, foreword to *L'Aleph*, 7.

¹²⁴ Caillois, "Temps circulaire, temps rectiligne," 12.

believe in circular time and “n’acceptent pour absolu aucun centre de références particulier, ni local, ni temporel. Ils sont et se veulent bénéficiaires de la totalité de monde, héritiers d’un humanisme universel, où ils choisissent librement ce qui leur convient.”¹²⁵

As part of the theme of circular time, Caillois studies its causal projection in Borges’s work. The idea of recurrent creation that Caillois finds, for instance, in “Las ruinas circulares,” is based on every creator being created by another creator according to a law of infinite repetition: “le créateur est tout le monde et personne; un plan d’intelligibilité en suppose toujours un autre plus complexe qui comprend le premier et lui demeure, du fait même, inconcevable; il est enfin un dieu derrière Dieu.”¹²⁶ Caillois also looks at the spatial projection of circular time in the form of the labyrinth, the space in which he situates the characters of a Borges story. In this sense, Caillois makes a distinction between a philosopher and a literary author such as Borges, who reflects on circular time in order to create fiction:

[Borges] inventa, tardivement d’ailleurs, la sorte de conte, inédite auparavant, qui assure le meilleur de sa gloire. Un philosophe raisonne sur le temps pur. Un conteur doit, en outre, situer ses personnages dans un espace déterminé. Borges se trouva contraint de faire correspondre à la durée circulaire une étendue également circulaire. Ce fut le labyrinthe, lequel acquit chez lui une valeur obsédante. Réel ou métaphorique, matériel, moral ou intellectuel, il procure le lieu privilégié de nombreux récits.¹²⁷

Caillois also describes two types of labyrinth: one in which the itinerary is obligatory and one must discover every part of the way; and another in which there are many crossroads that lead to other crossroads and one has to make choices along the way. He identifies this second type of labyrinth in Borges’s work: a labyrinth of inextricable, cyclical ramifications that he links again with circular time and recurrent creation.¹²⁸

In Caillois’s work on Borges, the concept of the labyrinth is extended to apply to a large part of the Argentine author’s work, relatively independent of the function

¹²⁵ Caillois, “Les thèmes fondamentaux de J. L. Borges,” 217.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 216.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 214.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 215.

that Borges himself attributed to it. Borges's own reflections on the labyrinth evidently also developed over time, and varied, for instance, from his approval of the book title of *Labyrinthes* in a French interview to his declared weariness of the theme in another.¹²⁹ The labyrinth in much of Borges's fiction until the 1950s was closely related to the representation of the space of the city in stories with a detective plot, as Annick Louis has shown.¹³⁰ It is remarkable, especially given Caillois's early interest in detective fiction, that this genre and its relation to the labyrinth played a minor role for Caillois. Only in his socio-cultural study "Le roman policier," which was first published independently in Buenos Aires by *Sur* in 1942 and one year later in France as part of *Puissances du roman*, does Caillois briefly refer to Borges's rules or laws of the detective novel in "Los laberintos policiales y Chesterton," and even then only to state that "certains articles sont certainement discutables."¹³¹ The polemic that arose between the authors about the origins of the detective novel took place that same year in *Sur*, in two issues that also included Borges's short story "La muerte y la brújula." While Borges saw a purely literary origin of the detective novel in the Anglo-Saxon literary tradition, especially in Edgar Allan Poe, Caillois situated it in particular circumstances in French history, during the establishment of the Paris police force by Joseph Fouché. After this polemic, Caillois would never return to the detective theme in his critical work on Borges.

Caillois's reflection on abstract labyrinths in Borges's work also included a far-reaching implication: the equation of the labyrinth with the universe. In his foreword to *Labyrinthes*, Caillois identifies the labyrinth with the universe and also subscribes to this view in his essay "Les thèmes fondamentaux de J. L. Borges." In this essay, he claims that the themes of the labyrinth and recurrent creation "inspirent les symétries et les jeux de miroirs, les systèmes de correspondances et d'équivalences, les compensations et les équilibres secrets qui constituent à la fois la substance et la structure des récits et des poèmes de l'écrivain."¹³² Significantly, in a revised version of the same text published in 1978, Caillois adds: "Je suis persuadé pour ma part que ces structures et ces correspondances sont aussi celles de l'univers."¹³³ Caillois's

¹²⁹ Borges, *Entretiens avec Jorge Luis Borges*, interviews by Charbonnier, 9-10; and Borges, "Harto de los laberintos," interview by Fernández Moreno.

¹³⁰ Louis, "Borges mode d'emploi français," 316.

¹³¹ Caillois, "Le roman policier," 88.

¹³² Caillois, "Les thèmes fondamentaux de J. L. Borges," 211.

¹³³ Caillois, "Thèmes fondamentaux chez Jorge Luis Borgès," in *Rencontres* (Paris: PUF, 1978), 218.

interpretation of the labyrinth as a syntax of correspondences can be related to his conception of the universe and human existence, which he also defined as an inextricable network of repetitions, dependencies, recurrences, structures, echoes, and reflections. This interest in correspondences, this time specifically between words, also appears to have been the basis of Caillois's translation of Borges's essay on the Kenningar and his 1955 study on the contemporary interest of these Old Norse and Icelandic literary tropes.¹³⁴

Caillois's attention for the structures and equivalences in the universe, which were perhaps already inaugurated in his surrealist belief in the unitary world, was a continuous one that he himself has described as such:

Il va de soi que j'ai continué à défricher à ma manière l'univers sensible, m'efforçant d'y déceler des corrélations, des réseaux, des carrefours, des régularités, en un mot quelques-unes des réverbérations mystérieuses dont se trouve marqué ou éclairé l'épiderme du monde, depuis les dessins des pierres dans la matière inerte jusqu'aux images des poètes dans les jeux apparemment libres de l'imagination.

Dans l'une et dans l'autre de ces extrémités, j'ai cru dès le début qu'il devait régner une syntaxe. Entre l'une et l'autre, il me parut plus tard qu'il existait une continuité.¹³⁵

This quotation from the postface of Caillois's 1975 book *Approches de l'imaginaire*, which compiles some of his work from between 1935 and 1950, forms part of a larger study of the relationship between literature (l'imaginaire) and other fields of interest such as sociology, ethnology, philosophy, and psychoanalysis. This study, collected in the three-volume book series on fiction *Approches de l'imaginaire*, the first volume of which has the same title, contains several sociological parts on the relationship between text and society, between literature and the universe.

It is therefore not surprising that literature, sociology, and philosophy are also closely linked in Caillois's classifications of Borges's work. Whereas the Argentine writer would start from metaphysical reflections in order to create fiction, Caillois's own interest, as a scrutinizer of hidden coherences in the universe, took the inverse route. The labyrinths in Borges's literary work contained abstract, metaphysical

¹³⁴ Borges, "Les Kenningar"; and Caillois, "Actualité des Kenningar."

¹³⁵ Caillois, postface to *Approches de l'imaginaire*, 246.

intuitions or implications that Caillois strove to uncover.¹³⁶ This led him logically to pay less attention to some stylistic and narrative techniques in Borges's work, in spite of his constant interest in the formal construction of prose. This is evident, for instance, from the way in which the back cover of *Enquêtes* stresses the continuity between *Fictions* and *Enquêtes* rather than the generic differences, though promotional reasons may also have played a role in this presentation:

Le public français qui jusqu'ici connaît surtout J. L. Borgès par ses *Fictions*, comme auteur de contes ou d'inventions fantastiques, verra se révéler ici un Borges nouveau, critique littéraire et essayiste. Mais c'est le propre de Borges que l'imagination et l'esprit critique soient chez lui la même chose et que le fantastique naisse d'une réflexion aigüe sur le monde et les ouvrages de l'esprit.¹³⁷

This text is unsigned, but the classification of Borges's work as fantastic corresponds with other work by Caillois. The (reflection on the) world that Caillois recognizes in Borges's *Fictions* and *Enquêtes* mainly refers to the cosmos, as he took little interest in the concrete spacio-temporal context of the texts, just as he did in *Labyrinthes*.

The metaphysical background that Caillois observed in Borges's work was thus mainly cosmological rather than, for instance, ontological or spiritual, as Caillois looked for a sort of ultimate truth or profound key to the universe in Borges's work, even in texts in which he did not reflect on the labyrinth. As a member of the jury for the Prix International des Éditeurs, Caillois claimed that Borges had renovated or created a new genre: the metaphysical story, the *conte métaphysique*: "Son œuvre a la transparence des cristaux et la profondeur sans fin des miroirs qui se reflètent l'un dans l'autre."¹³⁸ This endless depth, which is here not applied to any domain in particular, is also already described in a note on *Fictions* in Gallimard's catalogue, which refers particularly to the meaning of the world or the universe: "On trouve aussi dans **Fictions** des contes bizarres dont la signification est profonde, des sortes de paraboles de la condition du monde, ainsi **La loterie à Babylone**, description

¹³⁶ Jean-Philippe Barnabé makes a very brief but similar observation about Caillois's work. However, it seems that he equates Borges's work with Caillois's interpretation of it by describing Borges's work as "divers types de figurations symboliques ou d'allégories," neglecting Borges's ironic or playful stance towards metaphysics. See Barnabé, "(D)écrire l'Amérique," 276.

¹³⁷ See also presentation of *Enquêtes*, *Bulletin de la Nrf*, no. 117 (July, 1957).

¹³⁸ Quoted in Adam, "A Formentor: Débats fiévreux," 3.

minutieuse dont jaillit, à la fin, un symbole immense."¹³⁹ The classification of Borges's stories as parables, here in the sense of a text with a deeper meaning, was infrequent in French criticism, whereas it frequently appeared in criticism in the United States and took on various connotations.

In order to examine these deeper meanings, Caillois not only stressed the need for a rigorous study of literary works in general, which he carried out in his book series *Approches de l'imaginaire*, but also looked for rigor in the works themselves. He thus read Borges's work as rigorous and logical, perhaps to emphasize the existence of a coherent thought system in Borges's work. In another presentation notice of *Fictions* in the *Bulletin de la Nrf*, for instance, Caillois refers to Borges's stories as "contes où rigueur et érudition composent des chefs-d'œuvre de logique vertigineuse," and he describes *Labyrinthes* in similar words: "La rigueur du contenu, une logique implacable et déconcertante ne le cèdent en rien à la perfection de la forme et à la richesse de l'invention. Un conte de Borgès est une mécanique de précision où la moindre pièce joue son rôle."¹⁴⁰ In an interview in the weekly *Opéra*, Caillois even places Borges on a higher level than Franz Kafka for this same rigor: "je voudrais vous signaler une bonne lecture, un nouveau Kafka, plus rigoureux et avec infiniment plus d'humour... Jorge Luis Borges."¹⁴¹ Although in this fragment Caillois combined Borges's humor in an uncomplicated way with his rigor, he would put these two elements in opposition to each other in later texts.

One example of Caillois's need for rigor implying a subtle rejection of the use of humor or irony is his description of his break with the surrealists in *Cases d'un échiquier*, the second (but first to be published) 1970 volume of *Approches de l'imaginaire* that anthologizes texts published between 1950 and 1965. In this text, which shows a contemptuous vision of literature that was at the basis of Caillois's break with the surrealist movement and the foundation of the Collège de Sociologie,¹⁴² the author pleads for both seriousness and rigor:

J'étais un adolescent qui [. . .] considérait la littérature tout entière comme une activité frivole, symptomatique peut-être de réalités cachées, mais qu'un esprit

¹³⁹ Presentation of *Fictions*, *Bulletin de la Nrf*, no. 46 (April, 1951): 4. See also: Presentation leaflet (*prière d'insérer*) of *Fictions*, *Librairie Gallimard* (January, 1952).

¹⁴⁰ Presentation of *Fictions*, *Bulletin de la Nrf*, no. 54 (January, 1952); and presentation of *Labyrinthes*, *Bulletin de la Nrf*, no. 76 (December, 1953).

¹⁴¹ Caillois, "Caillois: 'Soldats de la liberté!'" interview by Parinaud.

¹⁴² See, for instance, Ayerza de Castilho and Felgine, *Victoria Ocampo*, 186-87.

sérieux se devait d'étudier plutôt qu'exercer. J'avais été naïvement persuadé que le surréalisme, loin d'être un mouvement littéraire de la même nature que les autres, proclamait au contraire la fin de toute littérature. Je pensais qu'il se donnait pour tâche de la remplacer par l'étude *rigoureuse* de l'imagination, au moyen notamment de l'écriture automatique, destinée, selon la formule célèbre du *Manifeste* de Breton, à révéler le fonctionnement réel de la pensée en dehors de tout contrôle moral, intellectuel ou esthétique. Je n'avais pas remarqué que le contrôle littéraire n'était pas mentionné ou je pensais qu'il était compris dans le contrôle esthétique. On se souvient qu'en fait les textes prétendument issus de l'écriture automatique furent les plus littéraires (et au pire sens du mot) qu'on ait jamais vus.¹⁴³

In his work on Borges, Caillois let his interest in "serious" literary works and in a serious, rigorous analysis of these works prevail, for instance in his postface to *Histoire de l'infamie. Histoire de l'éternité*: Caillois shows the degree of adaptation in Borges's fictional biographies by scrutinizing all sources related to the character of Hakim de Merv that one of Borges's texts deals with, among which is an essay by Napoleon Bonaparte.¹⁴⁴ He also applied this norm of seriousness to Borges's work when he commented negatively upon Ibarra's early translation of "El acercamiento a Almotásim" in *Mesures*, in his correspondence with Jean Paulhan:

J'ai vu beaucoup Borges: il est très intelligent, mais je trouve un peu dommage qu'il écrive trop de choses comme celle que *Mesures* a publiée. Cela me fait penser à la fable où un berger crie sans cesse "au loup." Je crains que le jour où il voudra s'exprimer sérieusement, on ne lui dise que cela ne prend plus. Mais peut-être n'a-t-il pas le désir de s'exprimer jamais sérieusement.¹⁴⁵

The lack of seriousness that Caillois observed, which can be explained by Borges's playful and skeptical attitude towards several systems of thinking, thus undermined the metaphysical implications that fascinated Caillois.

¹⁴³ Caillois, "Intervention surréaliste (divergences et connivences)," 211-12; italics added.

¹⁴⁴ Caillois, translator's postface to *Histoire de l'infamie. Histoire de l'éternité*.

¹⁴⁵ Caillois to Paulhan, July 26, 1939, in Paulhan and Caillois, *Correspondance Jean Paulhan, Roger Caillois, 1934-1967*, 118.

Caillois's wish for Borges to express himself seriously was contested by other mediators, most notably Ibarra, and, perhaps, by Borges himself. Ibarra's classifications in the preface to *Lettres françaises* and *Fictions* were somewhat ambiguous, as he stressed Borges's irony and humor but also seemed to criticize Borges slightly: "Un flirt très conscient et parfois aimable avec le pédantisme ne saurait faire illusion, je ne dis pas sur l'érudition de ces pages, mais sur leur sérieux même."¹⁴⁶ It was in comments on Caillois's translations of Borges's work, however, that Ibarra clearly took a stance against what he perceived as Caillois effacing Borges's particular humor when translating his work: "Je crois surtout que, lorsqu'il s'assoit à son bureau de traducteur, quelque chose se passe. La Sagesse, la Tradition, la Culture, le Sérieux, fondent sur lui. Il n'est pas là pour s'amuser."¹⁴⁷ Borges may also have referred implicitly to the same matter when he praised Ibarra's poetry translations in the preface to *CŒuvre poétique*: "Ibarra a partagé ma vie. Ibarra s'est intimement mêlé à Buenos Aires et à ses vastes faubourgs lumineux. Ibarra ne se méprend pas sur les connotations d'ironie, de tendresse et de nostalgie dont se nuance chaque mot de mes vers."¹⁴⁸ Caillois's rigorous study of the labyrinth and of other themes in Borges's work formed an important part of his poetical and metaphysical convictions, in particular of his unitary world view, and other mediators tried to implicitly and explicitly react to these convictions as they perceived them in the translations. In the next section I will deal with these differences between Caillois, Ibarra, and also Bénichou, as expressed in their translation norms.

5. Roger Caillois, Néstor Ibarra, and Paul Bénichou: Translating Borges away

Roger Caillois, Néstor Ibarra, and Paul Bénichou frequently participated in discussions about the translation of Borges's work in the early period, and in some cases they also translated the same text by Borges. Contrasting the translation norms and practices of these different translators is important in fully understanding the actions of the mediators. In French academic criticism, a number of scholars have

¹⁴⁶ Ibarra, preface to *Fictions*, 9. See also Ibarra, preface to *Fictions* (Paris: Gallimard, 1968), 29-30; and Ibarra, "Borges et Borges," 461.

¹⁴⁷ Ibarra, "Borges et Borges," 454.

¹⁴⁸ Borges, preface to *CŒuvre poétique*, 8.

studied and compared the poems that were duplicated between Caillois's 1965 translation of *L'auteur et autres textes* and Ibarra's 1970 rendering of *Ceuvre poétique*, or have limited themselves to a study of Ibarra's poetry translations and translation norms.¹⁴⁹ As no poetry volumes were issued in the early phase of the reception, I will mostly focus on the prose translations. These prose translations have been studied by Martín Batalla, Denis Brunet, and Michel Lafon, but none of these scholars have examined and compared the texts that were rendered from the same original version by two or even three translators.¹⁵⁰ Several duplicated versions of Borges's stories exist in the English language, and have been contrasted in descriptive translation studies, but the three French versions of "Borges y yo" and the translations Bénichou made for magazines that were duplicated by other translators of the book volumes, such as "La casa de Asterión," have received no critical attention.¹⁵¹ In order to make my method more comparable with the descriptive studies on the English translations, I will start from two examples that involved three key translators in France: Caillois, Ibarra, and Bénichou. Then I will link the internal differences with the views that the translators expressed externally. As translation scholar Theo Hermans notes, it is necessary to distinguish between the external and internal poetics of a translator; that is, between the norms deduced from statements on translation and the reconstruction of the principles underlying a translation.¹⁵² These differences or similarities between internal and external translation norms are thus important in understanding which translation norms were employed, although for my study the differences between mediators are more relevant. I will therefore compare my findings on the various translations, where possible, with insights from the reception of the translations at French publishing houses, in contemporary literary criticism, and in later academic criticism, with the aim of analyzing the norms that mediators used in their role as translators. I will then look at how the

¹⁴⁹ Bensoussan, "Traducir al francés la poesía de Borges"; Lafon, "Les griffures de l'Autre"; and Vecchio, "Versiones del Eterno Rotorno." Sylvia Molloy studies several early individual poetry translations by other translators such as Fernand Verhesen and Jean de Milleret. Molloy, *La diffusion de la littérature hispano-américaine*, 238-47. Molloy also discusses the 1967 translation of *Seis problemas para Don Isidro Parodi* made by Françoise Rosset, a topic that she elaborates on in a later article. Molloy, "Isidro Parodi."

¹⁵⁰ Batalla, "Néstor Ibarra, traductor de Borges"; Brunet, "La 'fiction borgésienne' et ses traductions"; Lafon, "Le texte traducteur"; and Lafon, "Menard (acaso sin quererlo)."

¹⁵¹ Ibarra's early prose translation "L'approche du caché" appeared in a version by Laure Guille and Caillois in *Histoire de l'infamie. Histoire de l'éternité*. Bénichou's magazine translations "Le Zahir" and "L'Aleph" were duplicated by René L.-F. Durand's versions in *L'Aleph*. Also, Bénichou's magazine translation of "Ragnarök. Delia Elena San Marco" and several unpublished translations from the *Mercure de France* Archives were duplicated by Caillois in *L'auteur et autres textes*.

¹⁵² Hermans, *Translation in Systems*, 89.

actions of the mediators were related to their roles as publishers, editors, or critics. In order to be able to make these comparisons between mediators and their norms, I will sometimes make use of texts and translations that were published just after my period of study.

The first text, "Borges y yo," has been translated by Ibarra in the special, 1964 Borges issue of *L'Herne*, by Caillois in 1962 for *La nouvelle revue française*, later included in the 1965 translation of *L'auteur et autres textes*, and by Bénichou, probably for publication in the literary magazine *Mercur de France*—a translation that was not published, perhaps because of the magazine's demise in 1965. These three versions have never been studied or contrasted, no doubt partly because Bénichou's version only exists in manuscript form. As the translation of Borges's short text from *El hacedor* does not present complex translation problems in the vocabulary because of the absence of culture-specific realia, it is in the details, for instance in the punctuation, that differences between the three translators can be observed:

Yo he de quedar en Borges, no en mí (si es que alguien soy), pero me reconozco menos en sus libros que en muchos otros o que en el laborioso rasgueo de una guitarra.¹⁵³

Moi je dois durer en Borges, non en moi-même (en admettant que je sois quelqu'un), mais je me reconnais moins dans ses livres que dans beaucoup d'autres, ou que dans les vifs et laborieux arpèges d'une guitare.¹⁵⁴ (1964 translation by Ibarra)

Mais moi je dois persévérer en Borges, non en moi (pour autant que je sois quelqu'un). Pourtant je me reconnais moins dans ses livres que dans beaucoup d'autres ou que dans le raclement laborieux d'une guitare.¹⁵⁵ (1965 translation by Caillois)

¹⁵³ Borges, "Borges y yo."

¹⁵⁴ Borges, "Borges et moi," *L'Herne* 4 (1964).

¹⁵⁵ Borges, *L'auteur et autres textes*, 68. In a previous, 1962 translation by Caillois published in *La nouvelle revue française*, small differences can be observed. Borges, for instance, is spelled Borgès. In the quoted line, Caillois places a comma behind "autres" and renders the last part as "dans le son laborieux raclé d'une guitare." See Borges, "Reflets et interpolations," 804. Caillois's translation was taken up in the *Œuvres complètes*, and presents small revisions made by Jean-Pierre Bernès.

Moi, je demeurerai dans Borgès, non en moi (si tant est que je sois quelqu'un), mais je me reconnais moins dans ses livres que dans beaucoup d'autres ou dans le râclément [*sic*] laborieux d'une guitare.¹⁵⁶ (undated translation by Bénichou)

In this quoted line, mainly chosen to illustrate the differences between the three translators, Caillois takes more liberty with the punctuation, by cutting a sentence in two with a full stop, a tendency present in his translation of the short text as a whole. He also adds a connector, "mais," to the first line. In the vocabulary, Caillois and Bénichou differ little in their rendering of Borges's "laborioso rasgueo de una guitarra," maintaining the metonym that implicitly associates the "laborioso rasgueo" with a guitarist and with a sound. Ibarra also retains the metonym, but changes the evoked sound fundamentally by adding both the extra adjective "vifs" and choosing the technical term "arpèges," a way of playing notes of a chord in sequence that has little to do with the more dry and sharp "rasgueo." In other instances of the short text, Ibarra also takes more liberties with the vocabulary, for instance by changing "un diccionario biográfico" to "quelque who's who." In the example, Caillois builds in extra intermissions with full stops, but in other cases Ibarra and Bénichou also add pauses with commas:

Así mi vida es una fuga y todo lo pierdo y todo es del olvido, o del otro.¹⁵⁷

C'est ainsi que ma vie est une fuite; je perds tout, tout est pris par l'oubli, ou par l'autre.¹⁵⁸ (1964 translation by Ibarra)

De cette façon, ma vie est une fuite où je perds tout et où tout va à l'oubli ou à l'autre.¹⁵⁹ (1965 translation by Caillois)

Ainsi ma vie est une fuite, et je perds tout, et tout va à l'oubli, ou à l'autre.¹⁶⁰
(undated translation by Bénichou)

¹⁵⁶ Borges, "Borgès et moi," among the unpublished translations of "La secta del Fénix" and texts from *El hacedor* by Paul Bénichou, MDF 22.7/12.25, Mercure de France Archives.

¹⁵⁷ Borges, "Borges y yo."

¹⁵⁸ Borges, "Borges et moi," *L'Herne* 4 (1964).

¹⁵⁹ Borges, *L'auteur et autres textes*, 68.

¹⁶⁰ Borges, "Borgès et moi," MDF 22.7/12.25, Mercure de France Archives.

Borges's repetitive use of the logical connector "y" without commas in the penultimate line, which underscores the unstoppable process of the other's intervention in Borges's life, is here only retained by Caillois's "où" and "ou." On the level of vocabulary, however, Caillois and Bénichou's translations are similar to each other, for instance in their literal rendering of Borges's guitar metonym, as shown previously.

This source-centered rendering corresponds with Caillois's and Bénichou's comments on the need for literalness—comments that also show the translators' knowledge of the stylistic traits of Borges's work. Caillois, for instance, referred in a note to Borges's use of hypallage, which he related to Borges's labyrinths,¹⁶¹ and also reflected on Latinisms in the author's work, even though style was not his main point of interest in Borges's work. With reference to Borges's Latinisms, Caillois underlines the need to translate these literally: "L'intrigue [de *L'immortel*] rend nécessaire qu'il conserve d'assez nombreux latinismes de vocabulaire et de syntaxe. La traduction [. . .] présentait des difficultés très spéciales [. . .], toujours calculées, mais qui pouvaient néanmoins surprendre le lecteur non averti."¹⁶² Bénichou also refers to the effect of surprise in Borges's work and the importance of not losing this effect in the translation:

Nous avons essayé de rendre, aussi fidèlement que nous l'avons pu, en même temps que le sens du texte, le caractère inusuel, dans sa simplicité pourtant extrême, du style de Borges. Il n'est pas toujours facile de mesurer le degré exact de surprise produit par telle expression sur le lecteur de langue espagnole, encore moins de ménager au lecteur français un degré de surprise égal. On hésite toujours, dans le choix d'un équivalent français, entre ce qui risque d'être trop inaccoutumé et ce qui ne l'est pas assez; et on craint de voir s'évaporer dans cette recherche le bonheur de l'expression originale, dont il faut pourtant donner au moins le reflet.¹⁶³

The translation of the vocabulary in "Borges y yo" and these comparable comments create the impression that Caillois's and Bénichou's translation norms were similar, especially in view of Ibarra's later reaction to their translations. In an

¹⁶¹ Caillois, "Les thèmes fondamentaux de J. L. Borges," 211.

¹⁶² Caillois, translator's foreword to *Labyrinthes*, 12-13.

¹⁶³ Bénichou and Bénichou, translator's foreword to *Enquêtes*, 10.

interview included in the special Borges issue of *L'Herne*, later issued in a separate book volume that also took up Ibarra's translation of "Borges y yo," Ibarra reacted ferociously to the choices of both translators. Ibarra states that Caillois and Bénichou are too afraid of translating Borges literally, and mistakenly correct Borges's peculiar style:

Tout bonnement, je me demande si lui [Bénichou] et Caillois ne se souviennent pas trop de leurs années de professorat secondaire. Ils sont peut-être marqués à jamais par la version latine. Ils savent trop que *Amat janua limen* ne doit pas être traduit par *la porte aime le seuil*, parce que l'élève qui traduit ainsi ne fait pas comprendre, ne montre pas qu'il a compris, montre plutôt qu'il n'a pas compris [. . .]. Ils veulent, eux, laisser trace qu'ils ont bien interprété Borges; mais voilà, en l'interprétant, ils privent le lecteur de la joie subtile de l'interpréter [. . .]. Vous connaissez le sens d'*explaining away*; je trouve Borges trop souvent *translated away*. La littéralité, notamment, inspire à ses traducteurs de la méfiance, sinon de l'horreur. Ils voient partout des 'faux amis'; les 'faux amis' les détournent des vrais.¹⁶⁴

On the basis of these comments, one would assume that Ibarra favors a literal translation, but his translation of "Borges y yo," and other comments that he makes in the same interview, point in the opposite direction. Ibarra, in fact, pleads for a form of "re-creation" of Borges's unusual style:

Vous imaginez bien que s'il suffisait de traduire Borges littéralement pour bien le traduire, il n'y aurait pas de problème. La littéralité n'est qu'un aspect de la question, le plus indiqué peut-être pour un entretien léger. De toute façon, je ne voudrais pas m'être mal fait comprendre. J'invite certes tout traducteur à se demander chaque fois et d'abord si tel trait, telle trouvaille instantanée, n'est pas justifiable d'une traduction littérale. Pour le reste, pour le tout venant, pour tout ce qui n'est pas étrange indispensablement, je crois qu'il faut rester quand même un peu étrange, mais pas forcément avec littéralité. De fait, il y a, il y aurait, tout un style à créer...¹⁶⁵

¹⁶⁴ Ibarra, "Borges et Borges," 453.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 455.

Despite Ibarra's tendency to consider both translators together, however, the duplicated translation of another text by Borges shows clear differences between Bénichou and Caillois. In Bénichou's "La maison de Astérion," published in *Les lettres nouvelles*, and Caillois's "La demeure d'Astérion" in *Preuves*, Caillois replaces several commas with full stops, similar to what he does in his translation of "Borges y yo," whereas Bénichou largely retains Borges's original punctuation. This difference in punctuation, and also in vocabulary and syntax, is already clear in the following fragment from the story:

No me interesa lo que un hombre pueda transmitir a otros hombres; [. . .].¹⁶⁶

Peu m'importe ce qu'un homme peut transmettre à d'autres hommes; [. . .].¹⁶⁷
(1956 translation by Bénichou)

Ce qu'un homme peut communiquer à d'autres hommes ne m'intéresse pas.¹⁶⁸
(1957 translation by Caillois)

Here, Bénichou is closer to the source text than Caillois in terms of both vocabulary and syntax, and this choice of his is consistent throughout the translation. In another fragment, Bénichou translates the verb in "fatigar patios"—frequent in Borges—literally into "ont fatigué tant de cours," while Caillois renders it as "lasser les cours."¹⁶⁹ Caillois eliminates two sentences without clear reasons (just as he eliminated an element of an enumeration in "Borges y yo"). Another example of the differences between the translators in the vocabulary is in the rendering of Borges's use of what could be called a "strange" adjective:

[. . .] pero dos cosas hay en el mundo que parecen estar una sola vez: arriba, el intrincado Sol; abajo, Asterión.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁶ Borges, "La casa de Asterión," 684.

¹⁶⁷ Borges, "La maison d'Astérion," 642.

¹⁶⁸ Borges, "La demeure d'Astérion. Les précurseurs de Kafka. La création et P. H. Gosse," 39. Here I use Caillois's version in *Preuves*, but the version published in *L'Aleph* and the later version in Jean-Pierre Bernès's revised translations for the *Ceuvres complètes* do not differ much. For some aspects of Caillois's translation of "La casa de Asterión," see also Collard, "Apuntes sobre traducciones al francés, neerlandés e inglés de relatos de Jorge Luis Borges," 128-30.

¹⁶⁹ Respectively on pages 643 and 39.

¹⁷⁰ Borges, "La casa de Asterión," 684.

[. . .] mais il y a deux choses dans le monde qui semblent n'exister qu'une fois: en haut l'inextricable soleil; en bas, Astérion.¹⁷¹ (1956 translation by Bénichou)

Mais il y a deux choses au monde qui paraissent n'exister qu'une seule fois, là-haut le soleil enchaîné; ici-bas: Astérion.¹⁷² (1957 translation by Caillois)

The "intricate" nature of the sun, which can be associated with the recurring theme of the labyrinth in Borges's story, and, of course, with God and the relationship between God and Asterión that is suggested in this part of the story, disappears in Caillois's translation (as does the original punctuation), and is replaced by a somewhat unclear association with correspondences or chains ("enchaîné").

In a sense, these differences can also be connected to comments that Caillois and Bénichou made publicly. In a later text on translation in general, Caillois qualifies his expressed need for a translation that adequately reflects the source text by placing more emphasis on the author's intentions:

Une traduction d'une précision philologique restitue le sens, mais ne restitue que lui. Elle risque de sacrifier les ambitions artistiques de l'auteur et, plus généralement, les qualités proprement rhétoriques du texte, qui en constituent parfois l'essentiel, comme il arrive aussi bien pour un humble proverbe que pour le vers le plus insidieusement musical. Si bien qu'elle n'est fidèle qu'à l'accessoire.¹⁷³

For his part, Bénichou took a position on the same matter by commenting not on Caillois's translations but on his precursor Paul Verdevoye, who receives little attention here because his role in Borges's work was more peripheral and no duplicated versions of his translations exist. In a review of *Fictions*, Bénichou praises Ibarra's versions and refers negatively to Verdevoye's work: "ces traductions [. . .] sont parsemées d'erreurs de sens et elles négligent trop les intentions et les beautés propres du style de Borges, qu'elles effacent et réduisent le plus souvent à la norme commune."¹⁷⁴ Bénichou gives examples of semantic errors, but also examples in

¹⁷¹ Borges, "La maison d'Astérion," 643.

¹⁷² Borges, "La demeure d'Astérion. Les précurseurs de Kafka. La création et P.H. Gosse," 39-40. The punctuation differs somewhat in the versions published in book form.

¹⁷³ Caillois, "Limites de la traduction," 544.

¹⁷⁴ Bénichou, "Le monde de José [sic] Luis Borges," 686-87.

which Verdevoye, according to Bénichou, reduces Borges's work to the common norm by replacing Borges's "unusual" adjectives with more obvious, less surprising ones.¹⁷⁵ This criticism could also be leveled at Caillois, particularly at his version of "La casa de Asterión," and, in this sense, Bénichou's external norms can actually be more easily related to Ibarra's normative stance, even though in practice each translator chose directly opposing solutions by translating the vocabulary very literally (Bénichou) or re-creating the text itself (Ibarra).

In order to complement my previous findings, it is also important to look at the reception of these translations at the publishing houses, in early literary criticism, and in later academic studies. Specifically for Caillois, who has received more critical attention in academic studies than Bénichou (and Ibarra, as far as his prose translations are concerned), some of my findings about his internal and external translation norms are confirmed in existing studies, which also see Caillois's choices as an adjustment to a common norm. Martín Batalla, for instance, refers, as well as to the segmentation of sentences and the intervention in the punctuation that I already discussed, to the elusion of subordinate constructions, the re-establishment of hyperbatons, and the relocation of explicative structures to the end of sentences, which he interprets as cases of domestication.¹⁷⁶ In a study of Caillois's translation of "El inmortal," Michel Lafon, for his part, argues that Caillois "normalizes" hypallages, synecdoches, personifications, Latinisms, and so on, making them less surprising in the translations.¹⁷⁷

In the contemporary critical reception of Caillois's translations, these somewhat negative comments were less frequently heard, and Caillois's translations were generally praised.¹⁷⁸ In a review of Caillois's translations in *Labyrinthes*, however, critic Michel Carrouges did observe what Bénichou called a reduction to the common norm:

¹⁷⁵ Ibid, 687. See also René Étiemble's comments on the translation in Étiemble, "Un homme à tuer: Jorge Luis Borges, cosmopolite," 524-26.

¹⁷⁶ Batalla, "Néstor Ibarra, traductor de Borges," 88.

¹⁷⁷ Lafon, "Le texte traducteur," 127-29.

¹⁷⁸ Review of *Labyrinthes*, *Le figaro littéraire* (January 23, 1954); "Avec Jorge Luis Borge [sic] disparaît un conteur, et un critique de génie," *Aux écoutes du monde* 39, no. 1737 (November 1, 1957); Bergier, "Ici, on désintègre!"; [Bergier?], "Le plus grand écrivain contemporain de langue espagnole: Jorge Luis Borges"; Dumur, "Histoire d'éternité"; and Paseyro, "Les animaux malades de la prose." For the positive reception of Caillois's later translation of *L'auteur et autres textes*, see Giron, "La boîte à bouquins: Jorge Luis Borges"; and Mauriac, "Jorge Luis Borges le merveilleux."

Pourtant, à côté des contes de *Fictions*, surtout des plus beaux, ils laissent une légère déception: ils sont un peu trop bien écrits, un peu trop apprêtés, un peu trop francisés (du moins à travers la traduction): on croirait lire quelquefois des contes dont la donnée a bien été fournie par Borgès, mais qu'un André Gide par exemple aurait essayé d'écrire à la manière de Borgès: l'insolite se trouve ainsi un peu trop apprivoisé.¹⁷⁹

This Gallicizing tendency suggested by Carrouges was later commented upon by critics of Caillois's translations of realia. Batalla's study, for instance, gives several examples of Caillois's versions of "El fin" and "El Sur," in which he replaces or omits local lexicon.¹⁸⁰ Based on some of Ibarra's prose translations and on externally expressed translation norms, Batalla sustains that Ibarra, conversely, "'restituye' [. . .] a los franceses, aquello que *le professeur Caillois* buscó borrar: lo mucho que de 'exótico' y de 'localista' hay en la escritura de Borges."¹⁸¹ Before that, Jean-Pierre Bernès had already shown in the 1993 Pléiade edition of Borges's work that Caillois's translation of "El Sur" avoids translating *argentinismos* that have to do with the traditional clothing of the gaucho, by introducing the notion of the "gaucho typique" instead of translating "la vincha, el poncho de bayeta, el largo chiripá y la bota de potro" of the gaucho.¹⁸²

For Bénichou it is not clear, for instance from his translations of "Borges y yo" and "La casa de Asterión," to what extent he Gallicized the works. In the already quoted review in which Bénichou repeats Ibarra's introductory lines on Borges's nationality, he considers that the *couleur locale* is situated in a second layer of the author's work, where it is untranslatable:

Ce n'est pas que Borges ignore l'inspiration locale; mais il est remarquable qu'elle s'exprime surtout chez lui par la caricature, et dans une seconde zone de son œuvre: et là le caractère local, dans les types représentés, dans leur langage et dans les nuances de leur tragi-comique, est tellement accusé qu'il ne peut être question de traduire.¹⁸³

¹⁷⁹ Carrouges, review of *Labyrinthes*.

¹⁸⁰ Batalla, "Néstor Ibarra, traductor de Borges," 89.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 91.

¹⁸² See Borges, *Œuvres complètes*, vol. 1, 1597-98.

¹⁸³ Bénichou, "Le monde de José [sic] Luis Borges," 675.

In his review, Bénichou refers in particular to Borges's publications in collaboration with Adolfo Bioy Casares, but he could have relegated Borges's realia to this second zone in his own translations as well, a question that would be relevant to explore in future research.¹⁸⁴

It should be remarked that all translations could be characterized by some of the "adjustments" for which Caillois, in particular, has been criticized. As the translations are contrasted here, and the translators themselves (and in turn perhaps also the scholars of translation) stressed the differences in order to take stances against other translators, the translators' choices have not yet been contextualized in the larger history of the translation and reception of Borges's work and of literature in general. As Denis Brunet has shown, French translations of Borges's work initially tended to use approximation in cases where they needed to find equivalents for Argentinisms, in order to approximate the text to a readership not yet familiar with works from Latin America. In a later phase, more translations used neologisms with quotation marks, italics, or without any changes for these same equivalents, safe in the knowledge that contact between French readers and Latin American literature had already been established.¹⁸⁵ In his study of French, English, German, and Italian versions of Borges's stories, Brunet also rightly observes that some common figures of translation, such as explicitation, amplification, strategies of relocation (*déplacement*), and rupture (for instance of series or parallelisms) are partly inherent in all translations.¹⁸⁶

Some translators' choices in terms of their internal and external translation norms are directly linked to specific selections and classifications that they made in other institutional roles. In particular, Caillois's tendency to omit or Gallicize local lexicon in "El fin" and "El Sur" can be connected to his wish to read Borges as a representative of "universal" literature. Some cases of domestication of Borges's rhetorical figures and unusual adjectives also bear a relation to Caillois's desire to undertake a rigorous study of Borges's metaphysical reflections and to make Borges's ideas more visible in the texts. In this way, Caillois's choices can also be

¹⁸⁴ Paul Bénichou's translation of *Enquêtes* together with Sylvia Bénichou was received positively in early criticism, but the comments are too short to complement my findings and suggestions here. See "Avec Jorge Luis Borge [*sic*] disparaît un conteur, et un critique de génie," *Aux écoutes du monde* 39, no. 1737 (November 1, 1957); "Essais: Un univers rêvé," review of *Enquêtes*, *Demain* 2, no. 90 (August 29-September 4, 1957); Albérès, "Un Edgar Poe du XX^e siècle: Jorge-Luis Borgès"; and Albérès, "L'imagination vertigineuse."

¹⁸⁵ Brunet, "La 'fiction borgésienne' et ses traductions," 228.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 388-90.

related to Ibarra's earlier-quoted comments about Caillois's "seriousness" in translating Borges's work.¹⁸⁷ The fact that these choices and norms were orthodox—that is, compliant with the dominant French tradition of domestication¹⁸⁸—rather than heterodox can perhaps be seen in the context of Caillois's dominant position within the translation and publication process of Borges's work and Latin American literature in general. Conversely, although Ibarra's and Bénichou's comments on Borges's statelessness seem to contradict this, their translation norms can be considered more heterodox with respect to the dominant norms, which corresponds to their positions as external translators who were not directly involved in the publishing process at Gallimard. More contrastive and descriptive translation studies are, however, needed in order to examine the heterodoxy of their translation norms.

Borges's role in these discussions between and on translators and translations was, as I have already indicated, limited in the early period, and it can also be questioned whether his later comments had any effect on the reception of these translations. The Argentine author called the French translations made by Verdevoye, Caillois, and Bénichou excellent in one of his first interview books in France,¹⁸⁹ but mainly supported and promoted Ibarra's later poetry translations. In this extract from a 1967 interview book, for instance, Borges refers to the forthcoming, 1970 translation of his *Œuvre poétique* by Ibarra by turning to an argument he used frequently for the translations of his work, the idea that Ibarra improved his texts:

Ibarra me connaît depuis des années. Il a un sens très vif du langage. En tant qu'Argentin il connaît l'espagnol parfaitement [. . .]. Ibarra connaît toutes mes habitudes littéraires. Je dirai même qu'il connaît toutes mes manies, tous mes

¹⁸⁷ According to Michel Lafon, various French translators did not notice the humorous dimension of Borges's work. He argues that Verdevoye's translation of "Pierre Menard, autor del Quijote" takes on a tragic rather than a comic tone, for instance when the translator changes the length of a parenthetical comment. Lafon, "Menard (acaso sin quererlo)," 336-39. See also "Borges y Francia, Francia y Borges," 26.

¹⁸⁸ See, for instance, Simeoni, "Translator's Habitus"; and Berman, *L'épreuve de l'étranger*.

¹⁸⁹ Borges, *Entretiens avec Jorge Luis Borges*, interviews by Charbonnier, 15. As becomes clear from another interview, Borges was conscious of some of the mistakes made by Verdevoye in his first translation. See Borges, *Entretiens avec Jorge Luis Borges*, interviews by de Milleret, 130. For a positive comment on Caillois's *Labyrinthes*, see also Borges to Victoria Ocampo, February-March 1954, in Borges and Ocampo, *Dialogue*, 117.

tics littéraires. Je suis sûr qu'il fera une traduction non seulement très juste, mais vraisemblablement très supérieure au texte."¹⁹⁰

Moreover, the actual translation of *Œuvre poétique*, which included *Luna de enfrente*, *Cuaderno San Martín*, *El otro, el mismo*, and the poems from "Museo" in *El hacedor*, was accompanied by a preface in which Borges distances himself from literal translations: "Nous voulons admirer le poète, non le traducteur, et ce scrupule ou ce préjugé a favorisé les versions littérales. Nous disons que le sens y est, bien que n'y soit pas la musique, comme si dans le poème ces deux éléments étaient séparables."¹⁹¹ As well as showing his gratitude to Ibarra in other lines of the preface, Borges perhaps refers here indirectly to Caillois's more literal and free-verse translations in *L'auteur et autres textes*.¹⁹² In the translator's foreword to the same volume, Ibarra distances himself from Caillois's poetry versions by referring to the need to maintain the verse forms, rhyme, and rhythm of the poems, and to translate regular verse as regular verse. He also comments on Caillois's work in a footnote.¹⁹³

Similarly to what happened with the reception of Norman Thomas di Giovanni's later US translations that were made in collaboration with Borges, Borges's contemptuous comments on literal translations have led to the idea that he and Ibarra shared a similar poetics of translation, as, for instance Batalla has argued.¹⁹⁴ This thought is logically supported by Borges's frequent statements on the need for a liberal translation, but seems to be contradicted by more private statements, for instance in Bioy Casares's diary on Borges, in which Borges and Bioy Casares refer to empty words (*ripios*) in Ibarra's poetry translations.¹⁹⁵ In any case, Borges's own comments and views on the different translators and translations were somewhat contradictory, and it may well be more relevant to focus on the impact of his more public statements only.

In view of Borges's public support for Ibarra's translations, it is remarkable that the reception of Ibarra's translations at the publishing house and in literary criticism was far from positive. At Gallimard, Ibarra's translation of *Œuvre poétique*

¹⁹⁰ Borges, *Entretiens avec Jorge Luis Borges*, interviews by Charbonnier, 14. See also Borges, *Entretiens avec Jorge Luis Borges*, interviews by de Milleret, 132-33.

¹⁹¹ Borges, preface to *Œuvre poétique*, 7.

¹⁹² See also Borges's more private comments on Caillois in Bioy Casares, *Borges*, 1070.

¹⁹³ Ibarra, translator's foreword to *Œuvre poétique*, 10.

¹⁹⁴ Batalla, "Néstor Ibarra, traductor de Borges," 85, 100. See also Louis, "Borges mode d'emploi français," 319-20.

¹⁹⁵ See Borges, "Problemas de la traducción," 322-25; and Bioy Casares, *Borges*, 1414-15.

sparked many discussions, as is clear from unpublished correspondence in the Gallimard archives. As Claude Gallimard states in a letter to Borges before the publication of the poetry volume, “Le problème pour nous est dans le fait que le ton du poème est tout à fait autre et que votre poésie exemplaire par sa dignité, sa pudeur, sa retenue, devient une sorte d’élégie d’inspiration sentimentale à la quelle votre œuvre se veut résolument étrangère.”¹⁹⁶ The staff members even gained advice from an external critic who wrote one of the first PhD theses on Borges, Michel Berveiller, before eventually deciding to publish the volume with Borges’s preface and with the caption *mise en vers français par Ibarra*, which was likewise added to Ibarra’s other poetry translations.¹⁹⁷ In early literary criticism and in later academic criticism, Ibarra’s poetry translations were criticized on some of the same grounds.¹⁹⁸

Unlike the, at least temporarily, positive critical reception of di Giovanni’s English translations, with which Ibarra’s renderings shared several characteristics such as a preference for poetry over prose,¹⁹⁹ Ibarra’s translations were not well received. This was most likely because of differences in di Giovanni’s and Ibarra’s translation norms and practice—with di Giovanni probably not aiming for a complete “re-creation” of the source texts and working on the translations in direct collaboration with Borges—and the norms of the critics that received these translations. A concrete explanation for these differences, however, must here remain open for further research into the later reception phase after 1964. Borges’s positive public comments on Ibarra’s translations, and thus his role as a mediator, had in any case little effect on the reception of his translations.

6. Conclusion: Borges as a French invention?

It can be deduced that the opening lines of Néstor Ibarra’s preface to *Fictions*, in particular, had a far-reaching impact and were reproduced by many French critics, including Paul Bénichou and René Marill Albérès, who had both spent time in Buenos Aires. In stressing Borges’s statelessness, Ibarra’s lines showed continuity

¹⁹⁶ Claude Gallimard to Borges, January 15, 1968, Gallimard Archives.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁹⁸ For early negative criticism of Ibarra’s poetry, see Borges, *Entretiens avec Jorge Luis Borges*, interviews by de Milleret, 132-34, 185-86; Bensoussan, “Le chant profond de Borges”; Lacôte, “Jorge Luis Borges. Miguel Angel Asturias”; Lacôte, “Jorge Luis Borges”; Réda, review of *Œuvre poétique*. For later academic criticism of Ibarra’s poetry translations, see Bensoussan, “Traducir al francés la poesía de Borges”; Lafon, “Les griffures de l’Autre”; and Vecchio, “Versiones del Eterno Rotorno.”

¹⁹⁹ Ibarra, “Borges et Borges,” 447. See di Giovanni, “Borges in English,” interview by Sorrentino, 180.

with the critical discussions in Argentina, but also implied a break by reversing the normative criterion of representativeness: whereas Ibarra had claimed in Argentina that it was absurd to expect an author to conform to a fixed conception of *lo criollo*, his French texts plainly stated that the author did not comply with this conception, therefore using negative Argentine criticism as a positive asset in France. Of course, Borges was much more than an "invention" of a number of introductory sentences.

The unpublished correspondence of the Gallimard archives shows the roles of other mediators, including the author himself. Borges became more involved in the translation and publication process of his own work in around 1964, by making suggestions for texts and peritexts and showing his preference for Ibarra as a translator of his future work. The contributions of Ibarra and Bénichou to the early reception are clearest in their roles as translators. Their more subversive translation choices contrast with their wishes to contextualize Borges as French in their institutional roles as critics, and also with Roger Caillois's domesticating translation norms. In the field of translation, Ibarra and Borges reacted to Caillois's earlier mediating efforts. Some of these actions, however, took place after the early reception period. For the translation and publication process at Gallimard and Le Rocher until 1964, Borges, Ibarra, and Bénichou played a less decisive role than Caillois. The use of correspondence in my research has helped to determine the extent to which mediators determined the material presentation of the first four book translations of Borges's work, and therefore the positions these mediators took in the reception.

Borges was thus partly right in observing that he was a French invention of Caillois. On a very general level, Caillois's choices could be related to the discussions about Borges's nationality in Argentina and to Ibarra's preface, in its lack of references to Borges's homeland, but they can also be connected more concretely to some institutional and individual factors in Caillois's reception of the author's work. The universalizing tendency in *Fictions* and other early book translations, for instance in the exclusion of "El Sur" and "El fin" from *Fictions*, could be seen as a strategy by Caillois to aim at a certain *goût français*: a reader's taste that could in turn be considered in the light of Caillois's institutional affiliations with Gallimard and *La nouvelle revue française* on the one hand, and the magazine *Preuves* on the other. In comparison with the political, anti-Nazi context in which Borges's work was published in *Sur* and *Lettres françaises*, Caillois's presentation of the book volumes in France implied a clear distancing from his political engagement during the war years. The rather paradoxical inclusion of all of Borges's French book titles (except

for the first edition of *Labyrinthes*) in a book collection that stressed the picturesque characteristics of Latin American literature can be related to commercial and symbolic strategies made by Caillois for the book series *La Croix du Sud*.

The choices that Caillois made in order to adjust Borges's work to his idea of the French reader's taste show a strategy directed at attempting to comply with dominant norms of the publishing houses and magazines rather than an attempt to subvert the literary conventions of that time. In this sense, Pierre Bourdieu's claim that orthodoxy is usually a strategy for those agents with relatively much (cultural) capital suggests that Caillois's central position in the translation and publication of Borges's work and his established institutional position were at play in his actions as an editor and critic of Borges's work. Also as a translator, it is possible that Caillois, from his position at Gallimard, had a tendency to comply with domesticating translation norms—in Ibarra's words, to "translate Borges away"—whereas Bénichou and Ibarra were, as external translators, possibly more inclined to foreignizing strategies, despite the differences in translation practice between the two.

At a more individual level, Caillois's presentation of *Labyrinthes* in France and his reflection on the labyrinth in Borges's work can be related to the poetical and philosophical views he expressed elsewhere. The selection of texts and the choice of the title and other peritexts seem to break with the reception of Borges's work in Argentina and can be understood in the context of Caillois's conception of the universe as an inextricable network of structures. The unitary world view and the questioning of the value of literature that were part of Caillois's program from his surrealist period become manifest in this book translation. The selections and classifications in Caillois's four early book translations can, in summary, be related to his different institutional roles of translator, critic, editor, and director of *La Croix du Sud*. His activities and efforts for Borges in France in spite of his difficult relationship with the author can also be explained by the commercial, symbolic, poetical, and philosophical interests involved in these roles.

My institutional approach to the early reception of Borges's work has shown the levels of reception that were important for the choices of mediators. The individual, poetical level, for instance, was particularly significant for Caillois's mediation of *Labyrinthes*, while other, individual and institutional factors were important for his actions for *Fictions* and other volumes included in *La Croix du Sud*. In Ibarra's preface, it is not only the international interaction with the Argentine

literary field that becomes clear, but also the way in which poetical norms transform from one field to another. An explicitly normative approach would have partly shown the same selections, classifications, and norms, but from a judgmental perspective. Here I have tried to part from the idea that every publishing and translation choice involves some sort of exclusion, and show that these choices can be better examined and understood by contextualizing them on the individual, institutional, national, and international levels at which Borges's work was received.

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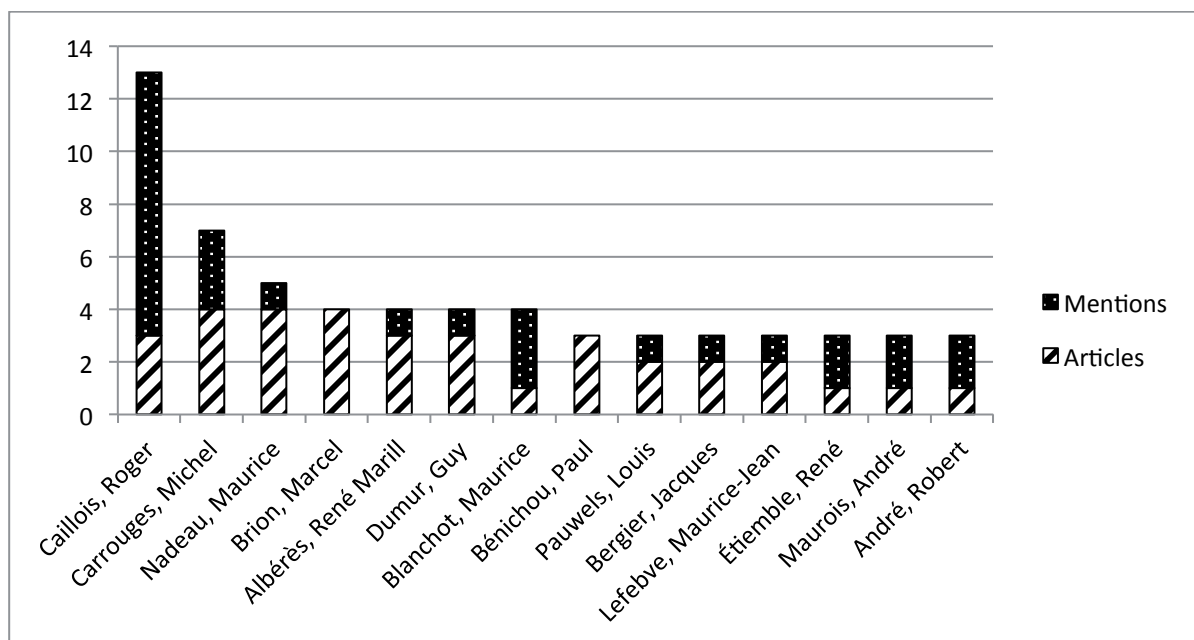




Chapter 2. Early criticism of Borges's work in France

1. Literary criticism and the positions of key critics in the early reception of Borges's work in France

A number of critics played a dominant role in the French literary criticism devoted to Borges's work. For the selection of these key critics in the period until 1964, I will list four selection criteria that I will also use for my chapter on early criticism in the United States. These criteria enable me to select those critics who had a key position not in the French literary field as a whole, but in the reception process of Borges's work. Because of the large quantity of critics and criticism, I will first use a quantitative measure. As a starting point and first criterion for selecting key critics, I will look at the frequency with which mediators published on and referred to Borges during the early phase of his reception in France. In the following graph, critics who published the most on Borges are listed first. As there were more than 100 different critics in total, only a small part of the wide panorama of critics could be shown in the form of a frequency graph. For the visual representation of the number of publications and references,¹ all critics who published at least three times on Borges were included. There were no interviews or books by these critics.



¹ I will use Karl Rosengren's term "mention" for these brief references to Borges in reviews of other authors. See Rosengren, "Literary Criticism," 298 and my methodological chapter.

By looking more closely at the names and publications of these fourteen critics, and also at the omissions from this frequency graph, the positions of critics in the reception of Borges's work can be determined more easily. Publication numbers alone do not explain the positions of critics in the reception, as these also depended on their institutional positions, their combination of institutional roles (publisher, editor, translator, critic), and their impact on other mediators. In order to look into the institutional positions of the critics and as a second criterion, I will focus on the prestige of the review media in which they usually published and in which they published on Borges in particular, their artistic seniority (beginner vs. experienced), and the recognition they gained through reviews or through other professional activities besides those of a critic. As a third criterion I will examine whether or not critics combined institutional roles. The fourth and final criterion of impact will here be limited to cases in which a publication was reissued elsewhere.

I will not put these four selection criteria in order of importance, but simply study the critics who match at least two of the four criteria. This means that even though the frequency count has been a starting point for looking at the panorama of frequent critics, a critic who complies with, for instance, the criteria of institutional position and combined fulfillment of institutional roles will be included in the corpus of key critics. Moreover, as the criteria of frequency and institutional position are only relative and must be used for comparing various critics, the condition of compliance with two of the four criteria cannot be strict. It is therefore possible, for example, to exclude a critic who published frequently on Borges and (partially) complied with the criterion of institutional position, but had a less dominant institutional position than other selected critics. I will now look at the names of the critics in the frequency graph in their order of appearance and relate each critic to the other three selection criteria. Eventually, I will deal with Paul Bénichou, Maurice Nadeau, René Étiemble, Maurice Blanchot, Louis Pauwels, Jacques Bergier, and Gérard Genette as key critics, but also refer to many other, more peripheral critics in the reception process.

Among the numerous publications and references by Roger Caillois, the peritexts of the book translations were excluded from the frequency count. The impressively high number of texts that remain in spite of this, to which the anonymous notes from the *Bulletin de la Nrf* can probably be added, show that Caillois was omnipresent in literary criticism of Borges's work. As I have already dealt with Caillois's work on Borges, I will discuss only his possible impact on other

mediators here: because of the high number of publications and references, one may ask whether he was a trendsetter in literary criticism.

The second critic listed in the graph is the rightwing Catholic critic and (science fiction) writer Michel Carrouges, a pseudonym for Louis Couturier. As well as contributing an article to *L'Herne*, he published frequently on Borges in the rightwing magazine *Monde nouveau paru* and in the Europeanist *Preuves*, a magazine domiciled in Paris and financed by the anti-communist Congress for Cultural Freedom.² His role for Borges mainly lies in this frequency, as Carrouges's institutional position was somewhat marginal, even within the circles in which he published on surrealism, science fiction, and esotericism. His break with the surrealist movement is a case in point for the dominated position he took in the French literary field. Carrouges entered the surrealist circles around 1949, at a time when surrealism was no longer dominant in the French literary field, and published several works on surrealism, notably a 1950 book on André Breton. This book, *André Breton et les données fondamentales du surréalisme*, aimed to reconcile a Catholic rightwing stance with esotericist surrealism, and therefore had a controversial status among both leftwing and rightwing intellectuals.³ Not surprisingly, Carrouges's political and religious preferences soon came under attack within the surrealist movement, which made claims to atheism and revolutionary politics, and Carrouges was expelled from the movement in 1951.⁴ Carrouges does not comply with two of the four selection criteria, even though the frequency with which he published on Borges is much higher than that of other critics: I will therefore discuss him as a peripheral critic in a section dedicated to six critics. This section will start with the roles of Maurice Nadeau and Paul Bénichou, who in contrast with Carrouges can be considered key mediators, but deals with the work of four, more peripheral mediators—Carrouges, René Marill Albérès, Marcel Brion, and Guy Dumur—in order to show the existence of collective selections, classifications, and norms.

Almost all of the aforementioned critics follow directly after Carrouges in the frequency graph. Nadeau published very frequently on Borges, on the occasion of almost each new book publication of the author's work, and one of his articles was also reprinted. His position was well established because of the prestige of the

² For his articles, see Carrouges, "Romans étrangers"; "Le gai savoir de Jorge Luis Borges"; Carrouges, review of *Labyrinthes*; and "Borges citoyen de Tlön." For mentions, see Carrouges, "Les mondes insolites"; "Actualité du conte fantastique"; and "Le spectroscopie des anticipations."

³ Bauduin, "Occultation of Surrealism," 34, 41.

⁴ Gershman, "Affaire Pastoureau"; and Bauduin, "Occultation of Surrealism," 13.

magazines in which he published, his seniority, and his recognition as a critic and editor. In the 1930s and 1940s, this leftwing critic was involved in surrealist circles. In the 1950s and 1960s, he was a critic for *Mercure de France*, *Combat*, *France observateur*, and *L'express*; he published mostly on Borges in *France observateur*.⁵ From the end of the 1940s onwards, he directed the literary pages of *Combat* and, in 1953, he founded the magazine *Les lettres nouvelles* and a book collection with the same name that he published at Julliard.⁶ He also used his institutional role as an editor to issue individual translations and book translations of Borges's work, both within and after my period of study. The combination of these four criteria (frequency, reproduction, institutional position, combination of roles) makes Nadeau very central in the reception process.

The next and fourth critic in the graph, Brion, was a regular contributor to *La revue des deux mondes*, *Les nouvelles littéraires*, and *Le monde*, and in this role he contributed to the literary consecration of authors such as Rainer Maria Rilke, James Joyce, Dino Buzzati, Thomas Mann, Hermann Hesse, Hugo von Hofmannsthal, and Miguel de Unamuno.⁷ Brion was also the long-time director of the foreign-literature section of newspaper *Le Monde*: all his articles on Borges were written for this newspaper, except for an article in *L'Herne*.⁸ Brion's role for Borges was somewhat more limited than that of Nadeau and, as I will show later in this section, than Bénichou, who match at least three of the four selection criteria.

Albérès, already briefly discussed in the previous chapter in the context of mediators who spent time in Argentina, taught at the Institut Français d'Études Supérieures in Buenos Aires and wrote several articles and reviews on French literature in *Sur* between 1946 and 1951, sometimes in Spanish, sometimes in translation. Traces of his other jobs and roles are more difficult to find, but it is known that he published several histories on contemporary (mostly French and European) literature and wrote for the newspaper *Combat* and the cultural weeklies *Arts* and *Les nouvelles littéraires*. In several of these books and articles, he discussed or

⁵ Nadeau, "Un écrivain déroutant et savoureux; Jorge Luis Borges"; "Un merveilleux sophiste; Jorge Luis Borges"; Nadeau, introduction to *Romans: Récits et sottises, œuvres lyriques*, by André Gide; "Encore Borges!"; and "Borges le perturbateur."

⁶ Dirkx, "Autour d'Arts: L'espace de la presse littéraire française," 249.

⁷ See Bibliothèque nationale de France, ed., *Marcel Brion: Humaniste et "passeur."*

⁸ Brion, "D'un autre hémisphère... Trois livres sud-américains"; "Jorge Luis Borgès et ses *Labyrinthes*"; "Jorge Luis Borgès et l'*Histoire de l'éternité*"; and "Masques, miroirs, mensonges et labyrinthe."

referred to Borges's work, and one of his articles was partly reproduced.⁹ Albérès's institutional position was much less dominant than that of, for instance, Nadeau because of the review media in which he published.

Dumur, for whom there is an equal lack of biographical information, was a theatre critic who published for *La table ronde*, *Les lettres nouvelles*, *Combat*, *Médecine de France*, and *France observateur* in the 1950s. Less established as a critic than Nadeau because of the (lack of) prestige of some of the review media in which he published and his lack of other professional activities beside those of a critic, Dumur nevertheless published frequently on Borges.¹⁰

The last critic that I will discuss, together with the five others, is Bénichou, who has already been discussed in the previous chapter. In the 1940s, Bénichou taught at the Institut Français d'Études Supérieures in Buenos Aires and worked as a translator for *Sur*. His position within the French literary field was less established than that of some other critics mentioned here, as it was partially restricted to the academic field, but he did publish his essays on Borges in prestigious magazines such as *Critique* and *Les lettres nouvelles*. He also combined his mediating role for Borges by translating the author's work both in individual translations and in book form for *Enquêtes*, mostly in the 1950s.¹¹ All of his three texts on Borges were also reprinted after 1964, and he thus satisfies at least three of the four selection criteria and will be analyzed as a key critic.

Of the six critics whom I will discuss together in the first section on Borges in French criticism, Carrouges and Dumur's positions were peripheral, while Brion and Albérès's positions were between peripheral and central. Nadeau and Bénichou were most central to the reception of Borges's work and will therefore be the starting point. Nadeau and Bénichou, and also Dumur and Albérès, were in some way institutionally connected, as they all published either in the newspaper *Combat*, in the weekly *France observateur* (or *L'observateur*, as it was still called in 1952), or in the literary magazine *Les lettres nouvelles*. They therefore published in leftwing media that were, at least in the 1950s and 1960s, opposed to communism, although they also issued texts in several other media and in books. Brion, by contrast, offered all his

⁹ Albérès, *Argentine: Un monde, une ville*, 317-18; "Un Edgar Poe du XX^e siècle: Jorge Luis Borgès"; "L'imagination vertigineuse"; and "Le fantastique cérébral: Jorge-Luis Borgès."

¹⁰ Dumur, "Une sensibilité exténuée"; "Histoire d'éternité"; "Ce bibliothécaire imparfait"; and "Du 'fantastique' argentin."

¹¹ For the essays, see Bénichou, "Le monde de José [sic] Luis Borgès"; "Le monde et l'esprit chez Jorge Luis Borgès"; and "Koublai Khan, Coleridge et Borgès."

articles to *Le monde*, a center-left newspaper that was somewhat less attentive to new intellectual trends than these three media.¹² Carrouges wrote for the politically rightwing magazine *Monde nouveau paru* and the Europeanist, anti-communist *Preuves*. As a whole, the six critics did not, therefore, form a close group.

The decisive reasons for discussing these critics together are in the similarities between their various classifications of Borges's work. The six critics dealt differently with several classifications, which were moreover recurrent in French criticism in general and therefore justify a more thematic discussion in the following section. The collectivity of certain classifications, such as the theme of metaphysics and the genre of fantastic literature, was not (only) due to discussions on Borges, but the result of a partially shared critical framework or literary conception. In this sense, and as I will show later, there is a difference between French and US literary criticism, as critics in the United States interacted little with each other. By taking the six critics together, I will be able to show this "centralization" in French criticism, a topic to which I will return in the conclusions to this chapter.

To return to the frequency graph, the next critic listed is Maurice Blanchot, who published articles on Borges and referred to the author a number of times in *La nouvelle nouvelle revue française*.¹³ Most of these texts were taken up in his 1959 book *Le livre à venir*. As well as this frequency and reproduction, Blanchot had an eminent position based on the prestige of the literary magazines in which he published most of his articles, *Critique* and *La nouvelle nouvelle revue française*, and his recognition as a fiction writer. Because of these three criteria of frequency, reproduction, and institutional position, I will discuss Blanchot as a key critic in the reception of Borges's work and devote a section to his work on Borges.

The next critic taken up is Louis Pauwels, whom I will discuss together with his co-writer Jacques Bergier, who directly follows Pauwels in the frequency graph. Pauwels and Bergier's effort for the divulgation of Borges's work was similar in frequency, as they jointly published on Borges in the commercially successful 1960 book *Le matin des magiciens*, each referred to Borges in two other, earlier articles, and they probably also each wrote an anonymous piece on the author's work.¹⁴ In the

¹² Jeanneney, "Monde (Le)," 966.

¹³ Blanchot, "Le tour d'écrou"; "Le secret du Golem"; "L'infini et l'infini"; and "Rêver, écrire."

¹⁴ [Pauwels?], "Un conteur de l'imaginaire: *Labyrinthes* par Jorge Luis Borges"; Pauwels, "Un petit voyage de Marx à Mars"; Bergier, "Ici, on désintègre!"; [Bergier?], "Le plus grand écrivain contemporain de langue espagnole: Jorge Luis Borges"; and Pauwels and Bergier, "L'écriture de Dieu. Le point suprême."

graph, I chose to include both critics with three publications, because the authorship of these two anonymous pieces is likely theirs. In any case, the frequency of their publications together is high. More importantly, they were also responsible for publishing translations of Borges's work from 1962 onwards in the magazine that was born out of the success of the book *Planète*, and possibly again for a number of anonymous articles in this same magazine, and thus combined their institutional roles to mediate Borges's work.¹⁵

Writer and journalist Pauwels was a conservative intellectual attracted to esotericism—before publishing *Le matin des magiciens* he wrote a book on George Gurdjieff, an important figure within esotericism—and converted to Catholicism in the 1980s. At the start of the 1950s, he was editor-in-chief of the newspaper *Combat* and of the cultural weekly *Arts*, and was later director of *Figaro magazine*.¹⁶ In this sense, Pauwels's institutional position was more established than that of journalist and writer Bergier, born in Odessa, who was originally a chemical engineer with a similar interest in occultism and science fiction. Bergier met Pauwels in 1954 when the latter was literary director of the book series *Bibliothèque mondiale*; of the two, Pauwels seems to have done most of the writing for the joint publications.¹⁷ In my section on Pauwels and Bergier, I will also refer to the Catholic writer and journalist François Mauriac. An important name in the French literary field and winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1952, Mauriac wrote only once on Borges, in the center-right weekly *Le figaro littéraire*, together with a short reference to the author published both in *L'express* and in Mauriac's *Bloc-Notes*.¹⁸ I will therefore only take Mauriac into account in order to show how he converged with and diverged from Pauwels's and Bergier's selections and classifications.

The next critic included in the frequency graph is Maurice-Jean Lefebve. He published two articles and made one mention of Borges's work, and therefore matches the selection criterion for frequency.¹⁹ However, Lefebve's institutional position was much less established than those of other mediators dealt with here.

¹⁵ Borges, "L'écriture du Dieu"; "Les deux qui rêvèrent"; "La bibliothèque de Babel," *Planète*, no. 10 (1963); and "La vérité sur Williams S..." For the anonymous articles in *Planète*, see "Le dictionnaire des responsables: Jorge Luis Borges," *Planète*, no. 8 (1963); and "Le nouveau dossier des cahiers de L'Herne: Le vrai visage de Borgès," *Planète*, no. 14 (1964).

¹⁶ Dirkx, "Autour d'Arts: L'espace de la presse littéraire française," 249; and Nikel, "Pauwels (Louis)," 1059.

¹⁷ Pauwels and Bergier, *Le matin des magiciens: Introduction au réalisme fantastique*, 20; and Bergier, *Je ne suis pas une légende*, 195.

¹⁸ Mauriac, "Naturalisme pas mort..."; and "Le Bloc-Notes de François Mauriac: 3 août."

¹⁹ Lefebve, "La folie Tristan ou une esthétique de l'infini"; "Notes: Littérature et essais," review of *Le livre à venir*, by Maurice Blanchot, 903; and "Qui a écrit Borges."

Even though he published in high-profile media such as *La nouvelle revue française*, his critical work did not gain equal prestige as, for instance, that of Blanchot or Caillois, nor did he publish and gain symbolic capital as a fiction author. As Lefebve articulated norms that were similar to Gérard Genette's, a critic not listed in the frequency graph but to whom I will devote a section, I will comment on his texts briefly in Genette's section.

The writer, linguist, translator, scholar, and Sinologist René Étiemble is listed among the last critics in the frequency graph. Étiemble spent the war years in the United States and returned to France having set up the French section at Alexandria University. He was a prestigious literary critic for *La nouvelle revue française* and *Les temps modernes*. Étiemble referred to Borges on several occasions, and published a long essay on the author in *Les temps modernes* that was also taken up in book form within my period of study.²⁰ Étiemble meets the criteria of frequency, reproduction, and institutional position through the periodicals in which he published, the prestige he gained as a critic, and the academic functions he fulfilled. He worked at several academic institutions including, from 1955, as a professor of comparative literature at the Sorbonne.

In discussing Étiemble's selections and classifications, I will also refer very briefly to two other, peripheral critics in order to show their similarities to and differences from Étiemble. The first is Valery Larbaud, who published one early review that was reissued in different magazines during and after my period of study.²¹ Larbaud's institutional position was established in the 1920s but, as he died in 1957, he was not around for the later period in which most of Borges's book translations were received and in which Larbaud's articles were reproduced. As he only complies with the criterion of impact through reproduction, Larbaud cannot be considered a key critic, which is also the case for the French poet Jacques Réda. Though now well known and well established, for instance as a former chief editor of the prestigious *La nouvelle revue française*, Réda was only just starting out as a critic in the 1950s and 1960s. Réda's first, 1957 text on Borges seems to have remained unpublished and was, to my knowledge, only taken up in his 1987 book on Borges.²² His two other articles appeared in the 1960s in the Marseille-published magazine

²⁰ Étiemble, "Un homme à tuer: Jorge Luis Borges, cosmopolite." For references to Borges's work, see Étiemble, "Lettre ouverte à Jean-Paul Sartre sur l'unité de mauvaise action"; and *Tong Yeou-ki ou le nouveau singe pèlerin*, 243.

²¹ Larbaud, "Lettres argentines et uruguayennes."

²² Réda, "Commençant par la fin."

Cahiers du sud, which focused on poetry and took a peripheral position with respect to magazines that were published in Paris and that were mostly financially supported by publishing houses, such as *Lettres françaises*, *Esprit*, *Critique*, *Les temps modernes*, and *La nouvelle revue française*.²³ His publications on Borges were thus reasonably frequent, but he only complies with the reproduction criterion and will thus not be fully discussed in his mediating role.

Next, the novelist, story writer, and biographer André Maurois is included in the frequency graph. His institutional position, for instance as a critic for the prestigious cultural weekly *Les nouvelles littéraires*, was well established. He mentioned Borges on two occasions but only wrote one, 1961 review of Borges's work and thus—at least in France—had a more limited role than the other critics discussed, as far as frequency is concerned.²⁴ This text, however, gained importance one year later when it was reproduced twice in the United States, as a preface to the first book translation of *Labyrinths* and in *The Paris Review*. I will therefore deal with Maurois's text in my chapter on early translations and publications of Borges's work in the United States.

The last critic from the frequency graph who will be discussed here is Robert André, who published on Borges in *L'Herne* and referred to the author twice in *La nouvelle revue française*.²⁵ The frequency with which he published on Borges was lower than for most other critics in the graph, and his institutional position was less central. André started publishing in the 1960s and was a young critic (artistically speaking) for *La nouvelle revue française* when he published on Borges. He will therefore not be discussed as a key critic here.

Gérard Genette and the writers of the *nouveau roman*, such as Alain Robbe-Grillet, Michel Butor, Claude Ollier, and Claude Simon, do not appear in the frequency graph. This may come as a surprise given the number of publications that already exist on the relation between Borges's work and these mediators. The *nouveau roman* movement included a number of authors who mainly published their work at Minuit from the 1950s onwards, developed work in other art forms such as film and theater, and published articles in *Tel quel* at the start of the 1960s. Their

²³ Réda, "Commentaire de *L'immortel* de Jorge-Luis Borges"; and "L'Herne; Jorge Luis Borges." See Paire, *Chronique des "Cahiers du Sud," 1914-1966*, 333-37.

²⁴ Maurois, *Journal d'un tour en Amérique latine*, 79; *Choses nues: Chroniques*, 225; and "Un livre par mois: *Labyrinthes* de J.-L. Borges."

²⁵ André, "La mort vécue de J. L. Borges"; Review of *Histoire d'écrire*, by André Dalmas, 723; and "Notes: Lettres étrangères," review of *Facundo*, by Domingo F. Sarmiento, 723.

exclusion from the graph, and the reason I will not discuss them at length, is that they hardly published any articles on Borges within my period of study.

Simon did not publish on or refer to Borges at all, and Robbe-Grillet used Borges's name only briefly in a number of publications, among which was his 1963 manifesto *Pour un nouveau roman*.²⁶ A literary advisor for Minuit from 1955, Robbe-Grillet wrote novels, cinema-novels, film scripts, essays, and interviews, but no texts explicitly devoted to Borges. Butor, a novelist, critic, poet, and professor of philosophy and literature who was a member of the jury for the 1961 Prix International des Éditeurs, also only referred to Borges in texts about other topics.²⁷ Ollier did publish one article on Borges in *L'Herne*, in which (as well as in another text) he discussed the *nouvelle vague* film *Paris nous appartient* (1961) and its relation to Borges's work.²⁸ His institutional position, however, was not central in comparison with those of critics such as Nadeau and Blanchot, or in comparison with Robbe-Grillet. Ollier once stated in relation to Borges that "ce qu'on a appelé le Nouveau Roman a peu de choses à voir avec Borges, marqué qu'il est par un psychologisme larvé, sous-jacent, qui se situe aux antipodes des préoccupations et des fondements de l'esthétique de Borges."²⁹ Writer and critic Philippe Sollers, who was co-founder of *Tel quel* and close to the *nouveau roman* in some of his own early novels, only referred to Borges once in my period of study. For Borges's reception he also played a small role as editor of *Tel quel* and translator of a Borges essay published in the magazine.³⁰ Lastly, Jean Ricardou, another editor of *Tel quel* and mainly known as a theorist of the *nouveau roman*, mostly published on Borges after my period of study. He did, however, also publish a short piece in *L'Herne*, in which he recognized some of Borges's techniques in the novels of the *nouveau roman* writers, including Robbe-Grillet, Butor, and Simon.³¹ While I will not dedicate a separate section to the *nouveau roman* writers, I will refer in particular to Robbe-Grillet in order to show possible processes of interaction with Blanchot and Genette.

With this choice, I argue that the *nouveau romanciers* did not function as key mediators in the early period according to my criteria, but this does not exclude the

²⁶ Robbe-Grillet, review of *L'invention de Morel*, by Adolfo Bioy Casares; "Il écrit comme Stendhal..."; and *Pour un nouveau roman*, 9.

²⁷ Butor, "Salonique." See also Butor's allusion to Borges in his 1957 novel *L'emploi du temps*, 49.

²⁸ Ollier, "Thème du texte et du complot"; and "Finesse et géométrie." See also Cozarinsky, *Borges en/y/sobre cine*, 94-98.

²⁹ Ollier, "Notre dette envers lui est considérable," interview by Alphand, 39.

³⁰ Sollers, "Le rêve en plein jour"; and Borges, "L'art narratif et la magie."

³¹ Ricardou, "God of the Labyrinth," 126.

possibility that Borges played a role, for example in their fiction work. The more implicit relations between Borges and the *nouveau roman* novels (and films) are beyond the scope of my thesis, because of my focus on key mediators at publishing houses and in criticism. Several scholars have studied these relations with reference to Robbe-Grillet, Ollier, and Butor, and contemporary French critics and some of the writers themselves have observed possible cases of influence.³²

While the *nouveau roman* writers will receive relatively little attention, I will include in my analysis a section on Genette. Genette referred to Borges in *Tel quel*, and published a 1964 article in *L'Herne* that was later taken up in book form and in several anthologies of Borges criticism.³³ Genette gained (international) acclaim with his *Figures* 1-5 (1966-2002), especially in the field of narratology, and was still an upcoming name in 1964, even though he had already accumulated prestige within the *Tel quel* and structuralist circles. He therefore complies with the criteria of impact via reproduction and institutional position. His impact on the reception of Borges's work mainly lies in how he took up interpretations by previous critics and in turn had an impact on later critics. Genette's interpretations will be studied in a separate section, with brief comments on Blanchot, Lefebve, Robbe-Grillet, and Michel Foucault. Foucault also published in *Tel quel* in the early 1960s and was friends with Genette.³⁴ As Foucault only referred to the author once in the early period until 1964, I will consider him (together with Lefebve and Robbe-Grillet) a more peripheral mediator than Genette.

While Genette's texts from the 1960s were published in general literary magazines rather than in academic journals, the nature of his criticism, and also the impact it had in narratology, put him in the same sphere as academic criticism. For

³² For Robbe-Grillet, see the academic publications by Hudde, "Das Scheitern des Detektivs: Ein literarisches Thema bei Borges sowie Robbe-Grillet, Durrenmatt und Sciascia"; Zlotchew, "La experiencia directa de la obsesiva fantasía en Borges y Robbe-Grillet"; Zlotchew, "Collaboration of the Reader in Borges and Robbe-Grillet"; and Zlotchew, "Fiction Wrapped in Fiction: Causality in Borges and in the *Nouveau Roman*." For Ollier there is only one academic study, Décarie, "Thème du traître et du complot: *La mise en scène* de Claude Ollier." At the end of the 1960s, however, French critics also frequently associated Ollier with Borges: Bourquelot, review of *Navettes* and *L'échec de Nolan*, by Claude Ollier; Boyer, review of *Navettes* and *L'échec de Nolan*, by Claude Ollier; Noguez, review of *L'échec de Nolan* and *Navettes*, by Claude Ollier; and Ricardou, "Textes 'mis en scène.'" For Butor, see Roudaut, "Butor-Borges"; and Hudde, "Das Scheitern des Detektivs: Ein literarisches Thema bei Borges sowie Robbe-Grillet, Durrenmatt und Sciascia," 336. For comments by the writers themselves, see Robbe-Grillet, *Erotic Dream Machine: Interviews with Alain Robbe-Grillet on His Films*, by Fragola and Smith, 62; Ollier, *Cahiers d'écolier (1950-1960)*, 95; Ollier, "Interview with Claude Ollier," by Tixier, 42; and Butor, "Boucles, trajets, repliements: *Otrante*, hiver 1994," interview by Mellier, 349.

³³ Genette in *Tel quel*, "Enquête sur la critique"; and "La littérature selon Borges."

³⁴ Foucault, "Le langage à l'infini." See also Dosse, *History of Structuralism*, vol. 1, *The Rising Sign*, 1945-1966, 148.

structuralist criticism in general, one could argue that the borders between journalistic or essayistic criticism on the one hand and academic criticism on the other became increasingly muddled, because specialized texts now also reached a larger audience in these literary magazines. As Joseph Jurt has stated for the structure of the French literary field and the impact of structuralism in particular:

Unter dem Begriff "Strukturalismus" war innerhalb des intellektuellen Feldes ein bedeutsamer Wandel eingetreten. Diese Bewegung bedeutete nicht bloß eine epistemologische Erneuerung, sondern eine Veränderung der Hierarchie der legitimen kulturellen Güter. Schriften, die vorher nur vom beschränkten Feld der Spezialisten der Humanwissenschaften gelesen wurden, überschritten nun den engen Kreis der Fachleute und erreichten das gesamte intellektuelle Publikum.³⁵

As François Donne has shown in a history of structuralism, for a long time the French university system remained closed to the new methods of structural linguistics, and most of the debates therefore took place outside higher education.³⁶ This is relevant for the reception of Borges's work in France not only because the situation was profoundly different from in the United States, but also because there was hardly any French academic criticism of Borges's work in my period of study. In France, the first PhD theses on Latin American literature were defended at the end of the 1950s, and Latin America studies in France went through a golden age in the middle of the 1960s.³⁷ Academic criticism of Borges's work, however, only appeared from the second half of the 1960s onwards, and the first PhD theses on Borges were defended in 1969 and 1970.³⁸ Another difference between French and US criticism that has already been mentioned was the high degree of interaction in French criticism of Borges's work, which justifies the choice of taking several critics together in order to show collective classifications or norms. The nature of French and US criticism, and the way this had an impact on the selections and classifications of key

³⁵ Jurt, *Das literarische Feld: Das Konzept Pierre Bourdieus in Theorie und Praxis*, 311.

³⁶ Dosse, *History of Structuralism*, vol. 1, *The Rising Sign, 1945-1966*, 191-201, 387.

³⁷ Cymerman, introduction to *Imprimés argentins de la Bibliothèque nationale*, 22; and Fell and Fell, "Evolución del latinoamericanismo en Francia," 311-12.

³⁸ Thérien, "Essai sur l'éternité et de temps dans l'œuvre de Jorge Luis Borges"; and Berveiller, "Le cosmopolitisme de Jorge Luis Borges." See also Lafon, "Borges y Francia, Francia y Borges," 31.

critics, will therefore be a question that will be further explored in the conclusions to the analysis of the critical reception of Borges's work in France and the United States.

I will now discuss the key critics, their selections of Borges's work, and the author classifications, thematic classifications, genre classifications, stylistic classifications, and classifications of literary movements under which Borges was placed. In a roughly chronological order, I will first discuss Bénichou and Nadeau, then Étiemble, Blanchot, Pauwels and Bergier, and lastly Genette. As the publications by Bénichou and Nadeau, and also Genette's Borges publications, can be considered representative for certain critical discussions about Borges, it is their selections, classifications, and norms, in particular, that will be related to those of other, more peripheral mediators in the reception of Borges's work. These more peripheral mediators include Carrouges, Brion, Albérès, Dumur, Robbe-Grillet, Lefebvre, and Foucault. Conversely, the articles by Étiemble, Blanchot, Pauwels, and Bergier seem to have stood apart, which means that the selections, classifications, and norms of these writers will be mainly related to their own poetical norms. In practice, I will therefore take two different but complementary approaches to studying the selections and classifications of Borges's work in criticism and their relation to the norms of mediators: on the one hand I will show how the Borges publications of a key critic relate to those of peripheral critics, in order to reveal the collective transmission of selections, classifications, or norms. On the other hand, I will study how the Borges publications of a key critic relate to his or her other work, in order to uncover the articulation of individual poetical preferences. This will enable me to show the existence and employment of norms on various levels of reception.

2. Paul Bénichou, Maurice Nadeau, and four more peripheral critics: Borges's *fantastique métaphysique*

I will start with Paul Bénichou's texts in order to deal with his discussion of Borges's nationality here, before dealing with the thematic classification of metaphysics, which he shared with other critics such as Maurice Nadeau, René Marill Albérès, Marcel Brion, Guy Dumur, and Michel Carrouges, in the following subsection. I will then turn to Nadeau and take his texts as a starting point to comment on the classification of Borges's work in fantastic literature, a classification that several of the five other critics also articulated. Bénichou and Albérès were both familiar with

Argentina and Argentine literature and, as I have already dealt with, both stressed Borges's lack of Argentine identity. Bénichou states in a first, 1952 essay in the magazine *Critique* that Borges's work belongs to universal literature and that he sees Borges's more "local" work—he refers to the author's parodic work in collaboration with Adolfo Bioy Casares—as hierarchically less important.³⁹ Albérès formulates similar statements in a 1957 review of *Enquêtes* in the newspaper *Combat*.⁴⁰ In a book on Argentina published in the same year, Albérès places Borges's work in a movement of authors that, contrary to the movement that prolongs the realist novel, is connected with "les recherches poétiques de l'Europe."⁴¹ Both of these more specialized critics thus chose to break from Borges's Argentine reception by following Néstor Ibarra's preface to *Fictions*, and in this sense their views came close to other French critics who did not have this knowledge of Argentine literature.

Ibarra's and Albérès's idea of simultaneously denying Borges a home country and integrating him into European literature was carried on by other French critics such as Brion and Dumur. In *Le monde*, the newspaper in which Brion published most frequently on Borges, for instance, the critic associates Borges's work with European literature (without incorporating it) because of its refined nature when he refers to *Fictions* as "le livre d'un Américain ultra-cultivé, nourri de ce qu'il y a de plus raffiné, de plus subtil et de plus secret dans la littérature européenne."⁴² In a review of the same book for *Combat*, Dumur directly refers to the preface:

Une fort intelligente préface d'un des traducteurs, N. Ibarra, nous renseigne sur les origines cosmopolites de Borges: "Hispano-Anglo-Portugais," élevé en Suisse, fixé à Buenos-Ayres [*sic*], ayant d'abord écrit en anglais, avant d'écrire en espagnol. Peut-être ce livre représente-t-il le reniement suprême de la culture européenne. Mais comme tel, c'est plus à l'Europe qu'il appartient qu'à l'Amérique latine. La tradition ibérique, en particulier, n'est guère sensible chez Borges (peut-être pourrait-on citer, à son propos, Pío Baroja). [. . .] Borges est bien fils de la vieille Europe—à l'extrême limite de son raffinement intellectuel et de sa sensibilité.⁴³

³⁹ Bénichou, "Le monde de José [*sic*] Luis Borges," 675.

⁴⁰ Albérès, "Un Edgar Poe du XX^e siècle: Jorge Luis Borgès."

⁴¹ Albérès, *Argentine: Un monde, une ville*, 317.

⁴² Brion, "D'un autre hémisphère... Trois livres sud-américains."

⁴³ Dumur, "Une sensibilité exténuée."

Dumur's comments also give some insight into the underlying conceptions on which these classifications may have rested. In another article, he justifies his choice of discussing Borges in a chronicle on French authors by positing the lack of recognition Borges received in his homeland. In addition to Borges's cultural omnivorism, Dumur stresses that France was the first country to appreciate Borges's work.⁴⁴ Dumur's idea that France had initiated the literary consecration of Borges's work, with the author unearthed out of nowhere rather than out of Argentina, seems to be related to the little prestige he attaches to Argentine literature and criticism. In this respect and in others, his conception of Borges bears similarities to the idea of Franz Kafka's "sudden" appearance in France, a point to which I will return later. The belittling attitude towards Argentina is most clear in Dumur's review of *L'Herne*, in which he criticizes the translations published in the special Borges issue:

Les quarante pages [d'inédits] reproduites ici, et qui ne sont pas du meilleur Borges, sont nettement insuffisantes pour nous apprendre à mieux connaître un écrivain qui est loin d'être traduit tout entier en français. On sent trop que cette entreprise concerne l'Argentine et que l'on n'a pas pu éviter de réunir ici tous les amis de Borges. A travers lui, c'est une certaine Argentine qui, ayant longtemps souffert de son isolement littéraire, trouve sa revanche sur une France qui n'a cessé de l'inspirer.⁴⁵

The translations in *L'Herne* included poems from *Fervor de Buenos Aires*, a text from *Manual de zoología fantástica*, essays from the start of the 1960s, a story in collaboration with Bioy Casares, and "El Sur"—a selection that thus tried to show the variety of texts by Borges that had not yet been translated. As well as disapproving of this selection, Dumur also clearly prefers the "French" interpretation of Borges's work in the special issue over the "Argentine" one: "Je souligne cependant que la participation française [. . .] nous apporte quelques clés indispensables à la connaissance intellectuelle de Borges, alors que, je ne sais pourquoi, l'aspect humain qui est développé par les compatriotes de l'auteur me touche moins."⁴⁶ While Dumur's degrading attitude represents his opinion alone, it does suggest the possibility that mediators, especially those involved in the French publishing houses,

⁴⁴ Dumur, "Histoire d'éternité," 44.

⁴⁵ Dumur, "Ce bibliothécaire imparfait," 14.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 15.

tried to break clear of Borges's Argentine background because of the low prestige of Argentine literature and criticism. Together with a more evident wish to reverse the criteria with which Borges's work was judged in Argentina, this may have also played a role in Ibarra's and Caillois's emphasis on Borges's statelessness.

2.1. Bénichou, Nadeau, Albérès, Carrouges, and Brion: Metaphysics in Borges's work

As well as the shared ideas about Borges's nationality, many critics articulated similar classifications regarding metaphysics in Borges's work. The word metaphysics appeared frequently, but not exclusively, as a thematic classification, and was related to other concepts such as fear and humor. In my discussion of these classifications I will largely follow the chronological order in which the critics published their articles, and start with one of the most central mediators in this discussion, Bénichou. In his first, 1952 essay, "Le monde de José [sic] Luis Borges," Bénichou describes the world of *Fictions* as one that supposes a "spirit," a kind of conscience that has agency over the human spirit and that mystifies our perception of the world. Bénichou associates this spirit with the *malin génie*, a reference to René Descartes's notion of the *malin esprit*:

Si notre pensée ne donne un sens aux choses qu'en les imaginant combinées pour l'erreur, si l'intention qui anime le monde et par où il nous est accessible est une intention mystificatrice, notre recherche ne peut aboutir qu'à une sorte de dépossession de nous-même: un malin génie, finalement insondable, préside à ce qui nous entoure. Le sens que notre esprit trouve au monde est sa propre dérision. A ce titre, l'œuvre de Borges apparaît comme un cas, parmi d'autres, de cette expérience métaphysique anxieuse que le discrédit des quiétudes théologiques a partout libérée.⁴⁷

This *malin esprit* (which is opposed, in Descartes, to the goodness of God) has as its contemporaneous philosophical variant the brain in the vat hypothesis. For Bénichou, the world of *Fictions* has no god or other divinity but only a *malin génie* that wants to mislead us, which provokes a fear or perplexity that Bénichou, in a

⁴⁷ Bénichou, "Le monde de José [sic] Luis Borges," 680.

footnote, relates to Kafka. The critic confirms his idea of the *malin génie* in a second essay entitled "Le monde et l'esprit chez Jorge Luis Borges," published in 1954, when he claims that "un monde fait pour tromper conduit à supposer un Esprit trompeur."⁴⁸

Although Bénichou refers to metaphysical anxiety and perplexity, he also refines this point in the first essay by stressing that Borges's world without a god is overall not so fearful.⁴⁹ In the second essay, he refers to the elements of playfulness and lightness in Borges's work, and thereby tries to go against the views of other critics:

Tout ce qui, chez Borges, est agencement et tentative d'administration du monde semble chargé d'inquiétude: c'est si vrai que plus d'un lecteur de *La bibliothèque de Babel*, des *Ruines circulaires* ou du *Biothanatos*, sous l'impression des inquiétantes inventions de l'auteur, ne veut percevoir en lui que l'angoisse et la tragédie. Cependant la conclusion que le ton de ces textes implique, et que d'autres, comme *La loterie à Babylone* ou *Le miroir des énigmes*, formulent explicitement, va en sens contraire: un repos, une légèreté supérieure, sont la récompense finale de cette odyssée de l'esprit, qui se voit vaine.⁵⁰

This anxiety and tragedy appears, for instance, in Brion's texts, as I will show later. In another fragment of the same essay, Bénichou goes even further when he claims that humor not only compensates for the metaphysical anxiety in Borges's work, but even relativizes the idea of a spirit, be it a bad spirit that mystifies our reality or a good one.

L'humour y a, au bout du compte, plus de place que le désespoir ou l'angoisse. Dans les quelques lignes qui servent d'épilogue aux *Otras inquisiciones*, Borges avoue qu'il existe en lui une tendance 'à estimer les idées religieuses ou philosophiques pour leur valeur esthétique ou pour ce qu'elles renferment de singulier et de merveilleux. C'est peut-être, ajoute-t-il, l'indice d'un scepticisme essentiel.' En quoi consiste ce scepticisme? En ce que Borges doute, en fin de compte, que le monde ait un secret: de là son penchant à

⁴⁸ Bénichou, "Le monde et l'esprit chez Jorge Luis Borges," 683-84.

⁴⁹ Bénichou, "Le monde de José [sic] Luis Borges," 685.

⁵⁰ Bénichou, "Le monde et l'esprit chez Jorge Luis Borges," 693.

imaginer les formes les plus paradoxales de ce secret, comme pour rendre insoutenable la thèse qu'il affecte de soutenir. Le monde ne prend une signification cachée et déroutante que pour perdre toute signification. Cette démarche aboutit à dissoudre l'idée d'un Esprit quelconque gouvernant l'univers, et elle y aboutit dans un climat évasif, qui justement dissipe l'angoisse. La dérision dont nous nous sentons l'objet n'est qu'une étape vers une dérision plus vaste, où le sentiment de notre solitude se résout en une sorte de perplexité claire, et en éclat de rire.⁵¹

Here, Bénichou uses Borges's own comments in his epilogue to *Enquêtes* in order to consider Borges's skepticism (of estimating religious or philosophical ideas for their aesthetic value or for their singular or marvelous elements) as a form of humor, playfulness, or game. Bénichou's use of this fragment from *Otras inquisiciones* would find many followers, especially when *Enquêtes* was issued in 1957. The idea of Borges's amusing use of religious or philosophical ideas was also frequently mentioned in French criticism of the 1950s and 1960s.⁵² However, although he presents a straightforward relationship between metaphysics and humor, Bénichou's essays seem to alternately see metaphysics as a (possibly anxious or desperate) thought system behind Borges's work or stress the way that humor refutes this system.⁵³

As well as to *Otras inquisiciones*, the second essay refers to *El Aleph*, of which in 1954 only the four stories from *Labyrinthes* had been translated. Bénichou discusses "La escritura del Dios," "El Aleph," and "El Zahir," the last two of which he would translate for *Les temps modernes* and *Les lettres nouvelles* in 1957.⁵⁴ He studies these stories in particular for the way they suggest a secret or hidden meaning that ends up being refuted. Bénichou's third and last essay dedicated to Borges, from 1964, also

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 681.

⁵² For direct references to the epilogue, see Couffon, review of *Enquêtes*; Dalmas, "A l'heure du 'piripite chantant'"; Marissel, "L'univers de Jorge Luis Borges"; Maurois, "Un livre par mois: *Labyrinthes* de J.-L. Borges"; Nadeau, "Un merveilleux sophiste; Jorge Luis Borges"; Réda, "Commençant par la fin," 16; Réda, "Commentaire de *L'immortel* de Jorge-Luis Borges," 440; Réda, "*L'Herne*; Jorge Luis Borges," 156; and Saillet, "Un inconnu illustre: J.-L. Borges." For more general statements on Borges's amusing metaphysics, see "Polémique autour d'un inconnu de génie: Borgès," *Paris Match*, no. 262 (April 3-10, 1954); Kemp, "Vérités et fictions"; Nimier, "Avez-vous lu Borgès?"; and Carrouges, "Le gai savoir de Jorge Luis Borges." In a 1964 interview, Borges himself also confirmed this combination by going against the idea that he was a philosopher and stressing the humor in his work. See Borges, "Jorge-Luis Borges à Paris," interview by Piatier.

⁵³ See Bénichou, "Le monde et l'esprit chez Jorge Luis Borges," 699.

⁵⁴ Borges, "L'Aleph," *Les temps modernes* 12, no. 136 (June, 1957); and "Le Zahir."

revolves around the question of a hidden truth or meaning in the universe. In this essay for *L'Herne*, he unravels various sources that show the curious parallel between the way Kublai Khan constructed a palace after having seen it in a dream and the way Samuel Taylor Coleridge composed his poem *Kublai Khan* after verses heard in a dream—a topic examined by Borges in “El sueño de Coleridge” in *Otras inquisiciones*. Bénichou shows that the sources indicate there is no such parallel, as the palace was not constructed after a dream, and that there is therefore no unexplainable key to the story of the composition of the palace and the poem. In this way, the French critic returns to the question of the existence of a spirit or divinity, this time to leave this possibility open:

Bien sûr, aucune merveille n'y paraîtra, pour la simple raison que, dès le début, il n'y en avait aucune. Qui nous empêche, pourtant, de continuer à supposer, derrière des apparences banales, un gouvernement secret des choses? C'est seulement par habitude ou par paresse que nous faisons dépendre semblable supposition de l'expérience de faits rares et philosophiquement spectaculaires, comme ceux qui nous semblent annuler le temps et l'espace, ou les limites de la veille et du rêve, ou l'impénétrabilité du moi. Au contraire, c'est quand rien ne sollicite l'étonnement vulgaire qu'il convient d'attribuer à la divinité les pensées les plus secrètes et les plus subtiles.⁵⁵

Bénichou's views on Borges can be summarized and further understood with a comparison to Caillois's work on Borges. Both critics shared a thematic interest in Borges's metaphysics, which overshadowed their interest in stylistic and narrative aspects. Bénichou's interest can be related to Edmund Husserl's phenomenological approach, with which Bénichou shared the emphasis on the intentionality of the author (without being biographical) and the neglect of the formal or generic aspects of literary works in favor of the ideas they embody.⁵⁶ As Bénichou states in his second essay on Borges:

L'étude de ces structures narratives à travers son œuvre serait du plus grand intérêt, et ne peut manquer d'être faite quelque jour. Je n'en dis rien ici, non

⁵⁵ Bénichou, “Koublai Khan, Coleridge et Borges,” 367.

⁵⁶ See Jensen, “Method and Vision of Paul Bénichou: An essay,” n.p.

plus que de son art, et de la magistrale élégance de ces textes si lourds de sens. Mais les formes qui caractérisent Borges comme écrivain naissent chez lui d'une pensée, qui aussi bien se passe d'elles plus d'une fois, et qui nous intéresse d'abord.⁵⁷

Metaphysics is, however, dealt with differently by Caillois and Bénichou, as Caillois mainly interprets Borges's work in cosmological terms, while Bénichou focuses on theological aspects without seeing Borges as a Christian. The secret that Caillois observes in Borges's work is therefore a secular one, whereas Bénichou does not exclude the possible existence of a (bad) divinity. Contrary to Caillois's serious reconstruction of unity in Borges's work, Bénichou also tries to show how Borges's humor undermines any religious or philosophical thought system, by stressing, for instance, that "évidemment il ne faut pas s'attendre à trouver dans les *Fictions* une métaphysique rigoureuse."⁵⁸

Other French critics also reflected on the same themes of metaphysics, humor, and fear. Nadeau, who together with Bénichou took the most central position in the reception of Borges's work of the six critics I discuss here, also dealt with these issues. In *L'observateur*, he compares Borges to Kafka and the Belgian-born poet, writer, and painter Henri Michaux on the basis of their creation of a convincing but hallucinatory description of reality. For this comparison, Nadeau does not reflect extensively on metaphysics, but refers more specifically to the fear that Borges's work produces, although for him his work also creates amusement now and then:

Borges, à la façon de Kafka ou de Michaux, par un léger décalage, construit à l'intérieur de notre réalité habituelle une réalité étrangère tout aussi vraisemblable et concrète, tout aussi "raisonnable" et qui, par là-même devient hallucinante. La terreur qu'elle engendre (d'autres fois ce n'est que de l'amusement) ne vient pas seulement de ce que nous la sentons capable d'obnubiler notre monde et de se substituer à lui [. . .] mais de ce qu'elle est en même temps un pur produit de l'esprit.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ Bénichou, "Le monde et l'esprit chez Jorge Luis Borges," 681.

⁵⁸ Bénichou, "Le monde de José [sic] Luis Borges," 685.

⁵⁹ Nadeau, "Un écrivain déroutant et savoureux; Jorge Luis Borges."

This description of strange, fear-provoking elements within reality comes close to some definitions of fantastic literature, but Nadeau in fact mostly excluded Borges from the fantastic, as I will show later. For Nadeau, fear is not paramount in Borges's work, and he contrasts Borges with the authors mentioned in Gallimard's catalogue *Bulletin de la NRF*, Franz Kafka and Edgar Allan Poe, in order to stress Borges's playfulness:

Il est beaucoup plus "intellectuel," plus désinvolte, et aussi plus "gratuit" que ses deux illustres répondants. Il est possible également que la littérature soit moins, chez lui, un besoin contraignant qu'un jeu distingué. On ne l'y voit engager qu'une part de lui-même: une intelligence, agile, audacieuse, portée à bouleverser les apparences avec joie et ironie.⁶⁰

In a later review of *Enquêtes*, Nadeau articulates similar views on Borges's game (i.e. playfulness) with religious and philosophical ideas, in particular with George Berkeley's idealist philosophy. He also quotes Borges's epilogue from *Enquêtes* in full, a reproduction that may have passed through the mediation of Bénichou, as the latter's 1954 essay was published in Nadeau's magazine *Les lettres nouvelles*.⁶¹ Albérès, for his part, did not take up any fragments from the epilogue, but referred to the combination of metaphysics and humor in a review of *Fictions* and *Enquêtes*: "C'est à la fois hénaurme et menu, hyper-intellectuel et précis, métaphysique et humoristique."⁶²

The Catholic and rightwing critic Carrouges, despite publishing in very different literary media, shared many selections and classifications with these other critics. Most of his articles and mentions are dedicated to *Fictions* and some of its stories, and date from a very early phase in the reception of the author's work: between 1952 and 1954. The title of one of his longest essays on Borges, "Le gai savoir de Jorge Luis Borges," seems to refer to the French translation of Friedrich Nietzsche's *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*. This text, published in *Preuves*, speaks of Borges's combination of philosophy and humor: "Tout amusement est une façon de montrer qu'on n'est pas prêt à s'en laisser imposer par l'esprit de sérieux. [. . .] [Borges] n'oppose pas le jeu de l'oie à la philosophie. C'est la philosophie elle-même

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Nadeau, "Un merveilleux sophiste; Jorge Luis Borges."

⁶² Albérès, "Un Edgar Poe du XX^e siècle: Jorge Luis Borgès."

qui devient un jeu de l'oie."⁶³ Carrouges's idea, which is similar to the much-quoted fragment from *Enquêtes* on Borges's game with (religion and) philosophy, does not seem to stem from interaction with the previously discussed critics. In fact, Carrouges's essay was published before the translation of *Otras inquisiciones*, Bénichou's essay and that of several others, and can be related to Carrouges's own interpretation of "Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius."

In Carrouges's 1964 essay for *L'Herne*, he discusses "Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius," and in particular its idea that "selon Borges, les métaphysiciens de Tlön professent que la métaphysique est une branche de la littérature fantastique. Cela seul suffirait à nous faire soupçonner que réciproquement la littérature fantastique est une des formes de la métaphysique, ou même davantage."⁶⁴ Carrouges states that Borges's philosophy can therefore be found in his stories, while he also stresses the fictional and playful status of the philosophical ideas in these texts. According to the critic, Borges proposes that the world itself is fantastic or unreal, an idea he takes from the "tlönization" of the world in Borges's "Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius" and associates with Marcel Duchamp and therefore probably with Dadaism (and surrealism).⁶⁵

While these comments deal with Borges's metaphysics and his playfulness with philosophical ideas in general, a small number of statements also refer to the specific theological metaphysics of Borges's work. Carrouges does not see the Argentine author as religious and stresses the playful side of Borges's dealings with religion. In this, he comes close to Bénichou's essays and idea of a *malin génie* in Borges's work that makes everything around us an illusion, again with reference to "Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius":

L'on peut bien entendu souligner que le conte de Borges se plaît à rapporter l'histoire d'une mystification. Mais si l'univers lui-même n'était qu'une gigantesque mystification? Il se peut bien que ce soit la pensée de Borges. Il se peut aussi qu'il y ait quelque chose dans le rapport entre la race humaine et le cosmos. C'est l'ancien problème du malin esprit, auquel songeait Descartes. Peut-être l'a-t-il conçu d'une façon trop directement théologique et peut-être l'a-t-il trop vite écarté. Les névroses et les mythologies nous montrent à quel

⁶³ Carrouges, "Le gai savoir de Jorge Luis Borges," 48.

⁶⁴ Carrouges, "Borges citoyen de Tlön," 242.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 244.

point le principe de mystification est activement à l'œuvre, de l'intérieur même de l'esprit humain.⁶⁶

Carrouges does not fully adopt the hypothesis of the *malin esprit* in Borges's work, perhaps, similarly to Bénichou, because of the role of humor. He thus deals only briefly with this theological aspect of Borges's work, which forms a notable contrast with his criticism of other authors, especially with his work on surrealism, a movement in which he participated at the end of the 1940s and at the start of the 1950s. In a 1947 article entitled "Surréalisme et occultisme" and in his 1950 book *André Breton et les données fondamentales du surréalisme*, Carrouges made esotericism, especially Christian hermeticism, a fundamental part of André Breton's works and surrealist thought in general.⁶⁷ Unlike his criticism of Borges's work, Carrouges's criticism of surrealism passed over the atheistic aspects of the movement by approaching certain surrealist terms from a deistic or spiritual perspective.

In French criticism, only Brion's discussion followed a different line by attributing more weight to the fearful aspects of Borges's metaphysics and disregarding the playful side. Brion perceives in his first review for *Le monde* in 1952 a tragic anguish in Borges's work that he associates with Søren Kierkegaard: "Capturer le lecteur dans les labyrinthes où il rencontrera la tragique angoisse spirituelle analogue à celle de Kierkegaard [. . .], voilà ce que nous propose M. Borges."⁶⁸ Brion's second review, of Borges's *Labyrinthes*, repeats these ideas about anxiety in Borges's work, but also gives a small place to the role of humor in his work when he states: "La destinée humaine y est inscrite dans ses plus dramatiques implications, et la nonchalance glacée avec laquelle est conduit le récit, l'humour à pans de glace qui alternativement gèle et brûle, font que les livres de Borgès ne ressemblent à aucun autre."⁶⁹

In his reference to Kierkegaard and in his use of the terms *tragique angoisse* (rather than *peur* or *anxiété*), Brion classifies Borges within an existentialist framework. The metaphysical anguish that the critic describes in Borges's work is an existential angst arising from man's experience of human freedom and his consciousness of his mortal condition. This normative framework is also clear in

⁶⁶ Carrouges, "Le gai savoir de Jorge Luis Borges," 48.

⁶⁷ Carrouges, "Surréalisme et occultisme"; and *André Breton et les données fondamentales du surréalisme*. See Bauduin, "Occultation of Surrealism," 13-16 and 33-60.

⁶⁸ Brion, "D'un autre hémisphère... Trois livres sud-américains."

⁶⁹ Brion, "Jorge Luis Borgès et ses *Labyrinthes*."

Brion's emphasis on the personal experience of anxiety, which is particularly evident from his second review. More so than in his first review, Brion discusses the theme of the labyrinth, which he sees as a background grid to most of Borges's stories (from *Labyrinthes* and *Fictions*), and applies it to human life. According to the critic, Borges and his characters are all prisoners of fear:

Tout labyrinthe est avant tout une confrontation de l'homme avec lui-même, au moment où il se trouve face à face avec les sources secrètes de son angoisse. Ce n'est plus à proprement parler le corps du héros qui est prisonnier, mais davantage encore sa pensée et son âme.

Il n'y a rien d'abstrait ou de théorique dans la recherche anxieuse de l'axe et du but que poursuit Borgès; la tragédie même de l'homme moderne, à quelque pays qu'il appartienne, est tout entière ici, comme chez Kafka et chez Buzzati: comme eux, Borgès est l'interprète de l'angoisse d'aujourd'hui dans ce qu'elle a de plus dramatique.⁷⁰

In Brion's association of Borges's work with Franz Kafka and Dino Buzzati, the link with French existentialism and existential angst is not far off: both Jean-Paul Sartre and Albert Camus, two prominent existentialists, wrote on Kafka, and Camus adapted Buzzati's work to the theatre.⁷¹

Brion's later essay for *L'Herne* shows the continuity of these poetical views. As the title indicates, in "Masques, miroirs, mensonges et labyrinthe," Brion studies how masks, mirrors, lies, and labyrinths in Borges's work conceal and reveal the truth or the mystery behind an illusion. The essay illustrates Brion's interest in the metaphysical, cosmological themes of what he calls Borges's *philosophie du temps* and his notion of *l'éternel retour*, which he again combines with psychological metaphysics.⁷² These themes lead, for Brion, to a kind of vertigo that includes existential angst: "Le vertige métaphysique dans lequel nous plongeant les livres du grand écrivain argentin, découle d'un *concept d'angoisse*, qui a été familier déjà à

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ For Kafka, see Sartre, "Aminadab ou du fantastique considéré comme un langage"; and Camus, "L'espoir et l'absurde dans l'œuvre de Franz Kafka." For Buzzati, see Camus, *Théâtre, récits, nouvelles*, 599-712. Brion had in fact already compared Buzzati to Kafka in an earlier, 1949 review of the French translation of Buzzati's *Deserto dei Tartari*, for which he used a very similar vocabulary of labyrinths, secrets, and anxiety. Brion, *Les labyrinthes du temps: Rencontres et choix d'un européen*, 77-85. To my knowledge, neither Sartre nor Camus ever commented on Borges's work.

⁷² Brion, "Masques, miroirs, mensonges et labyrinthe," 315 and 321.

Kierkegaard et à Kafka: architecte de labyrinthes intellectuels, Borges est bien de leur famille...."⁷³ Brion's "existentialist" classifications can also be found in reviews by two other critics, one of whom even classifies Borges together with Sartre and Kafka within a group of metaphysical writers under "un grand courant métaphysique et glacé."⁷⁴ It should also be observed, however, that this is an exception and that, in general, Borges was never directly called an existentialist.

Brion's conception of metaphysics and fear can be further understood by comparing it with Caillois's conception. As well as an evident correspondence between Brion's ideas and Caillois's reflection on the labyrinth and its relation to the theme of time and the eternal return, the metaphysical anxiety (*l'angoisse métaphysique*) had already been referred to in the *Bulletin de la Nrf* in the context of Kafka and Poe, probably by Caillois.⁷⁵ More importantly, Brion's belief in the existence of a secret or aim that the labyrinth contains comes close to Caillois's conception of the deeper meaning of hidden correspondences in the universe.⁷⁶ Both Brion and Caillois differ thus from Bénichou and Carrouges, for whom Borges's humor and skepticism dissipates his more theological metaphysics. This discussion is not unlike Sartre's distinction between Kafka and Camus, where Kafka represents the vision of a universe full of signs that we do not understand, and Camus the absence of every form of transcendence.⁷⁷ However, Brion's interpretation of Borges's work also includes a reflection on man's condition and destiny that personalizes Caillois's more abstract reflection on labyrinths of space and circular time. While Brion takes up Caillois's comments from the foreword to *Labyrinthes*, about the experience of the man who tries to get out of a labyrinth and feels it is infinite, Brion's examination of the labyrinth becomes more and more an examination of man. The cosmological and the psychological therefore come together, which is true for Brion's view on Borges, as well as for his poetics in general.⁷⁸

It can be concluded that the thematic classification of metaphysics in Borges's work was omnipresent and that the critics involved all had a different conception of this term. Bénichou and Carrouges's more theological conception differs, for

⁷³ Ibid., 322; italics in the original.

⁷⁴ Nimier, "Avez-vous lu Borgès?" See also Messadié, review of *Labyrinthes*.

⁷⁵ Presentation of *Fictions*, *Bulletin de la Nrf*, no. 46 (April, 1951): 4; and presentation of *Fictions*, *Bulletin de la Nrf*, no. 54 (January, 1952).

⁷⁶ For Brion's belief in the aim of the labyrinth, see Brion, *Les labyrinthes du temps: Rencontres et choix d'un européen*, 26.

⁷⁷ Sartre, "Explication de *L'étranger*," 136.

⁷⁸ See Simpson Maurin, *L'univers fantastique de Marcel Brion*, 206-7.

instance, from Brion's more cosmological and personal one. In her study on the reception of Borges in France, Sylvia Molloy seems to refer mainly to Brion's conception when she criticizes the image of what she calls a metaphysical Borges, which she limits to the vision that Borges, just like Samuel Beckett and James Joyce, describes the tragedy of man's condition.⁷⁹ Molloy exemplifies this metaphysical Borges in French criticism with a short anonymous note in *La tribune de Genève*, with a 1952 review by Jean-Jacques Marchand, and with Brion's 1954 review in *Le monde*. By contrast, I have shown that various conceptualizations of metaphysics coexisted. In spite of my observations on the different types of metaphysics, the term metaphysics and its conceptualization were not under discussion, whereas critics did discuss the themes of humor and fear that were closely linked to each conceptualization of metaphysics. Conversely, the discussion on the classification of Borges's work as fantastic included processes of interaction that dealt more directly with the conceptualization of the fantastic, as various definitions of the fantastic and conceptions of Borges's work competed with each other.

2.2. Nadeau, Brion, Albérès, Carrouges, and Dumur: The fantastic in Borges's work

Before turning now to Nadeau's perspective on the fantastic, which differs from that of the other critics in that it *excludes* Borges's work from the fantastic, I will briefly sketch the panorama of criticism of the fantastic in the French literary field of the 1950s and 1960s. This will enable me to contextualize the classifications of the fantastic by Nadeau and critics such as Brion, Albérès, and Carrouges, and their conceptualizations of this term. The 1950s and early 1960s saw a renewed interest in the fantastic on the part of the public and also a growth of criticism of the fantastic.⁸⁰ Borges's work was frequently received under the label of fantastic literature and the classification was widely discussed from the first book translations of his work onwards.⁸¹ Various individual translations of the author were issued in Caillois's

⁷⁹ Molloy, *La diffusion de la littérature hispano-américaine en France*, 210-20.

⁸⁰ Schneider, *La littérature fantastique en France*, 406.

⁸¹ As well as by the critics dealt with here, Borges's work is related to fantastic literature in: Presentation of *Enquêtes*, *Bulletin de la Nrf*, no. 117 (July, 1957); [Pauwels?], "Un conteur de l'imaginaire: *Labyrinthes* par Jorge Luis Borges"; "Le dictionnaire des responsables: Jorge Luis Borges," *Planète*, no. 8 (1963); Sternberg, *Une succursale du fantastique nommée science-fiction*, 14; Blanchot, "L'infini et l'infini"; Borges, "Jorge Luis Borges: Le plus grand écrivain argentin croit que ses livres ne valent rien," interview by de Saint-Phalle; Borges, "On le dit hautain, secret, impénétrable: J. L. Borges, ce grand homme tout simple," interview by Lapouge; Boussac, "Vingt contes de Borges élèvent l'infamie au rang d'une divinité"; Brenner, "Nous avons lu pour vous: *Enquêtes, 1937-1952* de Jorge-

anthologies on the fantastic, in *Fiction*, the French variant of the US *Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction*, and in *Planète*, a magazine that developed from Louis Pauwels and Jacques Bergier's reflection on "fantastic realism" that I will discuss in a later section.⁸² This importance of the genre in France forms a contrast with Borges criticism in the United States, where there was also much mention of "fantasy" and the "fantastic," for instance in a review in *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction*, but where the concepts were never extensively discussed. The large amount of French Borges criticism of the fantastic seems related on the one hand to the short references to the fantastic in the peritexts of *Fictions* and *Enquêtes*, and on the other hand to the renewed attention for the genre in France in general. The discussion was also connected to another Argentine author, as a number of critics referred simultaneously to Bioy Casares's work, which had already been translated in 1952, while Julio Cortázar, who was not translated into French until the 1960s, was only mentioned from the 1960s onward.⁸³ There seemed to be, however, little further interaction with Argentine criticism, as the reflection on the fantastic in Argentina was little developed until the 1960s, with the exception of Bioy Casares's 1940 introduction to the *Antología de la literatura fantástica* edited by Bioy Casares, Borges and Silvina Ocampo.⁸⁴

Luis Borges"; Caillois, "Les thèmes fondamentaux de J. L. Borges"; Couffon, "Pays d'Amérique latine"; Fofi, "Borgès et le cinéma"; Furter, "Jorge-Luis Borgès, romancier fantastique"; Genette in *Tel quel*, "Enquête sur la critique"; Genette, "La littérature selon Borges"; Guez, "Le livre de la semaine: *Enquêtes* de Jorge Luis Borges; L'auteur"; Hoog, "Au delà de l'énigme"; Ibarra, "Borges et Borges," interview by *L'Herne*; Klein, "Au nom des labyrinthes"; Lefebvre, "Qui a écrit Borges"; Luccioni, review of *L'invention de Morel*, by Adolfo Bioy Casares; Marissel, "L'univers de Jorge Luis Borges," 116; Maurois, "Un livre par mois: *Labyrinthes* de J.-L. Borges"; Maxence, "Mériter Borges," 1; Nahor, "Borges, un virtuose du fantastique"; Pauwels, "Un petit voyage de Marx à Mars"; Pauwels and Bergier, "L'écriture de Dieu. Le point suprême"; Pichon, "Science-fiction ou réalisme irrationnel?"; de la Rochefoucauld, "Deux écrivains argentins: Borgès et Casarès; Le plaisir et l'absence"; Réda, "Commentaire de *L'immortel* de Jorge-Luis Borges"; Roy, "Chroniques: Panorama des livres; L'art du conte et la poésie," 104; Roy, "Psychologie du fantastique," 1416; Schneider, *La littérature fantastique en France*, 407; Spriel, "Sur la 'science-fiction'"; Vax, "Autres littératures"; Vax, "Borges philosophe"; Verdevoye, "Littérature," 50-51; and Verdevoye and Bogliano, "Littératures hispano-américaines."

⁸² Borges, "Les ruines circulaires," in *Fantastique: Soixante récits de terreur*; "Le miroir d'encre," in *Fantastique: Soixante récits de terreur*; "Le Sud. Le miroir d'encre," in *Anthologie du fantastique*, vol. 2; "Les ruines circulaires," *Fiction*, no. 107 (October, 1962); "Abenhacan el Bokhari mort dans son labyrinthe," *Fiction*, no. 108 (November, 1962); "La bibliothèque de Babel," *Fiction*, no. 110 (January, 1963); "La loterie à Babylone," *Fiction* 11, no. 113 (April, 1963); "L'écriture du Dieu"; "Les deux qui rêvèrent"; "La bibliothèque de Babel," *Planète*, no. 10 (1963); and "La vérité sur Williams S...." See also Borges, "Un extrait d'une géniale nouvelle de Jorge Luis Borges"; and "La cité des immortels."

⁸³ For references to Bioy Casares, see Bénichou, "Le monde et l'esprit chez Jorge Luis Borges"; Blanchot, "Le tour d'écrou"; Blanchot, "Le secret du Golem"; Carrouges, "Le spectroscope des anticipations," 7; Dumur, "Du 'fantastique' argentin"; Klein, "Au nom des labyrinthes"; de la Rochefoucauld, "Deux écrivains argentins: Borgès et Casarès; Le plaisir et l'absence"; and Verdevoye and Bogliano, "Littératures hispano-américaines."

⁸⁴ Bioy Casares, prologue to *Antología de la literatura fantástica*. See Cócaro, "La corriente literaria fantástica en la Argentina," 11.

Although the large amount of French criticism of the fantastic, and French Borges criticism of the fantastic in particular, was obviously very heterogeneous, the conceptual discussions can be illustrated by making use of one of Caillois's anthologies on the fantastic, which has become one of the major early publications on this matter. In the preface to Caillois's 1958 anthology *Fantastique: Soixante récits de terreur*, he gives a definition of the fantastic that separates it from what he calls the *féerique*: "Le féerique est un univers merveilleux qui s'oppose au monde réel sans en détruire la cohérence. Le fantastique, au contraire, manifeste un scandale, une déchirure, une irruption insolite, presque insupportable dans le monde réel."⁸⁵ In Caillois's definition of the fantastic the role of fear is important, as the subtitle of the volume clarifies, and he also claims that the presence of fear was his criterion for selecting texts for the anthology: "la terreur doit être engendrée seulement par une intervention surnaturelle; l'intervention du surnaturel doit obligatoirement aboutir à un effet de terreur."⁸⁶ While Caillois's definition of the fantastic is only one example, its focus on the intrusion of an unusual or mysterious element in the real world and its demarcation from other terms such as the *féerique* was shared by other critics of the fantastic, some of whom also wrote on Borges.⁸⁷ However, Caillois's emphasis on fear as a pivotal element of fantastic literature was not always shared by other critics of the fantastic, who also stressed elements such as hesitation or game.

Similarly to a later, 1957 review, Nadeau's first review of Borges briefly mentions the fantastic without conceptualizing the term: "*Fictions* est le titre qui convient parfaitement à ce recueil de textes inclassables, ni nouvelles, ni contes fantastiques, mais plutôt chacun."⁸⁸ Rather than on the fantastic, Nadeau focuses on how Borges's work stands midway between reality as a constant reference point and the world of imagination. For Nadeau, Borges's work can still be situated in (marvelous) reality, as he states that "La grande force de Borges est de paraître se mouvoir dans ce monde-ci, concret, vraisemblable, quotidien."⁸⁹ He also adds to the discussion a sense of break or intrusion that can be related to then recent discussions on the fantastic, for instance when he refers to apocryphal reviews of books that

⁸⁵ Caillois, preface to *Fantastique: Soixante récits de terreur*, 3.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

⁸⁷ See Castex, *Le conte fantastique en France de Nodier à Maupassant*, 8; Schneider, *La littérature fantastique en France*, 149; and Vax, "Autres littératures," the last two of which discussed Borges's work. For a later, 1970 study of the fantastic with a similar definition, see Todorov, *Introduction à la littérature fantastique*.

⁸⁸ Nadeau, "Un écrivain déroutant et savoureux; Jorge Luis Borges." See also Nadeau, "Un merveilleux sophiste; Jorge Luis Borges."

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

break with a sense of reality. It is also on the basis of this imaginary, apocryphal literature that Nadeau later compares Borges to André Gide in the Pleïade edition of Gide's fiction work, and even refers to the French writer as a "Jorge Luis Borges avant la lettre."⁹⁰

However, paradoxically, the critic goes against the classification of Borges's work as fantastic in his 1964 essay for *L'Herne*:

On doit s'inscrire en faux contre la vue qui fait de Jorge Luis Borges un écrivain fantastique. Ce serait reléguer ses productions dans le royaume fort encombré de l'imaginaire, où nous aimons, pourquoi pas? nous ébattre de temps à autre, comme on va prendre l'air à la campagne [. . .]. Parce qu'il est le monde de l'insolite et du merveilleux, le monde de Borges est sans miracles.⁹¹

Nadeau's use of the terms *insolite* and *merveilleux* brings a surrealist context to mind. Breton's first manifesto of surrealism, for instance, had considered the marvelous (i.e. the extraordinary, the miraculous) as an invitation to see the surreal within the real:

Je crois à la résolution future de ces deux états, en apparence si contradictoires, que sont le rêve et la réalité, en une sorte de réalité absolue, de *surréalité*, si l'on peut ainsi dire. [. . .] Tranchons-en: le merveilleux est toujours beau, n'importe quel merveilleux est beau, il n'y a même que le merveilleux qui soit beau.⁹²

This same manifesto also paid attention to the fantastic, although Breton particularly showed how the fantastic had become part of reality: "Ce qu'il y a d'admirable dans le fantastique, c'est qu'il n'y a plus de fantastique: il n'y a que le réel."⁹³ Nadeau, who had published a *Histoire du surréalisme* in 1945,⁹⁴ therefore followed a surrealist definition of the marvelous and the fantastic by placing the fantastic outside reality, Borges's work inside marvelous reality, and therefore outside fantastic literature. In Nadeau's conception, the fantastic was thus not yet separated from the *féerique*.

Nadeau's objections to classifying Borges's work as fantastic can probably be considered in the light of the low status of the genre of fantastic literature in France

⁹⁰ Nadeau, introduction to *Romans: Récits et soties, œuvres lyriques*, by André Gide, xxv.

⁹¹ Nadeau, "Borges le perturbateur," 110.

⁹² Breton, "Manifeste du surréalisme (1924)," 27.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 28 n1.

⁹⁴ Nadeau, *Histoire du surréalisme*.

because of its association with trivial literature. It is possible that he reacted to previous classifications of the fantastic, some of which I will discuss below. As I want to argue, Nadeau's wish to place Borges's work within reality, which made him exclude the author's work from the fantastic, could also be related to French discussions on committed literature and Nadeau's position in these discussions. In an essay on *Enquêtes*, Nadeau refers to fragments from essays such as "Valéry como símbolo" and "Dos libros" in order to show that Borges makes serious comments on contemporaneous reality. In the same essay, Nadeau quotes Borges's note on Nazism that he wrote on the day of the liberation of France ("Anotación al 23 de agosto de 1944"). In France, this text had previously been published in *Les temps modernes*, and had thus circulated within a medium in which political commitment was the pivotal poetical norm.⁹⁵ Nadeau's classifications on Borges could, in my view, be situated between the aestheticism more common to *La nouvelle revue française* and the political engagement of *Les temps modernes*, a middle position that Nadeau also took with his magazine *Les lettres nouvelles*. As Nadeau observes with reference to the magazine he edited with critic Maurice Saillet:

Pour Saillet et moi l'engagement c'était la littérature elle-même, c'est-à-dire l'écriture, le fait d'écrire, Kafka était un de nos héros. L'assomption du prolétariat, la cité idéale, l'homme nouveau, tout ce qui avait motivé mon militantisme politique, ce n'était plus mon combat quasi exclusif, mais je détestais tout autant l'esthétisme, la littérature ronds-de-jambe de la NRF. Même si elle pouvait revendiquer Malraux, Claudel, Gide, les grands de l'avant-guerre.⁹⁶

For this reason, Nadeau may have situated Borges's work in opposition to committed literature, making sure, at the same time, to stress the relevance of Borges's work to "our" time in his same essay on *Enquêtes*:

Ennemi de l'engagement, plein d'un mépris souriant pour la politique et toutes les philosophies du bonheur, idéaliste extravagant parce que trop conséquent, Jorge Luis Borges ne se veut que parfait homme de lettres. Il est

⁹⁵ Borges, "Le rêve de Coleridge. Magies partielles du Quichotte. Le Biathanatos. La langue analytique de John Wilkins. Le miroir des énigmes. Note sur le 23 août 1944. De quelqu'un à personne."

⁹⁶ Nadeau, "En guise de postface," 407.

curieux de constater combien, à ce degré de perfection, un homme de lettres peut jeter le trouble dans les esprits.⁹⁷

In this context and in the same article, I also understand Nadeau's emphasis on the seriousness of Borges's work, or a "message" therein, despite his playfulness.

Nadeau's Borges reviews can also be related and contrasted to those of three other critics. Nadeau, Brion, Albérès, and Carrouges shared the view that Borges's reality is marvelous or hallucinatory. All four critics also situated Borges's texts in the real world rather than outside it. However, they differed in that Brion, Albérès, and Carrouges included Borges's work in their conceptualization of the fantastic. Brion's first review already refers to the fantastic, which he associates with the intellectual character of Borges's work: "Il fabrique lui aussi un monde fantastique d'autant plus inquiétant que ce fantastique est purement intellectuel—on pourrait le dire le fantastique de l'extrême logique."⁹⁸ In a later review of *Histoire de l'infamie. Histoire de l'éternité*, he coins the term *fantastique métaphysique* for Borges's work when he states: "Comment s'est constitué, dans l'évolution de sa pensée et de son art, le passage de l'imaginaire pur à ce que l'on pourrait appeler le *fantastique métaphysique*, cet ouvrage le montre bien."⁹⁹ Brion's very concise classification seems thus to apply to the story-essays of *Historia de la eternidad* rather than to Borges's stories from *Historia universal de la infamia*, but a concrete definition is not given. Further on in the same review, the fantastic becomes synonymous with, or related to, vertigo:

Les différents exemples du vertige métaphysique, qui se déguise de multiples façons dans les contes fantastiques de Borgès ne sont, en définitive, que des aspects paradoxaux de la quête de l'éternité, des efforts que l'homme fait pour se convaincre de l'existence du temps aussi bien que l'existence de l'espace.¹⁰⁰

In Brion, the *fantastique métaphysique* seems thus related to metaphysical concerns about time and man's destiny, which lead to vertigo and therefore anxiety. The fantastic is a means to explore the secrets in the world, to reveal reality.¹⁰¹ The fact

⁹⁷ Nadeau, "Un merveilleux sophiste; Jorge Luis Borges."

⁹⁸ Brion, "D'un autre hémisphère... Trois livres sud-américains."

⁹⁹ Brion, "Jorge Luis Borgès et l'*Histoire de l'éternité*"; italics in the original.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ For this aspect, see also Brion, "Masques, miroirs, mensonges et labyrinthe," 321.

that for Brion the fantastic sits between the apparent and the real, all within the real world, can also be deduced from his comparison between Borges's work and Spanish baroque literature, where the imaginary and the real are on the same level—a comparison that he mentions in his review of *Histoire de l'infamie. Histoire de l'éternité*, among other texts.¹⁰² Brion's *fantastique métaphysique* does not appear in his own 1961 book on fantastic art, *Art fantastique*, nor, to my knowledge, in (the peritexts of) his own stories, especially before the Second World War, which can be labeled fantastic.¹⁰³ It therefore seems to be a term he specifically coined for Borges's work; a term in which the discussions of metaphysics and the fantastic in Borges's work come together. In any case, it is in my view improbable that he took this classification from Bioy Casares's prologue to the *Antología de la literatura fantástica*, where the author speaks of *fantasías metafísicas*, as Bioy Casares conceptualizes them in a different way.¹⁰⁴

Albérès also observed a close relationship between metaphysics and fantastic literature in Borges's work, but with a focus on humor that was absent in Brion's criticism. While Albérès specifies, perhaps in reaction to the book's back cover, that *Enquêtes* is composed of articles and not of fantastic stories,¹⁰⁵ he refers to *Fictions* as “une série de contes fantastiques, kafkaïens mais plus plaisants que Kafka car l'humour y est toujours présent.”¹⁰⁶ In *Arts*, Albérès also refers to science fiction, although he places Borges in the categories of the fantastic and the metaphysical:

Dans une époque où la littérature française ou étrangère ne nous fournit rien de bien “nouveau,” nous découvrons l'Argentin Borges comme un esprit original et inimitable. Il apporte, par morceaux, une vision fantastique du monde, qui tient de Poe, de Chesterton, de Valéry et de l'hindouisme. Disons que la pente de son esprit est d'imaginer toutes les sortes d'univers possibles en les emboîtant les uns dans les autres. C'est l'espèce d'imagination que personne n'a réussi à imposer dans le domaine de la “fiction scientifique.” Ce tour de force, qui devait être accompli au XX^e siècle, ne l'a donc pas été par la

¹⁰² Brion, “Jorge Luis Borgès et ses *Labyrinthes*.” See also Brion, “Jorge Luis Borgès et l'*Histoire de l'éternité*.”

¹⁰³ Brion, *Art fantastique*. See Simpson Maurin, *L'univers fantastique de Marcel Brion*; and Simpson Maurin, “Les contes fantastiques.”

¹⁰⁴ Bioy Casares, prologue to *Antología de la literatura fantástica*, 13.

¹⁰⁵ Albérès, “Un Edgar Poe du XX^e siècle: Jorge Luis Borgès.” See also the back cover of *Enquêtes* and the presentation of *Enquêtes*, *Bulletin de la Nrf*, no. 117 (July, 1957).

¹⁰⁶ Albérès, “L'imagination vertigineuse.” Part of this review was reproduced as Albérès, “Philippe Sénart, R.-M. Albérès et Kléber Haedens ont composé votre bibliothèque en 1957.”

“science-fiction,” mais, par Borges, dans la métaphysique amusante et vertigineuse.¹⁰⁷

The different universes or worlds that, according to Albérès, fit into each other do not constitute a supernatural universe; rather, they are present in the real world. This seems related, for Albérès, to Borges's vision of reality as a multiplicity of possible, simultaneous realities on which he elaborates in another text on Borges in his 1962 book *Histoire du roman moderne*. Here, he also coins the term *fantastique cérébral*:

Le fantastique cérébral utilise un postulat essentiel: la complexité de l'univers, la multiplicité des mondes qui s'emboîtent l'un dans l'autre. La réalité n'existe pas en tant que telle, mais comme l'antichambre d'une autre réalité possible. [. . .] Même sous leur forme de récréation mathématique ou philosophique, ces paradoxes de l'esprit caractérisent la structure du fantastique—et souvent—du merveilleux—, dans notre siècle: non plus un “monde réel” soumis à l'intrusion de puissances extérieures vêtues en dieux de l'Olympe, en angelots ou en démons, en spectres un peu ridicules, *mais un monde visible qui n'est ni homogène ni unique*, qui appartient à une série de mondes *qui s'emboîtent l'un dans l'autre*.¹⁰⁸

At the same time, Albérès's view on the real world has little to do with the day-to-day reality, and in fact he claims in the same text that we leave the real world in a story such as “*Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius*.” The *fantastique cérébral*, which thus parts from the idea of the existence of various imaginary worlds, is also used to classify the *nouveau roman* authors, among which Albérès lists Alain Robbe-Grillet, Michel Butor, and Claude Simon.

Although the previously discussed publications by Brion and Albérès partly preceded and partly succeeded Caillois's anthology and other contemporary criticism of the fantastic, their discussions seemed unrelated. There was no sense of an element intruding the real world, although this observation is provisional as both critics commented only briefly on the classification and its application to Borges's work. Brion and Albérès did emphasize that the fantastic takes place in the real world, but focused more on how reality becomes unreal or marvelous, which in fact

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Albérès, “Le fantastique cérébral: Jorge-Luis Borges,” 406; italics in the original.

makes a distinction between the real world and an element extraneous to it (which was key to contemporary French definitions) impossible. In this sense, Brion and Albérès were, like Nadeau, close to a surrealist conception of the marvelous and the fantastic, even though their conception of the fantastic was a wider one than Nadeau's as they also placed the fantastic within reality. By emphasizing that Borges's fantastic literature took place within the real world, the critics showed that their definition of the fantastic was not yet clearly demarcated from the *féerique* outside the real world, a demarcation that would make this specification unnecessary. Most of these same comments also apply to Carrouges, even though his discussion of the fantastic in Borges was more elaborate and more closely related to his criticism of science fiction and surrealist literature.

From one of Carrouges's reviews of *Fictions* in *Monde nouveau paru*, it becomes clear that Carrouges usually situates the fantastic outside reality, but that he situates Borges's fantastic literature within it. Similarly to Brion and Albérès after him, he therefore does not, like Caillois and other critics, distinguish between the fantastic and the *féerique*, and considers reality in Borges's work as a marvelous realm similar to that of the surrealists:

Le secret de Borges est qu'il ne se cantonne pas dans la forme du récit tel un miroir placide enregistreur de la *vie ordinaire*, il pénètre d'emblée dans le domaine du merveilleux métaphysique. L'on sait que le fantastique est une des formes de littérature les plus séduisantes mais qu'elle présente un grand écueil: celui des frivoles facilités de la rêverie. Elle se porte alternativement vers les plages du passé ou de l'avenir qui se prêtent avec trop d'aisance aux songes d'âge d'or ou de paradis futurs. Borges fait au contraire partie des écrivains dont le sens du fantastique s'attaque immédiatement à la vie présente. Peu importe en effet la façon dont il situe la scène de tel ou tel conte, dans tous les cas notre sentiment habituel de la réalité n'en sort pas indemne.¹⁰⁹

This conception of the fantastic is also apparent from Carrouges's "Le gai savoir de Jorge Luis Borges," published in the same year, where the genre of the fantastic is in principle opposed to the real, while Borges's "tlönization" of the world brings both

¹⁰⁹ Carrouges, "Romans étrangers," 58.

concepts together: "C'est à partir de là que, dans cette étrange rivalité entre le fantastique et le *réel*, le fantastique l'emporte: l'œuvre de la société secrète s'achève par la *tlönisation* du monde."¹¹⁰ In this way, Carrouges can still situate Borges's work in the real world, and thus indirectly criticize a poetical conception that wants literature to register and mirror *la vie ordinaire*. In the essay from *Monde nouveau paru*, he shows his preference for Borges's idealist metaphysics, or, as he calls it, *l'idéalisme magique*, over scientific materialism (such as naturalism and Marxism), which rejects any form of deity.¹¹¹

As well as conceptualizing Borges's fantastic literature as the marvelous and the metaphysical within reality, Carrouges uses the classification more broadly in two texts on fantastic literature. In these texts, in which he also refers to Borges, the fantastic seems to coincide with or at least include the *féerique*; that is, the marvelous that opposes the real world. For Carrouges, the fantastic then becomes an umbrella term for different subgenres such as the *conte métaphysique et mystique* and the *littérature d'anticipation*, the genre of science fiction.¹¹² In another text, he elaborates more specifically on this latter genre and refers to Borges, Bioy Casares, and to many other authors who partake in the growing movement of science fiction.¹¹³ At the start of the 1950s, three new collections of science fiction literature were launched in France by Éditions Fleuve noir (Fleuve noir anticipation), by Gallimard and Hachette (Le rayon fantastique), and by Denoël (Présence du futur). The magazine *Fiction*, the French variant of the US *Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction*, was launched in 1953, and included several translations and criticism of Borges's work. Borges's work was also included in several magazines and anthologies devoted to science fiction, and classified under the genre in French criticism.¹¹⁴ In his 1953 text on science fiction, Carrouges testifies to the growing production and criticism of science fiction in

¹¹⁰ Carrouges, "Le gai savoir de Jorge Luis Borges," 47; italics in the original.

¹¹¹ Carrouges, "Romans étrangers," 58.

¹¹² Carrouges, "Lectures: Les mondes insolites"; and "Actualité du conte fantastique."

¹¹³ Carrouges, "Le spectroscopie des anticipations."

¹¹⁴ For the translations, see Borges, "La bibliothèque de Babel," in *Univers de la science fiction: 16 nouvelles*, edited by Juin; "Les ruines circulaires," *Fiction*, no. 107 (October, 1962); "Abenhacan el Bokhari mort dans son labyrinthe," *Fiction*, no. 108 (November, 1962); "La bibliothèque de Babel," *Fiction*, no. 110 (January, 1963); "La loterie à Babylone," *Fiction* 11, no. 113 (April, 1963); and "La bibliothèque de Babel," in *Les 20 meilleurs récits de science-fiction*, edited by Juin. For criticism apart from the texts by Carrouges, see Sternberg, *Une succursale du fantastique nommée science-fiction*, 14; Billetdoux, "Les itinéraires du petit Marco Polo"; Cassou, "L'exercice problématique de la littérature," 108; Duvignaud, "Hommes: Jorge-Luis Borges"; Klein, "Au nom des labyrinthes"; Pauwels, "Un petit voyage de Marx à Mars"; Pichon, "Science-fiction ou réalisme irrationnel," 39; Spriel, "Sur la 'science-fiction';" Tavernier, "A travers les livres: De Queffelec... à Tibor Dery"; and Tavernier, "Les fusées vont-elles plus vite que l'imagination des écrivains?"

France, a tendency that I have also observed for fantastic literature, although Carrouges is pessimistic about the low status of the genre and the lack of interest by French editors.

Carrouges's own interest in the genre of science fiction was, as becomes clear from the same 1953 text, related to a spiritual or religious interest that he also displayed in some of his texts on surrealism. In his article, he sees science fiction as the lay version of religious apocalyptic literature: "C'est ce passage du sacré au profane qui provoque la crise sur la valeur de la littérature d'anticipation. Celle-ci est la forme 'moderne,' profane, voir même athée, de la littérature apocalyptique."¹¹⁵ This aspect is, however, not underscored in Carrouges's discussion of Borges's work, and he discusses the author in the more general context of science fiction and surrealism, but without classifying his work as such: "Il est possible qu'on ne puisse classer ses récits dans le stricte cadre de l'anticipation, pas plus, d'ailleurs, que dans l'orbite du mouvement surréaliste au sens particulier de ce terme. Mais les classifications mécaniques sont secondaires."¹¹⁶ Carrouges therefore does not pass over the differences between Borges's work on the one hand and science fiction and surrealism on the other, discussing them as part of his broad definition of the fantastic. In French criticism around 1952, other critics such as Dumur also referred explicitly to surrealism.¹¹⁷

For surrealism, and in another text, Carrouges also links Borges to the movement because of the presence of the absurd in the author's work. For Carrouges, the absurd, in a similar fashion to humor, takes away metaphysical anxiety:

Il faut le souligner à ce propos; il y a un monde entre deux choses qu'on confond trop souvent: la conception de l'absurde chez les existentialistes ou para-existentialistes et le sentiment poétique de l'absurde chez les dadaïstes et les surréalistes. Le mot est le même, mais l'éclairage diffère du tout au tout. Les premiers se laissent écraser par l'absurde qui leur semble seulement noir et désespérant. Les autres ont le sentiment invincible qu'en dehors des

¹¹⁵ Carrouges, "Le spectroscope des anticipations," 15.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 13-14.

¹¹⁷ Dumur, "Une sensibilité exténuée"; Marchand, "Un nouveau dynamiteur; Jorge Luis Borges"; and Hoog, "Au delà de l'énigme." The attention for Borges's work from within the surrealist movement itself was scarce: Breton, for instance, only referred once to Borges before 1964. See Breton, "Braise au trépied de Keridwen," 313.

oppressantes absurdités de la vie humaine, il existe, traversant mystérieusement cette vie, un absurde poétique hautement libérateur et illuminateur. Loin de s'effaroucher, ils entrent dans le jeu, ils attendent de l'absurde non le désespoir, mais la merveille. Parce qu'ils n'ont pas placé leur espoir dans la logique à courte vue, mais dans l'explosion de cette logique. S'il leur arrive de succomber, c'est seulement dans la mesure où ils renoncent à atteindre cette face poétique de l'absurde.

C'est elle qui éclaire merveilleusement les pages de Borges.¹¹⁸

Carrouges's discussion of Borges's work also serves to distance himself from certain aspects of surrealism and science fiction. His praise of Borges's work enables him to criticize what he perceives as the nostalgic side of surrealism (because of its focus on the present and the past) and the lack of poetry and humor in science fiction literature. To fully grasp this double criticism, it should be quoted at length:

A ce propos, il est frappant et fâcheux que tant d'œuvres surréalistes ou para-surréalistes qui se sont lancées sur les chemins du fantastique se soient presque toutes limitées au présent et surtout au passé. Comme celles des romantiques allemands, elles ont peint un merveilleux *trop poétique*, trop anecdotique, trop nostalgique. Il y a mieux à faire qu'à cultiver les regrets des mondes perdus. L'avenir est la dimension surréaliste par excellence. Il y a plus de surréalité dans le principe de n'importe quel ouvrage d'anticipation que dans le lyrisme sur les temps révolus. Il est vrai que les auteurs de la plupart des anticipations négligent fâcheusement la poésie et le véritable humour; ils exploitent mécaniquement une idée abstraite, ils s'intéressent trop à la face prosaïque de l'exploration de l'avenir et ils renouvellent assez mal leurs façons d'imaginer les mondes futurs.

Cette double remarque nous permettra peut-être de mieux saisir la puissante originalité de Borges. Laissant à d'autres les nostalgies du passé et des lointains avènements, il introduit dans le présent une lumière fantastique, qui fait insidieusement basculer le sentiment de réalité. Son domaine, c'est celui de l'anticipation-éclair, une anticipation qui attaque de toutes parts, d'ores et

¹¹⁸ Carrouges, "Le gai savoir de Jorge Luis Borges," 48.

déjà, le miroir des apparences et nous en révèle les insondables jeux de glace.¹¹⁹

Carrouges passed over the atheistic aspects of surrealism and also mitigated the political, revolutionary claims of the movement, which in the first manifesto of surrealism and in later texts advocated the idea that art had to merge with revolution to change both society and the artist.¹²⁰ In the already quoted text on science fiction, Carrouges criticized surrealism for not dealing with the future and added that the surrealist focus on the past contrasted with its revolutionary position.¹²¹ While he therefore indirectly posited the incoherence of surrealism's political project, he parted from this premise by praising Borges's relevance to the present and near future. For Borges's work, Carrouges did not directly refer to either the surrealist political stance or Borges's stance against the revolutionary claim of surrealism.¹²² In fact, without these references, Carrouges could already relate Borges easily to the depoliticized variant of surrealism that he advocated.

In my discussion of various debates on Borges's nationality, his use of metaphysics, and fantastic literature, the classifications of existentialism and surrealism have been brought to the fore in several cases. These classifications of literary movements in the critical reception of Borges's work bear interesting parallels with the reception of Kafka's work in France, to which I will now briefly turn. In the reception of Kafka's work, which began in France before the reception of Borges's work, there was also little initial attention for the historical, cultural, political, and linguistic aspects. As Marthe Robert has shown in a study of the early reception in France until the 1950s, Kafka's work was domesticated in France, unlike authors such as William Faulkner or James Joyce who were in the reception too closely linked to regional conditions for them to be naturalized in France.¹²³ Kafka thus became extraterritorial, an author

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 49.

¹²⁰ Carrouges, "Surréalisme et occultisme," 199. See also Gershman, "Affaire Pastoureau"; and Bauduin, "Occultation of Surrealism," 13.

¹²¹ Carrouges, "Le spectroscope des anticipations," 10.

¹²² Both in "Valéry como símbolo" from *Otras inquisiciones* and in "Un caudaloso manifiesto de Breton" from *Textos cautivos*, Borges criticized André Breton and surrealism, in the latter text especially because of Breton's political view of the artist. Carrouges did not use these comments by Borges to support his viewpoint against the political project of surrealism, and these texts were of course not available to the French critic at the start of the 1950s.

¹²³ Robert, "Kafka en France," *Mercure de France* 342, no. 1174 (June 1, 1961).

“venu de nulle part et appartenant à tous” and “tombé du ciel,”¹²⁴ even already in the peritexts of the first book translation in 1933 at Gallimard, *Le procès*. Even the underlying reasons for Kafka's naturalization in France, such as the fact that most of his work was published posthumously and that his work was ignored in Prague, may be comparable, not to the actual conditions of the reception of Borges's work, but to the previously mentioned misconception that Borges's work had hardly been appreciated in his homeland.

Robert also claims that Kafka's naturalization caused his easy and rapid appropriation and integration into French surrealism and existentialism. For French existentialism, for instance, she shows that:

Kafka se trouva mêlé [. . .] à un mouvement typiquement français, l'existentialisme, qui l'entraîna naturellement dans une région où la philosophie l'emportait de beaucoup sur la littérature et où, par-là même, il devait achever de perdre ses contours. Désormais on parla de l'absurde, de la liberté, de l'angoisse existentielle, de la transcendance—de toutes choses qui concernent évidemment Kafka de près, mais qu'on prenait de haut, sans chercher à établir quel rôle concret elles jouaient dans la structure particulière de l'œuvre *romanesque*.¹²⁵

When these observations are applied to Borges's work, it could be observed that it was perhaps integrated into surrealism partially because of his extraterritorialization. In most of the examples I have quoted, Borges's work was not explicitly linked to the movement, but still interpreted in a surrealist framework. Carrouges's texts offer more explicit classifications of Borges's work within surrealism, and I will add another example in the section on Pauwels and Bergier. In this sense, Borges's own statements on surrealism from *Enquêtes* were in most cases ignored. The interpretative context of existentialism was present in Brion's articles, but critics did not directly relate Borges's work to existentialism or classify his work as such. In fact, Nadeau commented on Borges's lack of political commitment by using quotes from the author himself, which made Borges's appropriation for existentialism even more problematic. In spite of Borges's extraterritorialization and the French fondness for classifying authors according to schools and generations, to which Borges has

¹²⁴ Robert, “Kafka en France,” in *Le siècle de Kafka*, 16.

¹²⁵ Robert, “Kafka en France,” *Mercure de France* 342, no. 1174 (June 1, 1961): 245-46.

referred, his work could thus not be fully incorporated into surrealism and existentialism.¹²⁶

As well as this extraterritorialization, the tendency of French critics to label Borges under the wings of existing and predominantly French literary movements can likely be explained by the dominance of these movements in the literary field. Even though surrealism had lost its hegemony in the French literary field, both surrealism and existentialism offered a normative framework and corresponding vocabulary that could be used to evaluate Borges's work. The fact that the integration into surrealism and existentialism was not complete shows the incompatibility of these movements with Borges's poetical norms, and perhaps also the incompatibility of the interpretative frameworks of the critics with Borges's poetics. The tendency to capture Borges within an existing framework can also be observed for the classification of Borges's work as metaphysical and fantastic. While some of the discussions on these classifications can be related to Caillois's role as a mediator, they can also be associated with the dominance of metaphysical and fantastic literature in the French literary field of the 1950s. The thematic classification of metaphysics can therefore be understood in the light of the importance of Sartre's "metaphysical" literature and that of other existentialist writers.¹²⁷ The classification of fantastic literature can in turn be explained by the already discussed boom of interest in this genre.

Rather than the classifications and conceptualizations themselves, what is most notable about Bénichou, Nadeau, Carrouges, Brion, Albérès, and Dumur is the consensus they show in their Borges criticism. This homogenization in criticism was, in a certain way, similar to the centralization of selections and classifications in the French translation and publication process, this time not because several mediators shared these selections and classifications but because Caillois dominated the publication of Borges's book translations as a very central mediator. Although there were not many clear and direct processes of interaction within these Borges publications, their evaluations had certainly become homogeneous or centralized. This does not mean that all critics agreed with each other, as is clear from Nadeau's refusal to label Borges's work under the fantastic, but that they used several of the same classifications and norms. This points thus to a shared normative framework that already existed beforehand, perhaps because of certain hegemonic literary

¹²⁶ Bioy Casares, *Borges*, 827-28.

¹²⁷ See Boschetti, *Sartre et "Les temps modernes,"* 23-36.

movements or mediators in the field, or because of other processes specific to the French literary field. I will discuss these possible explanations for the process of centralization in the conclusions to this chapter. As I will analyze several other processes of centralization among French critics, such as the interaction between Maurice Blanchot, Gérard Genette, Alain Robbe-Grillet, Michel Foucault, and Maurice-Jean Lefebvre, these conclusions will deal with this topic for French criticism in general.

3. René Étiemble: The classification of Borges as a cosmopolitan writer

René Étiemble's only essay on Borges was published in the literary and political magazine *Les temps modernes* in September 1952. An extremely complex text, "Un homme à tuer: Jorge Luis Borges, cosmopolite" praises cosmopolitanism in Borges's work. Although I usually part from key mediators and their texts in order to further extend the analysis to the different contexts and levels of reception, in Étiemble's case I will start with a brief introduction to the political and institutional context in which his essay was published. This introduction will enable me to contextualize the analysis of the essay more coherently, and examine Étiemble's classification of Borges's work.

Étiemble's essay was published, not coincidentally, at a time when Jean-Paul Sartre had recently launched a different form of political commitment in *Les temps modernes*. Until that year, Sartre, and also the magazine he co-founded, had stood for literature as a form of social action: a vision he exposed, for instance, in his presentation text for the first, 1945 issue of the magazine and later in *Qu'est-ce que la littérature?* in 1947.¹²⁸ Sartre first explicitly contrasted this indirect form of political commitment through literature with the communist poetical conception, but he reconsidered his vision at the start of the 1950s by seeking a rapprochement with the Communist Party. For Sartre, literature was now no longer the supreme form of action and the writer also had to take militant action in order to perform his social role. In a series of three articles in *Les temps modernes* published between 1952 and 1954, "Les communistes et la paix," Sartre confirmed his adhesion to the communist, in this case Stalinist, revolution, which led to a break with several writers,

¹²⁸ See Sartre, *Situations*, vol. 2, *Qu'est-ce que la littérature?*

philosophers, and editors of the magazine, such as Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Claude Lefort.¹²⁹ Among the writers who distanced themselves from Sartre because of his political commitment in service of Stalinism, we can also count Étiemble. In a text first published in the literary magazine *Valeurs* in 1946, the year in which he started writing for *Les temps modernes*, Étiemble had already distanced himself from the need for a writer to politically commit himself, and especially from Sartre's conception of engagement.¹³⁰ In a previous issue of *Valeurs*, which Étiemble founded in Alexandria, the French critic also referred to Borges as "un des meilleurs écrivains de ce temps" after having read "Assyriennes" in Roger Caillois's *Lettres françaises*, a discovery he made through the French poet Jules Supervielle, with whom he corresponded when the latter was exiled in Uruguay.¹³¹

Étiemble's distancing from the pro-Soviet direction that Sartre was taking is clear from the telling subtitle of the second volume of his 1955 book *Hygiène des lettres*, called *Littérature dégagée, 1942-1953*. This volume includes the text from *Valeurs*, and, in a chapter entitled "L'écrivain et le stalinisme," both the essay on Borges and a letter addressed to Sartre. The "Lettre ouverte à Jean-Paul Sartre sur l'unité de mauvaise action," first published in 1953 in *Arts*, a weekly that around this time started to take a stance against existentialism and Stalinism, shows that the mounting anti-Semitism in Soviet policy and Sartre's uncritical attitude towards it was an important reason for Étiemble to break with Sartre and *Les temps modernes* in 1953.¹³² Étiemble explains to Sartre that he no longer feels free to publish his judgments in *Les temps modernes*, especially as far as his criticism of Stalinist Marxism is concerned. He claims he wants to express his opinions without being put into a political pigeon-hole, a point that he exemplifies with reference to his essay on Borges:

En littérature, disons, j'aime l'esprit cosmopolite: supposons que j'écrive aux *Temps Modernes* un article précisément où j'exalte cet esprit-là: du coup, je fais le jeu des Juifs, donc des sionistes, alliés, chacun le sait, aux banquiers de la Cité, aux bandits de Wall-Street; je deviens agresseur de l'Union soviétique. Si vous pratiquez honnêtement votre unité d'action, vous devez censurer mon

¹²⁹ Bouffartigue, "*Temps modernes (Les)*," 1338; and Boschetti, *Sartre et "Les temps modernes*," 276-90. Sartre's articles can be found in Sartre, *Situations*, vol. 6, *Problèmes du marxisme*.

¹³⁰ Étiemble, "De l'engagement."

¹³¹ [Étiemble], "Revue des revues," 107. See also Supervielle and Étiemble, *Correspondance, 1936-1959*.

¹³² Étiemble, "Lettre ouverte à Jean-Paul Sartre sur l'unité de mauvaise action," 148-49.

article. Or, en septembre 1952, je venais de publier aux *Temps Modernes*: *Un homme à tuer*, Jorge Luis Borges, cosmopolite. Rétrospectivement, je ne me sentais plus libre.¹³³

Within this political and institutional context, the article that in Étiemble's own words should have been censored in *Les temps modernes* can be analyzed textually. This analysis will not aim to contribute to knowledge on the previously described context, but rather on the way Étiemble tried to distinguish himself from other French critics. Étiemble's stance will enable me to compare different forms of Borges criticism in France and also abroad.

Étiemble's essay on Borges takes the complex form of an imaginary report in the future about the research work of the supposedly famous Chinese historian Wang Yuan-Ming. Wang's work is described by his disciple Lou Tcho, whose description is in turn found by Étiemble. In his research, Wang has tried to account for the unexplained rapid decline of European civilization between 1952 and 1987. Étiemble, in order to make his point, imbues his text with numerous historical and fictional events and characters (Wang Yuan-Ming, Paul Hazard, Charles Baudelaire, Guilherme de Almeida, Marius-François Guyard, etc.), among which I will only refer to a limited number. As Étiemble describes, Wang finds out that in around 1939 a group of people that he calls *les linguistes marrants* started to change the meaning of certain words. These *marrants* were followers of Marr, which in my view refers to Wilhelm Marr, a German publicist who coined the euphemistic term anti-Semitism and edited a Sunday newspaper in 1866 entitled *Der Kosmopolit*, but perhaps also refers to the French *marrant*, which translates as "funny."¹³⁴ As becomes clear from the references to the Chinese *marrants* and those of Moscow, the term refers here to the communists.

The linguistic changes of the *marrants* were, still according to Wang (or Lou Tcho, or Étiemble), initiated by Molotov—a reference to Vyacheslav Molotov, the Soviet foreign minister who signed the 1939 Treaty of Non-Aggression between Germany and the Soviet Union—who started changing the meaning of terms such as *agression*, *vérité*, *objectivité*, *justice*, *liberté*, and *cosmopolite*. The meaning of the word *cosmopolite*, the etymology of which is traced back by Wang to the sixteenth century, started changing radically in the 1950s under the influence of spies from the United

¹³³ Ibid., 150-51.

¹³⁴ For Wilhelm Marr, see Zimmermann, *Wilhelm Marr, the Patriarch of Anti-Semitism*.

States who traveled a lot, as a consequence of which everyone who traveled, even in thought, was guilty of cosmopolitanism: in other words, of treason. As Wang finds out, the perspective on the cosmopolitan changed from a citizen of the world who is free from national prejudices to someone who is a spy or a traitor.¹³⁵ Étiemble refers here to Joseph Stalin's anti-Semitic campaign in the USSR: from the end of the 1940s onwards, (rootless) cosmopolitanism was a euphemism used to accuse mostly Jewish intellectuals of a lack of patriotism or full allegiance to the Soviet Union. The expression was first coined by the Russian literary critic Vissarion Belinsky to describe writers who lacked (Russian) national character, but became part of a campaign that attacked Jewish intellectuals for being rootless cosmopolitans and thus for kowtowing to the capitalist West, especially to the United States.¹³⁶ Stalin's campaign culminated in 1953, the year in which he died, with the announcement of the so-called Doctors' Plot, an invented conspiracy by Jewish doctors against Kremlin leaders that Étiemble also discusses in his letter to Sartre.¹³⁷

Étiemble also lets Wang find out that the reason why Chinese civilization has not declined, in spite of Marxist and Leninist influences on Mao Tse-tung, is its appreciation of cosmopolitanism. The French critic thus expresses his admiration for Maoism as opposed to Soviet communism, a stance he would repeat decades later.¹³⁸ Étiemble's imaginary history thus criticizes Soviet communism, but the references to *Les temps modernes* make it clear that Sartre's adhesion to the Communist Party is also an important source of criticism here.¹³⁹ Apart from these more political references, Étiemble also uses historian Wang to criticize the Stalinist aesthetic norm of socialist realism when he refers to Alexander Fadeyev's attack on the Hungarian communist and literary critic Georg Lukács in *Pravda*. As Guillermo de Torre has explained in a study also cited by Étiemble, Lukács's interest in certain "bourgeois" authors from the past, such as Dante Alighieri, Miguel de Cervantes, William Shakespeare, Molière, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Leo Tolstoy, and Honoré de Balzac, led to accusations of cosmopolitanism, literary comparatism, and "objectivism" towards

¹³⁵ Étiemble, "Un homme à tuer: Jorge Luis Borges, cosmopolite," 512-17.

¹³⁶ See Pinkus, "Campaigns against 'Jewish Nationalism' and 'Cosmopolitanism.'"

¹³⁷ Étiemble, "Lettre ouverte à Jean-Paul Sartre sur l'unité de mauvaise action," 149. For the Doctors' Plot, see Brent and Naumov, *Stalin's Last Crime*.

¹³⁸ Étiemble, *Quarante ans de mon maoïsme (1934-1974)*.

¹³⁹ See Étiemble, "Un homme à tuer: Jorge Luis Borges, cosmopolite," 517-18.

"bourgeois" literary tendencies including existentialism, for which Lukács had to publicly confess his guilt.¹⁴⁰

By means of a letter on the decline of Europe, supposedly written by Wang and copied by his disciple Lou Tcho, Étiemble comments on Borges's work towards the end of his essay. His fictional first-person narrator Wang states that just before the fall of Europe, the word cosmopolitanism becomes taboo, to which the critical reception of *Fictions* testifies:

A preuve, un exemplaire de *Fictions*, en traduction française; ce livre tout piqué, tout jauni, aux pages de poussière, dut figurer dans la bibliothèque d'un érudit: page trois de la couverture, on avait collé une enveloppe jaune bourrée d'articles et de coupures qui concernent ce vieil ouvrage. J'ai scruté ce dossier. Or je ne vois personne qui se hasarde à considérer dans Borges ce qui m'en paraît l'un des plus séduisants aspects: la perfection de l'esprit cosmopolite. Brillamment, je l'avoue, et non sans quelque apparence de bien-fondé, ils parlent de mystère ou de métaphysique, de transcendance et d'absurde (ce qui semblait alors la mode); un seul entrevoit que l'auteur n'atteint à la poésie qu'en outrant l'intelligence, en raffinant sur la logique; les autres s'égarèrent, ce me semble, jusqu'aux borborygmes du romantisme viscéral.

En ces années pour l'Europe si menaçantes, quel réconfort apportait ce chef-d'œuvre! Quelle arme dans la lutte contre les excès de la secte "marrante"! Pas un mot à ce sujet dans les coupures.¹⁴¹

By means of Wang's letter, Étiemble thus responds to Borges criticism by French mediators. Although not all of his direct references to critical terms can be easily placed, Étiemble seems to denote with *mystère* and *métaphysique* a number of critics who discussed metaphysics in Borges's work, either in a more cosmological sense, such as Roger Caillois and Marcel Brion, or in a more theological sense, such as Paul Bénichou and Michel Carrouges. *Transcendance* is a term that to my knowledge is rare in early Borges criticism, but both *transcendance* and *mystère* are key words in existentialism, and could therefore have been used by Étiemble to distance himself from an existentialist interpretative context, perhaps such as Brion's interpretation.

¹⁴⁰ Torre, *Problemática de la literatura*, 313.

¹⁴¹ Étiemble, "Un homme à tuer: Jorge Luis Borges, cosmopolite," 518.

Lastly, the *absurde* may refer either to surrealism, which is clearly present in Carrouges's texts, or perhaps again to existentialism, even though the early references to the absurd in Bénichou, Dumur, and Nadeau do not implicitly or explicitly frame this classification within existentialism.¹⁴²

In the previously quoted fragment, and later in the essay when the *mise-en-abyme* of different narrators is replaced by Étiemble's direct discourse, the author takes a particular stance against French critics who emphasize the metaphysical side of Borges's work:

Les problèmes que les philosophes ne se posent que parce qu'il est trop aisé de démontrer que l'homme jamais n'en saura le fin mot, je les vois enfin traités selon qu'ils le méritent: en fables. Soit que Borges nous singe le divin désordre, soit qu'il joue à sonder tous les possibles, à vaincre l'idée de temps ou de mémoire, chaque fois il invente un mythe aussi beau que les plus beaux du monde. Mais, vivant au XX^e siècle, il se garde bien d'oublier que son temps est celui de *Mystère magazine*.¹⁴³

Étiemble's reference to *Mystère magazine*—the French version of *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine*, which published one of Borges's stories in 1948—serves to praise the importance of the detective plot in Borges's stories.¹⁴⁴ While historian Wang criticizes those who talk about mystery in Borges's work in his letter, in the last part of his essay Étiemble adds an exception for Borges's use of mystery fiction as a narrative procedure. Étiemble opts thus for a strictly literary viewpoint of Borges's work in which the study of form, and thus of poetry and literature, should have preference over the examination of Borges's philosophy or game with philosophy. He reflects, for instance, on the genre of the "récit-compte-rendu-d'un-roman-qui-n'existe-pas"¹⁴⁵ in Borges's work, a technique he uses in his own essay. He also refers to other stylistic and generic aspects of Borges's work, such as the brevity of the texts.

Most important for Étiemble, however, is the cosmopolitan nature of Borges's work. Étiemble's *esprit cosmopolite* in literature—"En littérature [. . .] j'aime l'esprit

¹⁴² For the absurd in existentialism, see Sartre, *Situations*, vol. 1, *Critiques littéraires*, 187-88. The references to the absurd before Étiemble's review can be found in: Bénichou, "Le monde de José [sic] Luis Borges"; Carrouges, "Le gai savoir de Jorge Luis Borges"; Dumur, "Une sensibilité exténuée"; and Nadeau, "Un écrivain déroutant et savoureux; Jorge Luis Borges."

¹⁴³ Étiemble, "Un homme à tuer: Jorge Luis Borges, cosmopolite," 523.

¹⁴⁴ See Borges, "Garden of Forking Paths," *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine* 12, no. 57 (August, 1948).

¹⁴⁵ Étiemble, "Un homme à tuer: Jorge Luis Borges, cosmopolite," 520.

cosmopolite"¹⁴⁶—advocates an author who travels in thought and takes up many literatures and languages in his or her work. In Borges's work he stresses a cosmopolitanism based on the number and diversity of sources from different countries, literatures, and languages that the author referred to, a conceptualization that was also used in Michel Berveiller's PhD thesis directed by Étienne several years later.¹⁴⁷ Étienne therefore shows an interest in Borges's library: in the books he has read and the languages he reads. In this way, cosmopolitanism in Borges also becomes closely related to comparative literature, a field to which Étienne actively contributed and that he perhaps even introduced in France.¹⁴⁸ According to Étienne, still through Wang, Borges's literary cosmopolitanism is not based on direct knowledge of all these sources, particularly the Eastern ones: "Faut-il vous le confier: je soupçonne cet excellent cosmopolite de n'avoir que mal connu, ou point du tout, ce qu'ils appelaient le Proche, le Moyen et l'Extrême-Orient."¹⁴⁹ The idea of a supposedly equal use and comparison of various literatures and cultures differs from Borges's own proposition, for instance in "El escritor argentino y la tradición," which saw cosmopolitanism as an intervention from the margins, and from Néstor Ibarra's French preface, in which he created a "European" cosmopolitanism by eliding references to Borges's homeland. Étienne's definition of literary cosmopolitanism highlights the need to be poetically autonomous from political affiliations in the first, political part of his essay. In this sense, he offers an aesthetic criterion to combat the moral criteria on which literature was predominantly judged in Sartre's *Les temps modernes*.

Étienne's essay on Borges also describes the cosmopolitan spirit as "tous ceux [. . .] qui lisaient à la fois Goethe et Montaigne, Abou Nouwas et Dostoïevski, Valéry Larbaud et Borges."¹⁵⁰ In a later, 1958 travel report on China in which he criticizes the Stalinist denunciations of cosmopolitanism, Étienne refers again to Larbaud and Borges as exemplary authors.¹⁵¹ Larbaud's name and its relation to Borges brings the French author's early review of Borges to mind. Published in 1925 in *La revue*

¹⁴⁶ Étienne, "Lettre ouverte à Jean-Paul Sartre sur l'unité de mauvaise action," 150-51.

¹⁴⁷ See Berveiller, "Le cosmopolitisme de Jorge Luis Borges." For a critical account of this thesis, see Alfieri, "La repercusión de Borges en Francia," 77-87.

¹⁴⁸ From 1955 onwards, Étienne was professor of comparative literature at the Sorbonne. Among his publications in this field, see Étienne, *Comparaison n'est pas raison: La crise de la littérature comparée*. In this 1963 book, Étienne repeats the story about Fadeyev, who accused George Lukács of comparatism, and thus of cosmopolitanism, and thus of a "bourgeois" spirit.

¹⁴⁹ Étienne, "Un homme à tuer: Jorge Luis Borges, cosmopolite," 521.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 516.

¹⁵¹ Étienne, *Tong Yeou-ki ou le nouveau singe pèlerin*, 243.

européenne, Larbaud's review of *Inquisiciones* refers to Borges's knowledge of different European literatures:

Ce qui pouvait, plus facilement que la culture, manquer au critique argentin, c'était le savoir. Trop longtemps les intellectuels de l'Amérique latine, en cela disciples inconscients de Simon Bolivar [*sic*], s'étaient contentés d'éléments de culture purement français, ou au mieux, franco-espagnols; les littératures anglaise et allemande étaient hors de leur vue, et on dit bien: "loin des yeux loin du cœur"; leur curiosité ne les portait pas de ce côté-là. Ils avaient lu, — disons: Darwin et Nietzsche, —en français. L'élément de culture italien aussi leur manquait en dépit du fait qu'ils appartenaient à la nation la plus italianisée du Nouveau-Continent. Or nous trouvons la plupart de ces éléments représentés dans "Inquisiciones."¹⁵²

Although Larbaud's interest in Borges's use of various sources and literatures was thus somewhat similar to Étiemble's, he mainly restricted Borges's cosmopolitanism to the European sources, and, in fact, as Sylvia Molloy has observed, did not question the author's knowledge of these sources.¹⁵³ Furthermore, and in contrast with Étiemble, who mainly underscored Borges's references to Eastern sources, Larbaud also brought Borges's cosmopolitanism home by discussing the cosmopolitanism of the city of Buenos Aires itself.

As Étiemble framed his discussion of literary cosmopolitanism within a larger, political discussion, it is relevant here to take a broader view of this political discussion in early Borges criticism. I have already shown how the French writer responded to what could be called extra-literary interpretations of the metaphysical side of Borges's work, but it could be asked whether his discourse was also related to more political classifications of the work. Although the title of his essay, "Un homme à tuer: Jorge Luis Borges, cosmopolite," suggests otherwise, the attacks of the French *marrants* were, at least until the year in which the essay was published, very rare. It is well known that Argentine criticism published at the start of the 1950s reproached Borges for his lack of political action and patriotism, especially on the basis of a

¹⁵² Larbaud, "Lettres argentines et uruguayennes," 67.

¹⁵³ Molloy, *La diffusion de la littérature hispano-américaine en France*, 211-12.

Sartrean conception of commitment and a negative view of cosmopolitanism.¹⁵⁴ Interestingly, Étiemble seems to have been aware of these reproaches at a later stage and in relation to Victoria Ocampo rather than to Borges, as he referred to the communists' accusations that Ocampo was a representative of "cette bourgeoisie cosmopolite et sans patrie"¹⁵⁵ in a 1962 text, after a trip to Buenos Aires.

In French criticism between the year Étiemble published his article and 1964, there were hardly any attacks on Borges, except for a number of negative comments on different volumes of his work by André Rousseaux in *Le figaro littéraire*, by Gennie Luccioni in *Esprit*, and by André Marcel d'Ans in *L'Herne*. These were critics who did not necessarily support a Sartrean form of political commitment but still used a political criterion to judge Borges's work.¹⁵⁶ And of these magazines and weeklies, only the Catholic *Esprit* had a leftwing persuasion, and had, in fact, not devoted any articles to the author until then.¹⁵⁷ Although *Les temps modernes* did not, apart from Étiemble's essay, publish much criticism of Borges's work either, it published numerous translations of his work in 1955 and 1957.¹⁵⁸ This attention from a magazine in which Borges's poetical conception did not fit easily, and the lack of attacks from Marxist critics, may be surprising, but I assume that a number of French critics may have kept their views to themselves, especially until the start of the 1960s. Poet Jacques Réda's account of his positive "conversion" to Borges's work in his first article on Borges in 1963 is a case in point. In the magazine *Cahiers du Sud*, he refers to his first readings of Borges's work and his initial exclusion of Borges from his personal pantheon:

Auparavant, j'avais traversé une période effervescente, amoureux mystique et charnel, étourdi de lectures, m'ouvrant à la philosophie marxiste et participant d'assez loin à de modestes luttes syndicales ou politiques. [. . .] Le principe de la lutte des classes a conservé pour moi le goût des lèvres que je n'approcherai plus (à moins que la dictature du prolétariat ou quelque autre miracle un jour

¹⁵⁴ Sorensen, "Toward a Transnational Republic of Letters," 136-37; and Bastos, *Borges ante la crítica argentina*, 235-303.

¹⁵⁵ Étiemble, "Un grand monsieur: Victoria Ocampo," 414.

¹⁵⁶ Rousseaux, "Littératures intellectuelles"; Luccioni, review of *Labyrinthes*; and d'Ans, "Jorge Luis Borges et la poésie d'Amérique."

¹⁵⁷ Boudic, "Esprit."

¹⁵⁸ Borges, "Le rêve de Coleridge. Magies partielles du Quichotte. Le Biathanatos. La langue analytique de John Wilkins. Le miroir des énigmes. Note sur le 23 août 1944. De quelqu'un à personne"; "Le temps et J. W. Dunne. Avatars de la tortue. Nouvelle réfutation du temps"; and "L'Aleph," *Les temps modernes* 12, no. 136 (June, 1957).

ne me les rende) et je me retrouve désarmé, dérisoirement libre devant les séductions abstraites de la littérature.

Chez Borgès, dont je venais alors de lire avec ravissement les *Fictions*, il n'y avait pas trace d'amour, encore moins de ce bovarysme panique où je me débattais, et quant au matérialisme dialectique, à peine si j'en trouvais mention dans un articles [sic] des *Enquêtes*, où elle s'accompagnait d'ailleurs d'une condamnation sans appel. Aussitôt Borgès devint suspect, et à la longue inévitable son exclusion du Panthéon intime où j'accueillais en même temps le Trotsky de *Ma Vie* et les héroïnes bourgeoises de Mann. L'Histoire, pensai-je, parfaitement insensible à mes inconséquences, l'Histoire ne pardonne pas. Je relus Sartre et fis mes délices de Plekhanov. Ainsi m'acheminai-je enfin vers une conception saine, efficace et cohérente de la littérature, une littérature sérieuse et positive où il n'y aurait pas de place pour le byzantinisme d'un Borgès.¹⁵⁹

By contrast, most explicit comments in early criticism of Borges's work and its relation to political commitment were articulated by French critics who distanced themselves from a literary climate that was perceived to be too political. Without referring directly to Sartre and his Marxist conception of militant literature, a number of critics praised Borges's work for going against or beyond politically committed literature.¹⁶⁰ Carrouges, for instance, praised Borges's idealism as opposed to scientific materialism. As I have already shown in the case of Nadeau, Borges's own texts from *Enquêtes* played a role in this part of the reception, while other texts by Borges in which he discussed the problem of the social role of the author, such as "Arte, arte puro, arte propaganda... ¿El arte debe estar al servicio del problema social?" were not generally known and used in France.¹⁶¹ These texts, published after Étienne's essay, in the 1950s and 1960s, all came at a time when the public hegemony of existential and communist literature was declining. The support of Soviet communism itself also lost much ground after the Hungarian Revolution of 1956. *Les temps modernes* and Sartre's poetical conceptions had to compete more and

¹⁵⁹ Réda, "Commentaire de *L'immortel* de Jorge-Luis Borges," 435. I have previously referred to an article included in Réda's 1987 book that carries 1957 as its year of publication, a piece that to my knowledge has remained unpublished. See Réda, "Commençant par la fin."

¹⁶⁰ "Les livres et les hommes: *Labyrinthes* de Jorge Luis Borges," *Radio Nice* (May 26, 1954); Carrouges, "Romans étrangers"; Marissel, "L'univers de Jorge Luis Borges"; Nadeau, "Un merveilleux sophiste; Jorge Luis Borges"; and Sallet, "Un inconnu illustre: J.-L. Borges."

¹⁶¹ Borges, "Arte, arte puro, arte propaganda..."

more with new literary magazines that promoted the autonomy of literature, such as *Critique*, *Les lettres nouvelles* and the revived *La nouvelle nouvelle revue française*, and movements such as structuralism and the *nouveau roman*.¹⁶² The disapprovals and approvals handed out by French critics in the 1950s and 1960s evidently did not all take Étiemble's imaginary attacks and praise as an exemplar, but the French comparatist did play an indirect role in creating the opposition between those who criticized Borges's political position or lack of political commitment and those who held that this position should not affect the literary judgment of his work. This struggle would become more prominent from the end of the 1960s onwards, when Borges started commenting more directly and frequently on political issues in interviews in France, and critics started to attack his position more explicitly.¹⁶³ In this way, Étiemble's essay anticipated a normative opposition that would divide the critical reception of Borges's work for a long time.

4. Maurice Blanchot: Borges's work as an honest mystification

The French novelist and literary critic Maurice Blanchot published one essay on Borges for *La nouvelle nouvelle revue française* and discussed the Argentine author more briefly in several of his other essays. I will examine his first essay at length and refer to his other texts in the course of the discussion. "L'infini et l'infini," first published in 1958 and a year later included in abbreviated form in *Le livre à venir*, analyzes the presence of the infinite in the works of Borges and Henri Michaux. Although Blanchot himself also highlights the problems in making a comparison of the two authors, he jointly discusses the sense of infinity in Michaux's experiences with mescaline and in Borges's relation between the book and the world. By focusing on Michaux's more recent books on the author's mescaline trips, *Misérable miracle* (1956) and *L'infini turbulent* (1957), Blanchot offers a different point of comparison than those used by earlier French critics such as Nadeau.¹⁶⁴ Previous comparisons between Michaux and Borges had pointed out resemblances in style, in the presence of the spectral or the dreamlike, and in the use of fear and humor, by referring to

¹⁶² See Boschetti, "Les temps modernes dans le champ littéraire."

¹⁶³ For this period, see Flamand, *Le nom et le savoir: Abrégé de culture borgésienne*, 41-64.

¹⁶⁴ Blanchot also published on Michaux in the 1940s, see Blanchot, "Au pays de la magie"; and "L'expérience magique d'Henri Michaux."

earlier volumes such as *Mouvements* (1951).¹⁶⁵ Blanchot's discussion of the two authors confirmed the various relations that already existed between them, and not only in French literary criticism. In 1936, Michaux participated in the 14th international congress of the PEN club in Buenos Aires, where he met Borges several times.¹⁶⁶ The Belgian-born writer and poet was also involved in the publication of an early French translation of Borges's work in *Mesures*.¹⁶⁷ Borges, for his part, translated Michaux's *Un barbare en Asie* into Spanish for *Sur*, which was issued in 1941 in Buenos Aires, and wrote much later about his encounter with Michaux in Buenos Aires.¹⁶⁸

The comparison between Michaux and Borges only appears in the first version of Blanchot's text, while the shortened version, "L'infini littéraire: L'Aleph," only deals with Borges. I will here follow the original version and thus also discuss Blanchot's concluding words on Borges. This sets my discussion apart from most studies on Blanchot's essay, which discuss the second version,¹⁶⁹ and my textual approach also differs from studies by Françoise Collin and Max Hidalgo Nácher, which focus more on the general thought system behind the authors' works. Daniel Attala's study, however, deals with Blanchot's original version (and Gérard Genette's work) and I will therefore mostly refer to his study in the course of my discussion of Blanchot (and also of Genette in a later section).

Blanchot's essay reflects on the infinite experience of literature that becomes apparent in Borges's work.¹⁷⁰ His discussion of the infinite in Borges's work uses Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel's concept of the bad infinite (*mauvais infini*), an infinite without margins that makes a totalizing closure impossible.¹⁷¹ This infinity of literature arises, according to Blanchot, from the relation between books and the world, which reflect each other eternally. Borges, as an "homme essentiellement littéraire," therefore equates the infinity of books with the infinity of the world:

¹⁶⁵ Dumur, "Une sensibilité exténuée"; Hoog, "Au delà de l'énigme"; Nadeau, "Un écrivain déroutant et savoureux; Jorge Luis Borges"; and Nimier, "Avez-vous lu Borgès?"

¹⁶⁶ See Martin, *Henri Michaux*, 271-91.

¹⁶⁷ Cerisier, *Une histoire de "La Nrf"*, 559. See also Borges, *Ceuvres complètes*, vol. 1, lxxii.

¹⁶⁸ For a later, academic study and comparison of Borges and Michaux's work, see Geisler, "El otro de Borges, Michaux."

¹⁶⁹ This is the case for Collin, "The Third Tiger; or, From Blanchot to Borges"; Hidalgo Nácher, "Usos críticos de Borges en el campo intelectual francés (de Blanchot a Foucault)"; Molloy, *La diffusion de la littérature hispano-américaine en France*, 236; and Rodríguez Monegal, "Borges and *La Nouvelle Critique*," 28-29.

¹⁷⁰ Blanchot, "L'infini et l'infini," 99.

¹⁷¹ See Collin, "The Third Tiger; or, From Blanchot to Borges," 86.

Le livre est en principe le monde pour lui, et le monde est un livre. [. . .] Si le monde est un livre, le monde est lisible; grande satisfaction pour un homme de lettres. Mais, si le monde est un livre, tout livre est le monde, et, de cette innocente tautologie, il résulte des conséquences redoutables: ceci d'abord, qu'il n'y a plus de borne de référence; le monde et le livre se renvoient éternellement et infiniment leurs images reflétées; ce pouvoir indéfini de miroitement, cette multiplication scintillante et illimitée, —qui est le labyrinthe de la lumière et qui du reste n'est pas rien, —sera alors tout ce que nous trouverons, vertigineusement, au fond de notre désir de comprendre.¹⁷²

According to Blanchot, if the world could be exactly translated into a book it would lose its beginning and its end and take the form of an infinite spherical volume, which may be the Aleph referred to by Borges. It can be deduced from Blanchot's essay that this form of translation would be unattainable, as nothing can grasp the totality of literature or reality. Blanchot therefore takes up these ideas in Borges's work in order to posit that literature is essential and truthful, as it shows that the world is perverted into an infinite number of possibilities and relations: "La vérité de la littérature serait dans l'erreur de l'infini."¹⁷³

As well as this questioning of totality that Blanchot finds in Borges's work—with occasional reference to Borges's stories but without analyzing any in particular—he also challenges the notion of the authorial subject. In this respect, Blanchot elaborates on the pantheist idea of the unique spirit that writes all books in Borges's work:

Borges comprend que la périlleuse dignité de la littérature n'est pas de nous faire supposer au monde un grand auteur, absorbé dans de rêveuses mystifications, mais de nous faire éprouver l'approche d'une étrange puissance, neutre et impersonnelle. Il aime qu'on dise de Shakespeare: "Il ressemblait à tous les hommes, sauf en ceci qu'il ressemblait à tous les hommes." Il voit dans tous les auteurs un seul auteur qui est l'unique Carlyle, l'unique Whitman, qui n'est personne. Il se reconnaît en George Moor [*sic*] et en Joyce,—il pourrait dire en Lautréamont, en Rimbaud,—capables d'incorporer à leurs livres des pages et des figures qui ne leur appartenaient

¹⁷² Blanchot, "L'infini et l'infini," 100.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, 99.

pas, car l'essentiel, c'est la littérature, et non les individus, et dans la littérature, qu'elle soit impersonnellement, en chaque livre, l'unité inépuisable d'un seul livre et la répétition lassée de tous les livres.¹⁷⁴

From this idea that all authors are one single author or spirit, Blanchot also deduces the vision that all writing is but a translation. He sees this as confirmed in Borges's "Pierre Menard, autor del Quijote," one of only two fiction stories, the other being "El Aleph," to which Blanchot refers.

Blanchot's idea that the literature itself, not the author, gives it its meaning, which he posits in relation to Borges but also seems to be a confirmation of a previous norm, can indeed be found in Blanchot's earlier work. In these texts, he claims that the text should hold a prominent place and that the author should stop "speaking" so that literature itself can "speak." For instance, in a review that Blanchot published in 1955 on Alain Robbe-Grillet's *Le voyeur*, later also included in *Le livre à venir*, the critic praises the novel's attempt to let the story speak for itself and from itself, without any clear conscience that expresses itself. Prior to his essay on Borges, Blanchot had thus already challenged the authorial subject in the literary text:

Le récit, toujours rapporté à un certain point de vue, devrait être comme écrit de l'intérieur, non par le romancier dont l'art, embrassant tout, domine ce qu'il crée, mais selon l'élan d'une liberté infinie, mais bornée, située et orientée dans le monde même qui l'affirme, la représente et la trahit. Critique vive, profonde, et qui a souvent coïncidé avec les œuvres maîtresses du roman moderne. Il est toujours nécessaire de rappeler au romancier que ce n'est pas lui qui écrit son œuvre, mais qu'elle se cherche à travers lui et que, si lucide qu'il désire être, il est livré à une expérience qui le dépasse. Difficile et obscur mouvement. Mais n'est-ce que le mouvement d'une conscience sur la liberté de laquelle il ne faut pas entreprendre? Et la voix qui parle dans un récit, est-ce toujours la voix d'une personne, une voix personnelle? N'est-ce pas d'abord, par l'alibi du Il indifférent, une étrange voix neutre qui, comme celle du spectre de *Hamlet*, erre de-ci de-là, parlant on ne sait d'où, comme à travers les interstices du temps qu'elle ne doit pas, cependant, détruire ni altérer?¹⁷⁵

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., 101.

¹⁷⁵ Blanchot, "La clarté romanesque," 199. For a later, more theoretical elaboration of this neutral voice, see Blanchot, "La voix narrative."

This perspective on literature speaking with an autonomous voice could be associated with the autonomy of the text in structuralist criticism and in the *nouvelle critique*, a group of literary critics who in the 1960s, following Roland Barthes's 1963 book *Sur Racine*, criticized the focus on literary history and biography within literary studies and pleaded for a text-centered approach.¹⁷⁶ However, although Blanchot was claimed as a precursor of both structuralism and the broader movement of the *nouvelle critique*, he did not comment on these literary affiliations himself.¹⁷⁷

Blanchot's idea of "impersonal" literature, which he applied to the figure of the author in the previously quoted fragment on Robbe-Grillet and in his 1958 essay on Borges, could also be extended to that of the characters in a story or in a novel. In fact, in one of his other essays in which he refers to Borges, Blanchot discusses the diminished interest in the role of characters in modern literature, particularly in the genre of what he calls the *récit à sujet*, in which the plot is paramount. In "Le tour d'écrou," an essay on Henry James's *The Turn of the Screw* (*Le tour d'écrou*) published in 1954 in *La nouvelle nouvelle revue française* and also taken up in *Le livre à venir*, Blanchot refers to Borges's preface to *La invención de Morel* by Adolfo Bioy Casares, published in France in 1953. According to Blanchot, "un écrivain aussi raffiné que J. L. Borgès affirme que la littérature romanesque moderne est supérieure, non par l'étude des caractères et l'approfondissement de la vérité psychologique, mais quand elle invente des fables ou des sujets."¹⁷⁸ In Borges's preface, the author lists *The Turn of the Screw*, *Der Prozess*, *Le voyageur sur la terre*, and *La invención de Morel* as works that offer a solid or rigorous argument or plot, to which Blanchot suggests adding "Las ruinas circulares" and "La biblioteca de Babel." With Borges in mind, Blanchot therefore concludes:

Dire qu'un roman vaut par son sujet, c'est dire qu'il ne vaut pas par la vérité de ses personnages, ni par son réalisme, psychologique ou extérieur, qu'il ne doit compter sur l'imitation ni du monde, ni de la société, ni de la nature, pour retenir l'intérêt. Un récit à sujet est donc une œuvre mystérieuse et déglagée de

¹⁷⁶ The *nouvelle critique* united several heterogeneous approaches to literature, including phenomenological criticism (Gaston Bachelard, Georges Poulet, Jean-Pierre Richard), existentialism (Jean-Paul Sartre, Jean Starobinski), psychoanalytic criticism (Charles Mauron), structuralism (Lucien Goldmann, Roland Barthes), and thematic criticism (Jean-Paul Weber). See Bonzon, *La nouvelle critique et Racine*; and Jones, *Panorama de la nouvelle critique en France*.

¹⁷⁷ See Blanchot, *Michel Foucault tel que je l'imagine*, 20; Bident, *Maurice Blanchot: Partenaire invisible*, 460; and Haase and Large, *Maurice Blanchot*, 19-21.

¹⁷⁸ Blanchot, "Le tour d'écrou," 1063.

toute matière: un récit sans personnages, une histoire où le quotidien sans histoire et l'intimité sans événements, ce fonds si commodément disponible, cesse d'être une ressource, et en outre une histoire où ce qui arrive ne se contente pas d'arriver par le jeu d'une succession superficielle ou capricieuse, épisodes qui succéderaient aux épisodes comme dans les romans picaresques, mais forme un ensemble uni, rigoureusement ordonné selon une loi, d'autant plus importante qu'elle reste cachée, comme le centre secret de tout.¹⁷⁹

This stance brings Blanchot again close to Robbe-Grillet, who discussed Borges's preface a year earlier in a review of *La invención de Morel* in *Critique*, a magazine that published Blanchot's essays and that was issued by Éditions des Minuit, the publishing house that published Robbe-Grillet and other writers of the *nouveau roman*. Robbe-Grillet stresses Borges's stated opinion that psychological development in narrative has been exhausted and, similarly to Blanchot, he does not refer to the genre of fantastic literature for either Borges or Bioy Casares.¹⁸⁰ In this sense, for both Blanchot and Robbe-Grillet the preface served to stand against traditional notions of character development, although Robbe-Grillet did not frequently use Bioy Casares's (nor Borges's) work strategically to make this point public.¹⁸¹ For Robbe-Grillet this function was perhaps more implicit in his work as a novelist and film script writer: the author has, for instance, suggested twice that Borges and Bioy Casares were of influence in his films, in particular Bioy Casares's *La invención de Morel* for *L'année dernière à Marienbad* (1961) and Borges's "Tema del traidor y del héroe" for *L'homme qui ment* (1968).¹⁸² In fact, numerous French critics observed the relationship between Robbe-Grillet's films (*L'année dernière à Marienbad*; *L'immortelle*, 1963) and novels (*Les gommages*, 1953) and Borges's and Bioy Casares's work, in particular because of their distancing of the realist paradigm, their description of several parallel realities, and the presence of the labyrinth in their work.¹⁸³ Several of these critics, such as Claude Ollier, Philippe Sollers, and Jean

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 1064.

¹⁸⁰ Robbe-Grillet, review of *L'invention de Morel*, by Adolfo Bioy Casares.

¹⁸¹ Robbe-Grillet only referred once to Borges in this volume, while Bioy Casares did not make an appearance. Robbe-Grillet, *Pour un nouveau roman*, 9.

¹⁸² Resnais and Robbe-Grillet, "Entretien avec Alain Resnais et Alain Robbe-Grillet," by Labarthe and Rivette, 14; and Robbe-Grillet, *Erotic Dream Machine: Interviews with Alain Robbe-Grillet on His Films*, by Fragola and Smith, 62.

¹⁸³ Ollier, "Ce soir à Marienbad"; Sollers, "Le rêve en plein jour," 910; Albérès, "Le fantastique cérébral: Jorge-Luis Borges," 406; Réda, "Commentaire de *L'immortel* de Jorge-Luis Borges," 455; and Ricardou, "God of the Labyrinth," 126.

Ricardou, were themselves linked to the *nouveau roman* by means of publishing house Minuit and the magazine *Tel quel*.

The remarkable presence of Bioy Casares's novel and Borges's preface to this book in Blanchot's and Robbe-Grillet's discussions about the diminished role of characters in fiction, though not necessarily paramount, repeated itself in a number of other and later texts by both mediators.¹⁸⁴ Between Robbe-Grillet and Blanchot's references to the novel, an excerpt of Borges's preface was also taken up in *Arts* in 1954 under the significant title "La fiction contre la psychologie."¹⁸⁵ Though Robbe-Grillet's 1953 text on *La invención de Morel* preceded that of Blanchot in 1954, the interaction between the two mediators does not show a clear direction from Robbe-Grillet to Blanchot. It does show, however, an interesting link between the mediators' literary theories that is revealed in their reception of Borges's and Bioy Casares's work and that has, except for short comments, not yet been studied.¹⁸⁶ In a discussion of the *nouveau roman* in 1963, Michel Foucault suggested that Sollers and other writers who published in *Tel quel* were indebted to Blanchot on a more abstract level of ontological experiences. Referring to the similarities between these writers and surrealism, he claims:

Il me semble que les expériences dont Sollers a parlé hier, il ne les place pas dans l'espace de la psyché, mais dans celui de la pensée; c'est-à-dire que, pour ceux qui font de la philosophie, ce qu'il y a de tout à fait remarquable ici, c'est qu'on essaye de maintenir au niveau d'une expérience très difficile à formuler—celle de la pensée—un certain nombre d'épreuves limites comme celles de la raison, du rêve, de la veille, etc., de les maintenir à ce niveau de la pensée—niveau énigmatique que les surréalistes avaient, au fond, enfoncé dans une dimension psychologique. Dans cette mesure, je crois que des gens comme Sollers reprennent un effort qui a été bien souvent interrompu, brisé, et qui est aussi celui de Bataille et de Blanchot.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁴ Blanchot, "Le secret du Golem," 876; Robbe-Grillet, "Le nouvel observateur, 1970," interview by Dumur, 363; and Robbe-Grillet, "Le roman policier," interview by Eisenzweig, 16.

¹⁸⁵ Borges, "Livres d'aventure: La fiction contre la psychologie."

¹⁸⁶ See, for instance, the publications on the *nouveau roman* by Jean Ricardou. Ricardou, *Problèmes du nouveau roman; Pour une théorie du nouveau roman; Le nouveau roman; and Nouveaux problèmes du roman*.

¹⁸⁷ See Foucault in Foucault et al., "Débat sur le roman," 339. That Blanchot's program of a literature without authors and characters also had an impact on other French mediators, a point to which I will return in my section on Genette, is clear from an essay published in 1954 in *La nouvelle nouvelle revue française*. In this essay, Borges and Blanchot are grouped together under "une nouvelle littérature allégorique," a literature that owes much to the allegories of the Middle Ages and has a diminished

The transmission between the two mediators can therefore be assumed to have been bidirectional.

Obviously, the specific aspect in which Blanchot and Robbe-Grillet coincided within the reception of Borges's work cannot be generalized for all of the *nouveau roman* writers. These writers differed, for instance, in the importance they attributed to the labyrinth, the use of *mise-en-abyme* structures, the elaboration of detective-like plots, and the reversal of traditional character roles and structures, which could have passed directly through their reception of Borges's work rather than via Blanchot's reception of the author. Another important difference between Blanchot and Robbe-Grillet is the latter's insistent claim, especially from the end of the 1950s onwards, that there is no metaphysics in life (or death) and hence that reality "ne prétend à aucune valeur allégorique," or as he states in *Pour un nouveau roman*: "le monde n'est ni significant ni absurde. Il est, tout simplement."¹⁸⁸ For Blanchot it was literary form or literature itself that gave meaning to the world. This point becomes clear in "Le secret du Golem," first published in *La nouvelle nouvelle revue française* in 1955, in which Blanchot again discusses Borges's preface to *La invención de Morel*.¹⁸⁹ In the essay, Blanchot states that the symbol, which for him becomes synonymous with the image or even with literature, takes us to a zone where nothing is expressible and where representation is not possible, but that nevertheless therefore takes on a meaning through itself:

Tout se passe comme si l'écrivain—ou l'artiste—ne pouvait poursuivre l'accomplissement de son œuvre, sans se donner, pour objet et pour alibi, la poursuite d'autre chose (c'est pourquoi sans doute il n'y a pas d'art pur). Pour exercer son art, il lui faut un biais par lequel échapper à l'art, un biais par lequel il se dissimule ce qu'il est et ce qu'il fait—et la littérature est cette dissimulation même.¹⁹⁰

Blanchot elaborates on the role of literature and the way it gives meaning to reality in his main essay on Borges, to which I will now return. He uses a moral criterion to praise falsification in Borges's work:

interest in the psychology of the individual or society. See Micha, "Une nouvelle littérature allégorique," 699.

¹⁸⁸ Robbe-Grillet, *Pour un nouveau roman*, 18. See Robbe-Grillet, prologue to *Dans le labyrinthe*, n.p.

¹⁸⁹ Blanchot, "Le secret du Golem," 876.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 875.

Fictions, artifices sont dès lors les noms les plus honnêtes que la littérature puisse recevoir [. . .]. Le mot truquage, le mot falsification, appliqués à l'esprit et à la littérature, habituellement nous choquent. Nous pensons qu'un tel genre de tromperie est peut-être trop simple, nous pensons que s'il y a falsification universelle, c'est encore au nom d'une vérité peut-être inaccessible, mais vénérable et même adorable. Nous pensons que l'hypothèse du malin génie n'est pas la plus désespérante: un falsificateur, même tout-puissant, est une vérité solide qui nous dispense de penser au delà.¹⁹¹

The last hypothesis of the misleading *malin génie* proposed by René Descartes, which also appeared in the works of Paul Bénichou and Michel Carrouges, does not evoke fear or nihilism for Blanchot—nor does it, in fact, for the other two critics.¹⁹² Because of its fictional status and infinity, literature has a significant role to play, as Blanchot concludes at the end of his discussion on Borges: “La littérature n'est pas une simple tromperie, elle est le dangereux pouvoir d'aller vers ce qui est par l'infinie multiplicité de l'imaginaire.”¹⁹³

Scholar Daniel Attala has discussed this outlook on literature and on Borges's work in an attempt to show that Blanchot's essay involves a positive perspective on the (bad) eternity and infinity. It leads, according to Attala, to an ecstatic (marvelous or supernatural) escape that Blanchot calls “ce glorieux retournement qui s'appelle l'extase.”¹⁹⁴ This, for Attala, is related to Borges's “Magias parciales del Quijote,” in which Borges claims that we as readers can be fictitious, an essay however not explicitly discussed by Blanchot.¹⁹⁵ In this sense, Attala distances himself from scholars such as Collin who have stressed a negative view on the vertiginous emptiness of literature as expressed by Blanchot, especially in narratological studies that follow Genette's line. Without rejecting Attala's suggestion, I will argue that this enthusiastic and exultant outlook on literature in Blanchot's work is also related to French discussions on the function of literature, in particular to Blanchot's confrontation with Jean-Paul Sartre.

¹⁹¹ Blanchot, “L'infini et l'infini,” 101.

¹⁹² See Bénichou, “Le monde de José [sic] Luis Borges,” 680; and Carrouges, “Le gai savoir de Jorge Luis Borges,” 48.

¹⁹³ Blanchot, “L'infini et l'infini,” 102.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 100.

¹⁹⁵ Attala, “Magias parciales de Macedonio o del Borges de Blanchot al Borges de Genette,” 123.

Blanchot's comments on *tromperie* and *honnêteté* in literature can already be found, together with the term *mystification*, in his famous 1947 essay "La littérature et le droit à la mort." In this essay, he reverses the negative connotation of these terms in a number of allusions to Sartre, who accused some authors of byzantinism and bad faith. As scholar Hidalgo Nácher has described, in the 1940s and 1950s Blanchot formulated a counter-discourse to Sartre's ideas in a theoretical debate in which Georges Bataille was also involved.¹⁹⁶ The terms that Blanchot applies to Borges seem to respond in the first place to Sartre's essay "Situation de l'écrivain en 1947," published in the same year as Blanchot's essay. Sartre talks in this essay about the sickness of words and the problem of mystification:

La fonction d'un écrivain est d'appeler un chat un chat. Si les mots sont malades, c'est à nous de les guérir. Au lieu de cela, beaucoup vivent de cette maladie. La littérature moderne, en beaucoup de cas, est un cancer des mots. [. . .] Notre premier devoir d'écrivain est donc de rétablir le langage dans sa dignité. Après tout nous pensons avec des mots. Il faudrait que nous fussions bien fats pour croire que nous recélons des beautés ineffables que la parole n'est pas digne d'exprimer. [. . .] Ce n'est pas tout: nous vivons à l'époque des mystifications. [. . .] Mais comme l'écrivain s'adresse à la liberté de son lecteur et comme chaque conscience mystifiée, en tant qu'elle est complice de la mystification qui l'enchaîne, tend à persévérer dans son état, nous ne pourrions sauvegarder la littérature que si nous prenons à tâche de démystifier notre public.¹⁹⁷

Blanchot's 1947 essay contests this vision of language as transmitter of an intentional conscience, and also refers to the honesty of delusion, falsification, and mystification, in a similar way as he did for Borges's *Fictions* and *Artifices*:

Ce qui est frappant, c'est que, dans la littérature, la tromperie et la mystification non seulement sont inévitables, mais forment l'honnêteté de l'écrivain, la part d'espérance et de vérité qu'il y a en lui. Souvent, en ces jours, on parle de la maladie des mots, on s'irrite même de ceux qui en parlent, on

¹⁹⁶ Hidalgo Nácher, "El problema de la escritura en el campo intelectual francés (1945-1975)," 265-347. See also Bident, *Maurice Blanchot: Partenaire invisible*, 205-6.

¹⁹⁷ Sartre, "Situation de l'écrivain en 1947," 304-6.

les soupçonne de rendre les mots malades pour pouvoir en parler. [. . .] Naturellement, un écrivain peut toujours se donner pour idéal d'appeler un chat un chat. Mais ce qu'il ne peut pas obtenir, c'est de se croire alors sur la voie de la guérison et de la sincérité. Il est au contraire plus mystificateur que jamais, car le chat n'est pas un chat, et celui qui l'affirme n'a rien d'autre en vue que cette hypocrite violence: Rolet es un fripon.¹⁹⁸

Blanchot's norm of the honesty of falsification therefore predates his interpretation of Borges's texts. As well as thus reacting to Sartre by reversing a moral norm that Sartre would have used to evaluate the honesty of literary works, Blanchot took a stance against Sartre by stressing that literature can only engage in revolutionary action in an indirect manner and from the perspective of literature itself.¹⁹⁹ This stance in favor of the autonomy of the literary writer and text contrasted with Blanchot's former adherence to the extreme right in his youth. In its stance against Sartre, Blanchot's essay on Borges shared with René Étiemble (and perhaps with Robbe-Grillet) a wish to focus more but not exclusively on Borges's work as a literary artifact rather than as an expression of philosophical ideas.

Still, for Blanchot, there is a secret that literature suggests but does not reveal. He ends his essay on Borges with a comment on the fact that the Argentine author only suggests this ontological question, a fragment that was lost in the abbreviated version for *Le livre à venir*:

*Artifices, je me rappelle que Borges a donné ce titre à l'un de ses recueils où sa pensée joue avec l'infini. Je présume qu'il attire l'attention sur l'artifice, par modestie, par respect de l'art, par ruse aussi, connaissant ce perfide, ce merveilleux pouvoir de renversement qu'est la littérature, artificielle là où on la veut naturelle, incomparablement vraie, quand elle demeure en deçà de la vérité et donne cours à l'erreur propre à l'infini. D'une des *Enquêtes* de Borges, je retiens cette affirmation: "La musique, les états de félicité, la mythologie, les visages travaillés par le temps, certain crépuscules et certains lieux veulent nous dire quelque chose, ou nous l'ont dit, et nous n'aurions pas dû le laisser perdre, ou sont sur le point de le dire; cette imminence d'une révélation, qui ne se produit pas, est peut-être le fait esthétique." Ainsi nous a-t-il suggéré, avec sa discrétion nonchalante,*

¹⁹⁸ Blanchot, "La littérature et le droit à la mort (1947)," 22-23.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid. See also Haase and Large, *Maurice Blanchot*, 11-12, 119-22.

ce qui pourrait être son propre secret: que l'écrivain est celui qui vit avec fidélité et attention, avec émerveillement, avec détresse, dans l'imminence d'une pensée qui n'est jamais que la pensée de l'éternelle imminence.²⁰⁰

In a later text on dreams in which Blanchot mentions Borges, he also refers to this imminence of a secret by situating it in the impersonal voice, "une lumière impersonnelle dont la source nous échappe."²⁰¹ In Blanchot's earlier essay "Le tour d'écrou," the critic states that the secret cannot be revealed because it is situated in the literary infinite.²⁰² In Blanchot's infinite imminence of a secret, literature, and therefore Borges's fiction, thus acquired its positive function to speak honestly.

5. Louis Pauwels and Jacques Bergier: The secret of the universe in Borges's work

Both Louis Pauwels and Jacques Bergier, who are best known for their joint publication of the bestseller *Le matin des magiciens: Introduction au réalisme fantastique*, which included discussions of Borges's work, published on Borges before its publication in 1960. A first article in 1953 may well have been written by Pauwels, but was published anonymously in *Arts*, the cultural weekly for which Pauwels was the editor in chief.²⁰³ In this review of *Labyrinthes*, published together with a translation of "Historia del guerrero y la cautiva," Borges's work is classified under the fantastic, which is in turn related to fearfulness: "On trouve aussi dans son œuvre des récits fantastiques tels **La loterie à Babylone** (dans **Fictions**), d'un fantastique terrifiant mais purement mental."²⁰⁴ Another early article on Borges was also published anonymously, in the 1956 book *Le petit-fils de Sancho Panza et autres nouvelles*. As Bergier published various pieces in this book and as it was part of the Bibliothèque mondiale series that was directed by Pauwels, it is highly likely that the article on Borges was written by either one of them.²⁰⁵

²⁰⁰ Blanchot, "L'infini et l'infini," 110.

²⁰¹ Blanchot, "Rêver, écrire," 1092.

²⁰² Blanchot, "Le tour d'écrou," 1068.

²⁰³ Dirkx, "Autour d'*Arts*: L'espace de la presse littéraire française," 249; and Nikel, "Pauwels (Louis)," 1059.

²⁰⁴ [Pauwels?], "Un conteur de l'imaginaire: *Labyrinthes* par Jorge Luis Borges."

²⁰⁵ [Bergier?], "Le plus grand écrivain contemporain de langue espagnole: Jorge Luis Borges."

For two other texts in which Borges makes an appearance, from 1954 and 1957, the authorship is beyond dispute. In *Fiction*, a magazine for fantasy and science fiction literature, Bergier refers to the publication of Borges's *Labyrinthes*.²⁰⁶ Pauwels discusses Borges's work briefly in the newspaper *Paris-press* *l'intransigeant*, where he devotes an article to a special science fiction issue of the Marxist magazine *Europe*. In this article, significantly entitled "Un petit voyage de Marx à Mars," Pauwels observes the incompatibility of science fiction with Marxist materialism and rationalism:

C'est que les grandes œuvres de la science-fiction témoignent d'une révolution de la pensée qui n'est pas du tout conforme au matérialisme historique et au rationalisme militant. Les physiciens, comme les grands poètes modernes, commencent à nous dire ce que les anciens mystiques disaient: que la raison est un instrument insuffisant pour saisir une réalité, en nous et hors de nous, mille fois plus étrange, féérique et terrifiante, que tout ce que peut concevoir une conscience humaine ordinaire.²⁰⁷

In this fragment, in which he mentions again the presence of fear, and in the article in general, it is clear that Pauwels feels that the communists have "annexated" science fiction and made it into a laic, socialist, progressive, and materialist genre. His criticism of materialism and rationalism, and in particular of Marxism and existentialism, foreshadows a conception of literature that reappears in *Le matin des magiciens*. Pauwels's early comments on Borges also prefigure these later publications when he classifies Borges's work in the context of science fiction literature and suggests that it belongs to the "school" of *réalisme fantastique*, fantastic realism:

Vous savez que la science-fiction n'est pas seulement une littérature d'anticipation, soit optimiste comme chez ce vieux Jules Verne, soit de protestation contre la société mécanisée, comme chez Huxley ou George Orwell. A travers les chefs-d'œuvre de Lovecraft, de Bradbury ou de Luis Borgès [*sic*], elle reflète l'anxiété métaphysique de notre siècle et cherche à rendre sensible une certaine réalité fantastique de l'univers et de l'âme humaine. A l'entreprise surréaliste succède dans divers pays, et sans que les

²⁰⁶ Bergier, "Ici, on désintègre!" 116.

²⁰⁷ Pauwels, "Un petit voyage de Marx à Mars."

auteurs se soient concertés, une école romanesque que l'on pourrait appeler l'école du réalisme fantastique. Cette littérature gagne très vite en profondeur dans les esprits.²⁰⁸

In this fragment, in which metaphysical anxiety appears in a somewhat similar way as in Roger Caillois's *Bulletin de la Nrf* and in Marcel Brion's work,²⁰⁹ Pauwels describes a new genre and successor of surrealism, fantastic realism, one of the main topics of the book to which I will now turn.

Le matin des magiciens, the product of discussions between Bergier and Pauwels that the latter put into writing, became a bestseller in France and was translated into various languages.²¹⁰ The book proposed to reconcile science, fiction, philosophical reflections, occultism, and esotericism by dealing with, for instance, fantastic literature and art, science fiction, scientific discoveries, mysteries, lost civilizations, conspiracy theories, secret societies, alchemy, sexuality, and eroticism. It also included a part on Nazi occultism, with speculations about Adolf Hitler and a new race of supermen. For most of the themes dealt with in the book, there was a sense of a hidden story, a story different from official historiography.²¹¹ For the authors, fiction could reveal these hidden stories and truths, and pseudo-scientific texts were juxtaposed with fictional texts that they classified as science fiction and fantastic literature, among which were texts by Gustav Meyrink, Arthur Machen, Arthur C. Clarke, and Borges.

The magazine *Planète*, founded in 1961 and directed by a committee consisting of Pauwels, Bergier, and François Richaudeau, had the same objectives. The magazine was also published in various countries and languages. At its height in France, 100,000 copies of each issue were published.²¹² The magazine was innovative in its attention for visual aspects, using new publishing techniques and illustrations. As well as articles on (pseudo)scientific themes, *Planète* included (illustrated) fiction: mostly translations of foreign authors such as H. P. Lovecraft, Fredric Brown, Ambrose Bierce, Arthur C. Clarke, and Borges. In what follows, I will mainly

²⁰⁸ Ibid.

²⁰⁹ Presentation of *Fictions*, *Bulletin de la Nrf*, no. 46 (April, 1951): 4; Presentation of *Fictions*, *Bulletin de la Nrf*, no. 54 (January, 1952); Brion, "Jorge Luis Borgès et ses *Labyrinthes*"; and Brion, "Masques, miroirs, mensonges et labyrinthe," 322.

²¹⁰ Bergier, *Je ne suis pas une légende*, 195. For the sales figures of the book, see Renard, "Le mouvement Planète," 152.

²¹¹ Renard, "Le mouvement Planète," 156.

²¹² Winock, *Chronique des années soixante*, 76; and Renard, "Le mouvement Planète," 153.

examine Pauwels and Bergier's selections and classifications of Borges's work in *Le matin des magiciens* and refer to *Planète* in the course of this discussion.

At the start of their book, Pauwels and Bergier define fantastic realism no longer as a terrifying genre as Pauwels once did, but as a form of knowledge about the profound truth, about reality:

On définit généralement le fantastique comme une violation des lois naturelles, comme l'apparition de l'impossible. Pour nous, ce n'est pas cela du tout. Le fantastique est une manifestation des lois naturelles, un effet du contact avec la réalité quand celle-ci est perçue directement et non pas filtrée par le voile du sommeil intellectuel, par les habitudes, les préjugés, les conformismes.²¹³

From its name, it is clear that fantastic realism refers to the fantastic within reality. However, there is no intrusion or intervention of an unusual element in the real world like the kind that was common, for instance, in Caillois's conceptualization of fantastic literature.²¹⁴ In this way, Pauwels and Bergier's fantastic realism comes close to the surrealist conception that the world is marvelous. Pauwels was in fact a friend of André Breton and, although Pauwels and Bergier were never directly involved in the surrealist movement, they took an interest in the esotericist side of surrealism.²¹⁵ For Borges's work, the authors were very much interested in revelations that could lead to knowledge of the laws of the world—an understanding of a deeper reality of life that they find in two of the author's stories in particular: "La escritura del Dios" and "El Aleph." They discuss both stories in a part of the book entitled "L'homme, cet infini," which is dedicated to the mental capacities of man, such as parapsychology and telepathy.

The importance of this first Borges story from *El Aleph* and the French *Labyrinthes* for both mediators can be deduced from the fact that Bergier already referred to "La escritura del Dios" as "un chef-d'œuvre qui sera certainement cité à l'avenir dans toutes les listes des dix meilleurs nouvelles de toutes les littératures" in his article in *Fiction*, and from the fact that the story was also explicitly named,

²¹³ Pauwels and Bergier, *Le matin des magiciens: Introduction au réalisme fantastique*, 21. I will refer to the specific Borges parts in *Le matin des magiciens* as "L'écriture de Dieu. Le point suprême."

²¹⁴ See Caillois, preface to *Fantastique: Soixante récits de terreur*, 3.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 20.

perhaps by Pauwels, in the anonymous article in *Arts*.²¹⁶ The 1970 sequel to *Le matin des magiciens*, *L'homme éternel*, again paid attention to the story, this time in the context of a book devoted to lost civilizations.²¹⁷ In *Le matin des magiciens* itself, the authors discuss the story in a chapter in which they study the possibility of the existence of a kind of *homme éveillé* or *surhomme*: a person who may have recognized the secret of the universe by acquiring technical knowledge, of mathematics, for instance, or of nuclear energy. These “supermen” may have existed in the past, and this existence may therefore explain the occurrence of past miracles, miracles that in these cases are products of a human brain and body, not of any kind of god.²¹⁸ As Borges’s story “La escritura del Dios” confirms the existence of a higher power or order in the universe, it seems to contradict Pauwels and Bergier’s Nietzschean discussion. However, the story also confirms the idea that man is capable of deciphering the universe, and this is the aspect on which they focus. They briefly discuss how the imprisoned magician Tzinacán discovers the ineffable name of God in the writing on a jaguar’s pelt in “La escritura del Dios,” and conclude:

L’univers nous dévore, ou bien nous livre son secret, selon que nous savons ou non le contempler. Il est hautement probable que les lois les plus subtiles et les plus profondes de la vie et du destin de toute chose créée sont inscrites en clair dans le monde matériel qui nous cerne, que Dieu a laissé son écriture sur les choses, comme pour notre sage sur le pelage de la panthère, et qu’il suffirait d’un certain regard... L’homme éveillé serait l’homme de ce certain regard.²¹⁹

In this way, they use the story to confirm the existence of a secret in the universe that can be revealed by an enlightened man.

In 1962, “La escritura del Dios” became the first story by Borges to be published in *Planète*, and it was in fact preceded by an epigraph from *Le matin des magiciens*: the first line of the previously quoted fragment on the revelation of the secret of the universe. The introductory note to the translation also extends Néstor Ibarra’s introductory lines:

²¹⁶ Bergier, “Ici, on désintègre!” 116; and [Pauwels?], “Un conteur de l’imaginaire: *Labyrinthes* par Jorge Luis Borges.”

²¹⁷ Pauwels and Bergier, *L’homme éternel*, 122.

²¹⁸ Pauwels and Bergier, *Le matin des magiciens: Introduction au réalisme fantastique*, 455.

²¹⁹ Pauwels and Bergier, “L’écriture de Dieu. Le point suprême,” 458-59.

Jorge Luis Borgès est d'origine hispano-anglo-portugaise. Elevé en Suisse, il s'est fixé depuis longtemps à Buenos Aires, où il naquit en 1899. Nul n'a moins de patrie que cet homme étrange, et nul écrivain n'échappe aussi totalement à tout régionalisme comme d'ailleurs à toute indication temporelle.²²⁰

Other translations and short articles by Pauwels and Bergier also repeat this tendency to reproduce Ibarra's preface and Caillois's texts by stressing the unclassifiable and stateless nature of Borges's work. Borges was consistently published in *Planète's* section "La littérature différente," while other literary texts were grouped under sections such as "La littérature soviétique," "La littérature anglo-saxonne," "L'art fantastique de tous les temps," "La littérature chinoise," and "La littérature noire."²²¹ The introductory note to another translation, of Borges's story "La biblioteca de Babel," shows that Pauwels and Bergier's thematic interest in the secret of the universe was uninterrupted, a theme that they also found in Arthur Clarke's fiction:

Le thème de cette nouvelle—l'une des plus belles et des plus troublantes de Borgès—est celui-ci: le secret de l'univers, et le secret de toutes choses [. . .]. C'est le thème d'une autre nouvelle célèbre, d'Arthur Clarke, où l'on voit des moines tibétains chercher à travers mille milliards de combinaisons possibles de lettres le nom véritable de Dieu, la clé ultime de la Vérité...²²²

Interestingly, the selection of Borges's "La escritura del Dios" finds a remarkable parallel in the only review that the Catholic writer François Mauriac devoted to the author in 1957. In a similar way as Pauwels would criticize Marxist materialism and rationalism—his review of science fiction in *Europe* was published directly after Mauriac's—Mauriac criticized naturalism in order to re-evaluate the secret in Borges's work.²²³ For Mauriac, a novelist does not have to confirm the invisible or the spirit behind the materialist world, but should not deny it either. It is here that Mauriac refers to "La escritura del Dios."²²⁴ Although Mauriac's perspective

²²⁰ Introductory note to Borges, "L'écriture du Dieu," 79.

²²¹ See, for instance, "Le dictionnaire des responsables: Jorge Luis Borges," *Planète*, no. 8 (1963).

²²² Introductory note to Borges, "La bibliothèque de Babel," *Planète*, no. 10 (1963): 127.

²²³ Mauriac, "Naturalisme pas mort..." 1. See also Mauriac, "Le Bloc-Notes de François Mauriac: 3 août."

²²⁴ Mauriac, "Naturalisme pas mort..." 9.

on metaphysics in Borges was Catholic and thus differed from those of the authors of *Le matin des magiciens*, the three mediators shared a similar interest in the theme of the secret in Borges's work.

The interpretation of another story by Borges, "El Aleph," goes in the same direction. In one of the chapters of *Le matin des magiciens*, Pauwels and Bergier examine a place within man where everything that happens to him—everything that he sees, knows, and feels—will be immediately explainable, as a kind of key to total knowledge. As part of this study on the transfinite place, which the authors call "le point de vue par-delà l'infini,"²²⁵ they discuss Borges's story and publish an extensive fragment of "L'Aleph" at the end of their chapter.²²⁶ In the importance that the authors attribute to the *point suprême*, the close relation between fantastic realism and surrealism also becomes clear. They discuss the surrealist ambition to capture the world in one metaphor and refer to Breton's second manifesto of surrealism, in which he relates surrealism to esotericist spiritualism. In this context, Bergier and Pauwels quote Breton's famous 1930 sentence on the transfinite place: "Tout porte à croire qu'il existe un certain point de l'esprit d'où la vie et la mort, le réel et l'imaginaire, le passé et le futur, le communicable et l'incommunicable, le haut et le bas cessent d'être perçus contradictoirement."²²⁷ While Breton laicized and psychologized the concept of the supreme point in his second manifesto and Carrouges conceptualized this mental space in a deistic or spiritual way in his criticism of Breton's work, Pauwels and Bergier made the concept both cosmological and psychological.²²⁸

As Pauwels and Bergier claim, their chapter on the transfinite place traces this concept on three levels of knowledge: in the esotericist tradition, in avant-garde mathematics, and in what they call *la littérature moderne insolite*, an umbrella term for the different forms of fantastic, surreal, and science fiction literature that are exemplified by Borges's work. In their brief discussion of "El Aleph," the authors use ideas from the Samadhi technique—a state of consciousness reached by meditation—

²²⁵ Pauwels and Bergier, "L'écriture de Dieu. Le point suprême," 475.

²²⁶ Borges, "Un extrait d'une géniale nouvelle de Jorge Luis Borges." As "El Aleph" was not published in book form in France until 1967, *Le matin des magiciens* took up Paul Bénichou's version published in *Les temps modernes*. The fragment covers the part in which the narrator comes to Carlos Argentino's house to look at the Aleph up to the post-scriptum.

²²⁷ Breton in Pauwels and Bergier, "L'écriture de Dieu. Le point suprême," 475. See Breton, "Second manifeste du surréalisme (1930)," 154.

²²⁸ Carrouges, "Surréalisme et occultisme," 195; and *André Breton et les données fondamentales du surréalisme*, 22-34. Carrouges did not discuss Breton's concept of the supreme point in his criticism of Borges's work.

and from the mathematician and philosopher Georg Cantor in order to establish relations and integrate what they consider "truths" about the transfinite point.²²⁹ The authors' main aim is to rationally understand the idea of the transfinite:

l'époque dans laquelle nous vivons a ceci de particulier que l'effort de l'intelligence pure, appliquée à une recherche éloignée de toute mystique et de toute métaphysique, a abouti à des conceptions mathématiques qui nous permettent de rationaliser et de comprendre l'idée de transfini.²³⁰

In describing this point, they first situate it in the universe and not, as suggested in Breton's surrealist manifesto, in the spirit:

Il existe dans l'Univers un point, un lieu privilégié, d'où tout l'Univers se dévoile. Nous observons la création avec des instruments, télescopes, microscopes, etc. Mais, ici, il suffirait à l'observateur de se trouver dans ce lieu privilégié: en un éclair, l'ensemble des faits lui apparaîtrait, l'espace et le temps se révéleraient dans la totalité et la signification ultime de leurs aspects.²³¹

Next, and just before quoting a long fragment from "El Aleph," the authors take a psychological rather than cosmological perspective of the supreme point, making it into a mental space that is more similar to how Breton saw it. They claim that, in the end, the spirit will eventually be able to create an Aleph with the help of science:

On peut encore imaginer que, dans un avenir plus ou moins lointain, l'esprit humain ayant maîtrisé ces mathématiques du transfini, parviendra, aidé de certains instruments, à construire dans l'espace des "aleph," des points transfinis d'où l'infiniment petit et l'infiniment grand lui apparaîtront dans leur totalité et leur ultime vérité. Ainsi la traditionnelle recherche de l'Absolu aurait enfin abouti. Il est tentant de songer que l'expérience a déjà partiellement réussi.²³²

²²⁹ Pauwels and Bergier, "L'écriture de Dieu. Le point suprême," 475.

²³⁰ Ibid., 476-77.

²³¹ Ibid., 476.

²³² Pauwels and Bergier, *Le matin des magiciens: Introduction au réalisme fantastique*, 480.

This vision of the Aleph and Borges's "El Aleph" leads to a hopeful conclusion in which there is no place for fear. Pauwels had previously referred to metaphysical fear in Borges's work, but in *Le matin des magiciens* this element is absent from the definitions of fantastic realism and the supreme point. In suggesting that the (or Borges's) Aleph existed, or had even already been attained, and could offer a form of total knowledge of the world, Pauwels and Bergier present a reassuring thought in which there is no fear of the infinite. With reference to this and as far as Borges's work is concerned, I agree with Jean-Bruno Renard's study of what he calls the "mouvement Planète," in which he says that the book and the magazine *Planète* were characterized by optimism and therefore contrasted with previous movements from the 1950s, such as existentialism and communism.²³³ This optimism did not, in my view, differ between the consideration of (pseudo)scientific and fictional sources or between the book and the magazine. Another critic has, conversely, claimed that this optimism was not applied to the literature included in the magazine: "on ne trouve que très peu de nouvelles optimistes publiées dans *Planète*. Avec la littérature fantastique (dont Lovecraft et Borgès), c'est une expression de l'angoisse qui domine."²³⁴ This view overlooks the fact that the specific *presentation* of this literature by Pauwels and Bergier was markedly positive.

Part of this optimism for Borges's work can be related to the fact that Pauwels and Bergier stressed the idea of totality rather than of (bad) infinity. In the discussion of "El Aleph" as a supreme point, for instance, there is no sense of infinity in which literature and reality continuously reflect each other, such as in Maurice Blanchot's reviews. Although Borges's Aleph itself shows the impossibility of an object or space that contains totality, as the Aleph does not encompass the observer who observes the Aleph, this belief in totality still exists in *Le matin des magiciens*. This optimism can also be deduced from the authors' emphasis on the possibility of a revelation, in contrast, for instance, with Blanchot's focus on the imminence of a revelation that does not take place (even though Blanchot's vision of infinity is not a pessimistic one either, as I have shown before). Similarly, in the 1970 sequel to the book, in which the authors discuss, as well as "La escritura del Dios," Borges's essay "El idioma analítico de Wilkins," they focus on John Wilkins's imaginary language that captures the totality of the real. Borges's mocking stance on Wilkins's classification, and the

²³³ Renard, "Le mouvement Planète," 163.

²³⁴ Cornut, *La revue "Planète" (1961-1968)*, 103.

general suggestion underlying the essay that the relation between language and reality is problematic, is of less interest to the authors.²³⁵

Although Bergier later stressed that *réalisme fantastique* did not pretend to offer any philosophy or religion, and although both authors also indicate in *Le matin des magiciens* that their book has a novel-like intention,²³⁶ it is also true that the book uses Borges's texts to reflect on scientific, philosophical, and religious ideas. In taking Borges's texts and the marvelous elements they contain as sources for the truth about our reality,²³⁷ Pauwels and Bergier go in the inverse direction to that of Borges's work, taking a philosophical or religious starting point in order to arrive at a poetical idea. This inversion can be compared to Caillois's study of the hidden correspondences in the universe, and is also similar to his "serious" study of the texts. The way in which Caillois, Pauwels, and Bergier thus maintain the belief in a secret or hidden meaning rather than focus on the playful and skeptical remarks and refutations that Borges's work also contains sets them apart from other French critics, some of whom I have already discussed.²³⁸ Bénichou, for instance, also discussed the idea that the world has a hidden truth in stories such as "La escritura del Dios," "El Aleph," and "El Zahir," but saw this idea ultimately as being refuted in the same stories by Borges's humor and skepticism.²³⁹

After *Le matin des magiciens*, Pauwels and Bergier would continue to select and classify Borges's work, including in several translations and articles for *Planète*. In 1965, Pauwels would also travel to Buenos Aires and other cities in Latin America to give several conferences on the occasion of the publication of the first issue of *Planeta*, the Spanish version of *Planète*. His meeting there with Borges led to the publication of Olaf Stapledon's *Le créateur d'étoiles*, published in French by Éditions Planète (the publishing house founded in 1964 that was closely linked to the magazine), a publication that came about on Borges's advice and with a preface by the Argentine author.²⁴⁰ Somewhat later, Bergier would also publish Borges's stories in various

²³⁵ Pauwels and Bergier, *L'homme éternel*, 138-48.

²³⁶ Bergier, *Je ne suis pas une légende*, 202; and Pauwels and Bergier, *Le matin des magiciens: Introduction au réalisme fantastique*, 24.

²³⁷ For a comment on this issue, see Pauwels and Bergier, *L'homme éternel*, 16.

²³⁸ See Wahl, "Les personnes et l'impersonnel," 263.

²³⁹ Bénichou, "Le monde et l'esprit chez Jorge Luis Borges."

²⁴⁰ See Pauwels, "Un dîner avec Borgès"; Pauwels, *Un jour je me souviendrai de tout...*, 264; and Borges, preface to *Créateur d'étoiles*, by Stapledon.

anthologies of crime fiction published by Éditions Planète and by other publishing houses.²⁴¹

Thanks to both *Le matin des magiciens* and *Planète*, Borges's work reached a much larger audience than before.²⁴² However, the critical reception of the book and the magazine within various circles of specialists of the fantastic and science fiction, of religious and scientific groups, and of circles of literary critics (among whom was Gérard Genette, to be discussed later) was polemical.²⁴³ Caillois himself, for instance, criticized *Planète* in a letter to Victoria Ocampo, partly for using his name in the introductory notes to the translations of Borges's work:

Je n'approuve pas—et moins en moins—cette revue. Et je suis assez fâché qu'ils usent de mon nom comme celui d'un de leurs conseillers (en fait de conseils, ce serait plutôt des admonestations). Je n'ai aucun rapport avec eux et leur façon de spéculer sur la crédulité publique me déplaît beaucoup.²⁴⁴

Pauwels, in turn, criticized Caillois directly in the magazine in 1965 for wanting to protect his "Borges legacy":

C'est Roger Caillois qui a introduit son œuvre en France. *Planète* lui a donné un assez large public. Mais Caillois, bien que fonctionnaire de l'Unesco, se réjouit-il que cette sévère beauté aille au grand nombre? J'en doute. Combien faudra-t-il de révolutions pour que nos intellectuels cessent de réagir en aristocrates?²⁴⁵

The fact remains, in any case, that both the book and the magazine helped Borges to reach a larger and also different audience. The interest of this audience in *Le matin des magiciens* and in Borges's work in particular may be seen in the light of Bergier's own

²⁴¹ Borges, "Les jardins aux sentiers qui bifurquent," in *Les chefs-d'œuvre du crime*, edited by Sternberg, Bergier, and Grall, Paris: Planète, 1965; Borges, "La mort et la boussole," in *Les chefs-d'œuvre du crime*, edited by Bergier and Sternberg, Verviers / Paris: Gérard et Cie / L'Inter, 1966; and Borges, "La mort et la boussole," in *Les chefs-d'œuvre du crime*, edited by Bergier and Sternberg, Paris: Club des amis du livre, [1966?].

²⁴² See also the previously quoted sales figures for *Planète*. The sequel to *Le matin des magiciens* was much less successful. Renard, "Le mouvement Planète," 115.

²⁴³ Renard, "Le mouvement Planète," 158-62. For a compilation of negative criticism, see Galifret, ed., *Le crépuscule des magiciens*.

²⁴⁴ Caillois to Ocampo, March 16, 1964, in *Correspondance Roger Caillois, Victoria Ocampo (1939-1978)*, 380.

²⁴⁵ Pauwels, "Un dîner avec Borgès," 152. See also Pauwels, *Un jour je me souviendrai de tout...*, 264.

suggestion that the success of the book had to do with the religious aspect it offered at a time when the church was losing ground. This suggestion probably also applied to the authors themselves, as becomes clear from the following fragment from Bergier's 1977 autobiography:

Il est essentiellement dû à la mentalité des auteurs: je suis juif orthodoxe et Pauwels, depuis que je le connais, recherche inlassablement une foi. Quoi qu'il en soit, les résultats sont là: pour une vocation scientifique déclenchée par ce livre, il y a bien dix vocations religieuses! Ce phénomène s'explique en partie par le fait que là aussi *le Matin des magiciens* comble une lacune, lacune due à la carence des Églises correspondant aux religions révélées.²⁴⁶

Although the classification of Borges's work did not involve a strictly religious or spiritual interpretation, the selections of the stories and the reflection on thematic classifications such as the secret and the truth corresponded to an optimistic faith in the existence of a deeper truth in the universe, which Borges's stories could reveal.

6. Gérard Genette: "La forme moderne du fantastique, c'est l'érudition"

Like Maurice Blanchot before him, Gérard Genette discussed the relationship between the world and the book in Borges's work. This relation between reality and literature appears in a 1964 article entitled "La littérature selon Borges," which Genette adapted and included in *Figures 1* in 1966 under the title "L'utopie littéraire." I will discuss Genette's 1964 article at length, referring more briefly to Blanchot and to other, more peripheral mediators such as Maurice-Jean Lefebve, Michel Foucault, and Alain Robbe-Grillet, as well as to Genette's other, mostly later texts on Borges. I will not go into detail about Genette's later work after the early phase of the reception of Borges's work, but use some fragments to show the stability of his classifications and norms.²⁴⁷

In his 1964 article in the special Borges issue of *L'Herne*, Genette summarizes Borges's idea that every book is the work of a timeless and anonymous author. He

²⁴⁶ Bergier, *Je ne suis pas une légende*, 207.

²⁴⁷ For a detailed study of these later sources, see Julien Roger, who claims that Borges was not only Genette's theoretical starting point but also functioned as an example of Genette's (re)writing practice. Roger, "Genette, el otro de Borges."

refers to “cette conception de la littérature comme un monde homogène et réversible où les particularités individuelles et les préséances chronologiques n’ont pas cours” and to “ce sentiment ‘œcuménique’ qui fait de la littérature universelle une vaste création anonyme où chaque auteur n’est que l’incarnation fortuite d’un Esprit intemporel et impersonnel.”²⁴⁸ A pantheist explanation of this ecumenical sentiment is the idea that one spirit lives in the plurality of authors and works. Genette exemplifies this briefly with a description of Borges’s essay “Magias parciales del Quijote”:

selon cette hypothèse [panthéiste], le monde des livres et le livre du monde ne font qu’un, et si le héros de la seconde partie du *Quichotte* peut être lecteur de la première, et Hamlet spectateur d’*Hamlet*, il peut s’ensuivre que nous, leurs lecteurs ou spectateurs, soyons sans le savoir des personnages fictifs, et qu’au moment où nous lisons *Hamlet* ou *Don Quichotte* quelqu’un soit occupé à nous lire, à nous écrire, ou à nous effacer.²⁴⁹

As the idea that readers can be fictitious was only implicitly present in Blanchot’s discussion of the vertiginous, infinite relationship between the book and the world, it seems probable that Genette also took his inspiration, other than from Borges, from Lefebve.

In a 1958 essay published in *La nouvelle nouvelle revue française*, Lefebve reflects on the figure of the *mise-en-abyme*, especially in relation to Borges’s “Magias parciales del Quijote.” Lefebve calls Borges’s use of this figure an aesthetics of the infinite that gives the reader a “sentiment de l’irréel.”²⁵⁰ In another essay from *L’Herne*, published at the same time as Genette’s, Lefebve also discusses the pantheist idea of a common spirit for all authors and books. He refers to “Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius” (rather than to “Magias parciales del Quijote”) in order to take importance away from the notion of the author: “La littérature rêve d’être faite par tous et non par un. La notion d’auteur particulier et original est incompatible avec la souveraineté du livre. Dans Tlön, on fabrique artificiellement des auteurs en rapprochant deux ou plusieurs œuvres quelconques.”²⁵¹ Similarly, Genette discusses “Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius” in

²⁴⁸ Genette, “La littérature selon Borges,” 324.

²⁴⁹ Ibid. See also Genette, *Figures: Essais*, vol. 1, 17; and *Métalepse: De la figure à la fiction*, 131-32.

²⁵⁰ Lefebve, “La folie Tristan ou une esthétique de l’infini,” 103.

²⁵¹ Lefebve, “Qui a écrit Borges,” 227.

his 1964 essay, concluding that all books are made by one author. As well as the similarities between Genette's and Lefebve's classifications, they thus referred to several of the same texts, such as "Magias parciales del Quijote" and "Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius," and also "La biblioteca de Babel."

However, while Blanchot only implicitly criticized a text interpretation that is too much inspired by the intentions of the author, and Lefebve expressed this criticism more explicitly, Genette made it into the central point of his essay. By using "Pierre Menard, autor del Quijote," Genette stresses the intentions of the reader and criticizes in this way the pre-structuralist approach to literature:

Depuis un siècle et demi, notre pensée—et notre usage—de la littérature sont affectées par un préjugé dont l'application toujours plus subtile et plus audacieuse n'a cessé d'enrichir, mais aussi de pervertir et finalement d'appauvrir notre commerce des Lettres: le postulat selon lequel une œuvre est essentiellement déterminée par son auteur, et par conséquent *l'exprime*. Cette redoutable évidence n'a pas seulement modifié les méthodes et jusqu'aux objets de la critique littéraire: elle retentit sur l'opération la plus délicate et la plus importante de toutes celles qui concourent à la naissance d'un livre: la lecture.²⁵²

For Genette, Borges wants to mitigate the notions of paternity of a literary work, the order of historical succession, and originality in writing by showing "l'espace sans frontières de la lecture."²⁵³

By means of this boundless space for the reader, Genette deals with the notion of infinity that is omnipresent among Borges critics such as Blanchot, Lefebve, and Foucault. Louis Pauwels and Jacques Bergier also dealt with infinity, but their discussion emphasized a reassuring totality (of the Aleph) rather than infinity, and had therefore little to do with the notion conceptualized by Genette, Blanchot, Lefebve, and Foucault. For Genette, infinity in Borges can be found in the creative intentions of the reader: "Le temps des œuvres n'est pas le temps fini de l'écriture, mais le temps infini de la lecture; l'espace littéraire, c'est la mémoire des hommes. Le sens des livres est devant eux et non derrière: il est en nous."²⁵⁴ In this sense,

²⁵² Genette, "La littérature selon Borges," 325; italics in the original.

²⁵³ Ibid., 326.

²⁵⁴ Ibid., 327.

Genette's notion differs from that of Blanchot, for whom the infinite in Borges is linked to the eternal relationship between the book and the world, and from that of Lefebvre, for whom the infinite can be found in Borges's *mise-en-abyme* structures. It also differs from the notion of Genette's friend Foucault, for whom infinity in Borges can be found in language.²⁵⁵ Foucault refers to Borges for the first time in his 1963 essay "Le langage à l'infini," published in the magazine *Tel quel*, in which he also discusses Blanchot and his idea of the infinite. As well as Borges's "El milagro secreto," Foucault deals with "La biblioteca de Babel" in order to reflect on how language multiplies itself into the infinite:

Dans la *Bibliothèque de Babel* tout ce qui peut être dit a déjà été dit: on peut y trouver tous les langages conçus, imaginés, et même les langages concevables, imaginables; tout a été prononcé, même ce qui n'a pas de sens, au point que la découverte de la plus mince cohérence formelle est un hasard hautement improbable, dont bien des existences, acharnées pourtant, n'ont jamais reçu la faveur. Et cependant au-dessus de tous ces mots, un langage rigoureux, souverain, les recouvre, qui les raconte et à vrai dire les fait naître: langage lui-même appuyé contre le mort puisque c'est au moment de basculer dans le puits de l'Hexagone infini que le plus lucide (le dernier par conséquent) des bibliothécaires révèle que même l'infini du langage se multiplie à l'infini, se répétant sans terme dans les figures dédoublées du Même.²⁵⁶

For Foucault, language is infinite because it is able to multiply, repeat, mirror, and refer to itself, and for this form of infinity the metaphor of the library plays an important role.²⁵⁷ While Foucault deals with the contingency of language in Borges's stories here, he would extend his analysis of Borges to the contingency of our system of classifications, and, ultimately, to the contingency of our knowledge in the preface to *Les mots et les choses: Une archéologie des sciences humaines* from 1966, which is beyond the time scope of this study.²⁵⁸

²⁵⁵ For the relationship between Genette and Foucault, see Dosse, *History of Structuralism*, vol. 1, *The Rising Sign, 1945-1966*, 148.

²⁵⁶ Foucault, "Le langage à l'infini," 52.

²⁵⁷ See O'Sullivan, "The Library Is on Fire: Intertextuality in Borges and Foucault."

²⁵⁸ For a study of Borges in *Les mots et les choses*, see Rodríguez Monegal, "Borges and *La Nouvelle Critique*," 33-34; and Hidalgo Nácher, "Usos críticos de Borges en el campo intelectual francés (de Blanchot a Foucault)."

Genette's discussion of Borges's work can also be related to Robbe-Grillet's well-known programmatic text *Pour un nouveau roman* from 1963. Based on a series of articles published in the weekly *L'express* between 1955 and 1956, this book underscores the need for narrative forms to keep changing: "la répétition systématique des formes du passé est non seulement absurde et vaine, mais [. . .] elle peut même devenir nuisible."²⁵⁹ Robbe-Grillet uses Borges's story "Pierre Menard, autor del Quijote" in order to show the need for evolution in novelistic form: "Ce n'était pas un paradoxe que développait à ce propos J.-L. Borgès dans *Fictions*: le romancier du XX^e siècle que recopierait mot pour mot le *Don Quichotte* écrirait ainsi une œuvre totalement différente de celle de Cervantès."²⁶⁰ By means of the futile project of Pierre Menard, Robbe-Grillet suggests the reader's changing conceptions of literature and the changing reality. While Robbe-Grillet, like Genette, acknowledges the important role of the reader, he therefore comes back to the role of the author in creating a new novel.

From these relations between Genette and other critics, it can be easily deduced that they interacted with each other. If Genette did not reproduce specific classifications and norms from Blanchot, Lefebvre, Foucault, and Robbe-Grillet, he at least took some of his ideas from the poetical and institutional context in which these mediators were immersed. Blanchot, Foucault, and Genette were all claimed as precursors or supporters of structuralism, even though the first two rejected this association.²⁶¹ Institutionally, these three critics were, together with Robbe-Grillet, linked to the magazine *Tel quel* published at Seuil. From its launch in 1960 and during the early 1960s, *Tel quel* rejected Jean-Paul Sartre's conception of committed and existential literature, and pushed structuralism and the *nouveau roman* to the fore as alternatives.²⁶² During this period, the magazine published Blanchot, Foucault, Robbe-Grillet, Genette, and other (structuralist) critics and (*nouveau roman*) writers such as Roland Barthes, Jacques Derrida, Michel Butor, Claude Ollier, and Claude Simon.²⁶³ It also issued several translations of Borges's work made by Roger Caillois

²⁵⁹ Robbe-Grillet, *Pour un nouveau roman*, 9.

²⁶⁰ Ibid. See Robbe-Grillet, "Il écrit comme Stendhal...."

²⁶¹ See Blanchot, *Michel Foucault tel que je l'imagine*, 20; Bident, *Maurice Blanchot: Partenaire invisible*, 460; Haase and Large, *Maurice Blanchot*, 19-21; Revel, "Foucault (Michel)," 591; Eribon, *Michel Foucault*, 195-96; and Schaeffer, "Genette (Gérard)."

²⁶² See Dosse, *History of Structuralism*, vol. 1, *The Rising Sign, 1945-1966*, 276-78; and Kauppi, "Tel quel": *La constitution sociale d'une avant-garde*, 57-59.

²⁶³ For Derrida's short references to Borges in 1964 and 1968, among other magazines in *Tel quel*, see Rodríguez Monegal, "Borges and Derrida: Apothecaries"; and de Toro, "Borges/Derrida y la escritura."

and Philippe Sollers, and a text on the author by Valery Larbaud.²⁶⁴ Only Lefebve stood apart, as he did not have close ties to structuralist critics and mostly published in *La nouvelle nouvelle revue française*. The process of reproduction between Blanchot, Lefebve, and Genette has been studied several times in academic criticism and corresponds thus mostly to already existing poetical and institutional relations in the French literary field.²⁶⁵ While I have also added a short analysis on Genette's relations with Foucault and Robbe-Grillet here, I will focus now on Genette's relations with other French critics whom I have already dealt with and who published in a different and partially earlier institutional context.

In Genette's 1964 *L'Herne* essay, he responds to other French interpretations of Borges's work, a response that was deleted from the 1966 version of this text:

On trouve [. . .] chez lui l'alliance rare d'une imagination ouverte aux paradoxes et aux spéculations les plus vertigineuses, et d'une intelligence foncièrement hostile à toute imposture et à toute intimidation: cet auteur fantastique est aux antipodes du mysticisme et de la pensée totalitaire. [. . .] Cette attitude critique suffirait à le distinguer de bon nombre de ses laudateurs, grand trafiquants de mystère. Il affirme quelque part qu'il essaie toujours d'être de ceux qui par avance rejettent le surnaturel, et nul lecteur attentif ne peut mettre en doute la sincérité de cette protestation. Borges n'entre dans ses propres fictions qu'à son corps défendant; il est un des rares, peut-être le seul écrivain de ce genre chez qui le goût du possible—et de l'impossible—n'ait pas tué le sens du réel.²⁶⁶

Academic critic Daniel Attala has seen this criticism of mysticism and totalitarian thought as a reaction against Blanchot (although the discussion of Blanchot's political position is mainly from a later date).²⁶⁷ However, rather than distancing himself from a critic with which he had much in common, I want to argue that Genette was responding to Pauwels and Bergier's *Le matin des magiciens*. These critics were fascinated by surreal "mysteries" in Borges's work and Pauwels's temporary

²⁶⁴ Borges, "L'art narratif et la magie"; Borges, "Degrés"; and Larbaud, "Sur Borges," *Tel quel*, no. 7 (Autumn, 1961).

²⁶⁵ Molloy, *La diffusion de la littérature hispano-américaine en France*, 236; and Rodríguez Monegal, "Borges and *La Nouvelle Critique*," 29-30. The relationship between these three critics was also already observed in journalistic criticism of the second half of the 1960s. See Ronse, "Le récit abstrait."

²⁶⁶ Genette, "La littérature selon Borges," 324-25.

²⁶⁷ Attala, "Magias parciales de Macedonio o del Borges de Blanchot al Borges de Genette," 124-25.

affiliations with the *Nouvelle droite* had also earned him a reputation as a rightwing critic.²⁶⁸ On a more general level, Genette's comments seem to refer to critics who discuss mystery and metaphysics in Borges's work, and may therefore also apply to the group of six critics I dealt with previously, including Paul Bénichou and Michel Carrouges. He thus distances himself from a text interpretation that focuses on (higher) meanings by paying attention to Borges's literary reality and the role of the reader.

As Genette calls Borges's work fantastic in the above-quoted fragment, like many critics before him, it is relevant to compare and contrast his conceptualization of this term with the conceptualizations by other critics dealt with previously. I will first discuss a number of more recent texts by Genette in which he classifies the author as fantastic, and then turn to his first mention of Borges's work in *Tel quel* in 1963. In *Figures 3*, published in 1972, Genette discusses "La forma de la espada" and the role of the narrator Moon, who turns out to be the other: the traitor instead of the victim. Through this story, Genette emphasizes again the idea that one man is all men:

Le commentaire "idéologique" de ce procédé narratif est donné par Moon lui-même: "Ce que fait un homme, c'est comme si tous les hommes le faisaient... Je suis les autres, n'importe quel homme est tous les hommes." Le fantastique borgésien, emblématique en cela de toute une littérature moderne, est *sans acception de personne*.²⁶⁹

Here, the fantastic becomes linked to the pantheist idea so important for Genette in Borges's work. Even though the fantastic is not defined in this short fragment, it seems to refer to what Genette, in his *L'Herne* essay, calls "le goût de l'impossible." This conceptualization becomes clearer in another text, in which Genette refers to "Pierre Menard, autor del Quijote" as fantastic because of its impossible nature: "Le cas du *Quichotte* de Pierre Ménard était non seulement imaginaire, mais fantastique, puisqu'il suppose qu'un écrivain du XX^e siècle, sans le recopier et sans l'avoir appris

²⁶⁸ Nickel, "Pauwels (Louis)"; and Gutierrez, "Le discours du réalisme fantastique: La revue *Planète*," 94-95.

²⁶⁹ Genette, *Figures*, vol. 3, 254; italics in the original.

par cœur, puisse produire (*producir*), et non reproduire, une réplique littérale d'un texte du XVII^e.²⁷⁰

Genette's *Palimpsestes* uses a similar definition of the fantastic as the impossible, as something that causes vertigo, but also adds another shade of meaning by referring to Borges's creative use of multiple authors and sources in one of his essay volumes:

Discussion est en somme un très classique recueil d'essais critiques, avec le mélange d'"analyse" et de commentaire qui caractérise ce genre. La part du vertige y tient surtout aux thèmes et aux idées agités dans ces essais sous le couvert d'auteurs parfois sollicités et débordés, mais non toujours. Cette thématique du fantastique intellectuel induit à une certitude diffuse sur l'authenticité des sources invoquées, mais cette méfiance peut tenir à l'ignorance du lecteur, et surtout au fait que nous lisons aujourd'hui ces textes anciens à la lumière troublante des plus récents.²⁷¹

This interpretation is interesting because Genette applies the classification of the fantastic also to Borges's essays. As the French critic has claimed, his first contact with Borges's work in 1959 was when he read *Fictions* and *Enquêtes* together.²⁷² When Genette referred to Borges for the first time in a questionnaire on literary criticism published in *Tel quel* in 1963, he reflected on the growing importance of criticism and the fact that criticism and literature are condemned to each other from the start: "Car aujourd'hui [. . .] la littérature s'intéresse encore plus à la critique que la critique ne s'intéresse à la littérature, et l'on pourrait [. . .] annoncer le moment où la critique n'aura plus la littérature pour objet, parce que la littérature aura pris pour objet la critique."²⁷³

In this same questionnaire, in which several critics and authors participated, Genette refers to Borges when describing the creativity and inventivity of criticism:

On accuse volontiers les critiques, depuis qu'ils existent, de manquer de pouvoir créateur et de compenser leur impuissance par on ne sait quelle

²⁷⁰ Genette, *L'œuvre de l'art: Immanence et transcendance*, 279.

²⁷¹ Genette, *Palimpsestes: La littérature au second degré*, 294.

²⁷² Genette, *Figures*, vol. 4, 9-10.

²⁷³ Genette in *Tel quel*, "Enquête sur la critique," 71.

tyrannie exercée sur les vrais écrivains. Mais quiconque a jamais entrepris de commenter une ligne de littérature sait bien que cet exercice exige plus d'invention et de sensibilité qu'il n'en faut pour écrire tous les romans du monde, et l'on ne voit pas ce que les contes de Borges ou les récits de Blanchot contiendraient de plus inquiétant que leurs œuvres critiques; la forme moderne du fantastique, c'est l'érudition.²⁷⁴

This last sentence in particular had an impact on later critics, as it was repeated by the French translator and critic Michel Maxence in the foreword to *L'Herne* and on the back cover of the 1964 edition of *Histoire de l'infamie. Histoire de l'éternité*.²⁷⁵ Maxence, who was on the editorial board of *Tel quel* in the 1960s, took up Genette's conceptualization of the fantastic, focused as it was on erudition and citations:

"La forme moderne du fantastique, écrivait récemment Gérard Genette, c'est l'érudition." Quelle phrase pourrait mieux éclairer la réussite de Borges? Moderne, son érudition, loin de les dessécher, donne aux emprunts, aux citations, aux divers signes d'ancienneté de la culture mise en jeu, une juste et jeune ébriété.²⁷⁶

By referring to Borges's *fantastique intellectuel* and to erudition as a form of fantastic literature, Genette conceptualizes the fantastic as something cerebral but not necessarily or primarily as something metaphysical. In this sense, he diverges from earlier critics who referred to Borges's *fantastique métaphysique* (Marcel Brion), who took up Borges's statement on metaphysics as a branch of fantastic literature (Michel Carrouges), or for whom Borges's fantastic had an esotericist dimension (Pauwels and Bergier). Blanchot hardly referred to the fantastic as a genre, but took a middle position between these previous critics and Genette, as he situated an ontological secret in literature itself. René Marill Albérès had already conceptualized a *fantastique cérébral*,²⁷⁷ but Genette's fantastic was much more focused on literature than on ideas, as it paid attention to Borges's use of (fictional) authors and sources. Apart from a

²⁷⁴ Ibid., 70.

²⁷⁵ Maxence, "Mériter Borges," 1; and back cover of Borges, *Histoire de l'infamie. Histoire de l'éternité* (Paris: Union Générale des Éditeurs, 1964).

²⁷⁶ Maxence, "Mériter Borges," 1.

²⁷⁷ Albérès, "Le fantastique cérébral: Jorge-Luis Borges," 406.

shift in the conceptualization of the fantastic, Genette's texts also testify to a greater interest in Borges's essays as fantastic literature.

Genette's reflection on the fantastic serves to show his convergences with and divergences from previous critics, but the center of his early work on Borges did not revolve around this classification. Genette ends his *L'Herne* text with a return to the pantheist theme with which he started the essay. For this ending, he combines both Lefebve and Blanchot's final statements in their respective essays. In his own *L'Herne* essay, Lefebve claimed that underneath its layer of the fantastic and the metaphysical, Borges's work was about literature itself:

Le véritable sujet de l'œuvre borgésienne est, au-delà du fantastique et de la métaphysique qui le fonde, la littérature elle-même considérée comme une manière d'être, —et peut-être comme le seul être possible. Borges a dû s'aviser un jour que si elle prétend refléter quelque chose du monde, elle ne put le faire qu'en se reflétant elle-même.²⁷⁸

By claiming that Borges's work was about literature itself, Lefebve came back to Blanchot's point about the problematic relationship between literature and reality. Blanchot, for his part, ended his essay on Borges with a fragment from "La muralla y los libros" in which Borges states that the imminence of a revelation that does not take place may be the aesthetic fact. Blanchot reiterated in this way the idea that there is a secret that literature suggests but does not reveal: "l'écrivain est celui qui vit [. . .] dans l'imminence d'une pensée qui n'est jamais que la pensée de l'éternelle imminence."²⁷⁹

Genette reproduces the secondary place that Lefebve ascribes to the fantastic and the metaphysical, and the idea of the imminence of a revelation in Blanchot's work, in order to give an individual shift to his interpretation of Borges's work:

L'idée borgésienne de la littérature, sous ses dehors de fantastique et de mystification, est une idée sérieuse, profonde, qui nous propose à la fois une jouissance et une responsabilité. La littérature selon Borges n'est pas un sens tout fait, une révélation que nous avons à subir: c'est une réserve de formes qui attendent leur sens, c'est l'imminence d'une révélation qui ne se produit pas, et

²⁷⁸ Lefebve, "Qui a écrit Borges," 224.

²⁷⁹ Blanchot, "L'infini et l'infini," 110.

que chacun doit produire pour lui-même. Ainsi, Borges redit à sa manière que la poésie est faite par tous, non par un. Cette redite est peut-être la parabole moderne de l'humanisme.²⁸⁰

By distinguishing himself from previous French critics and also reproducing some of their ideas, Genette thus came to break with some dominant classifications, such as the genre classification of the fantastic or the theme of metaphysics. For Genette, the true subject of Borges's work was not (fantastic) literature nor metaphysics, but what the reader made of it. The revelation could only take place in the reader's experience. In this way, Genette replaced the idea of the pantheist spirit living in the plurality of authors and works with the notion of the reader.

7. Conclusion: Unity within diversity

In my discussion of key critics and their reviews, I have devoted little attention to the international level of reception, because the key critics interacted little with foreign critics. The issue of *L'Herne* in 1964 opened up possibilities for this interaction by publishing many French and foreign critics together. It published, for instance, articles by Argentine critics such as Borges's friends Adolfo Bioy Casares, Victoria and Silvina Ocampo, José Bianco, and Borges's mother Leonor Acevedo. Spanish critics Guillermo de Torre and Rafael Cansinos-Assens, Italian critic Piétro Citati, German critic and translator Karl August Horst, and the American critics and translators Anthony Kerrigan and James E. Irby also published in the Borges issue.²⁸¹ While these foreign critics did not become important for the French reception of Borges's work, many of them did take or come to take a key position in their respective national fields. In this way, the complexities of the reception processes in the different national spaces entered into the French literary space. To give just one example, behind Victoria Ocampo's personal note on Borges and his reference to her in an interview with Napoléon Murat, both published in *L'Herne*, there was a long history of tension that most likely escaped French readers who were not aware of the Argentine reception of the author and the relationship between Borges and

²⁸⁰ Genette, "La littérature selon Borges," 327.

²⁸¹ See Roux and de Milleret, eds., "Jorge Luis Borges," special issue, *L'Herne* 4 (March, 1964).

Ocampo.²⁸² These “new” mediators in France contributed “new” ideas and perspectives to the discussion of the author’s work: both in criticism and in the selection of individual translations, Borges’s early poetry and essays, his work in collaboration with Bioy Casares, and his biography received much more attention than before. The *L’Herne* issue thus diversified French criticism, although it has to be remarked that none of the foreign texts were written by key mediators in the French reception, such as Paul Bénichou, Maurice Nadeau, René Étiemble, Maurice Blanchot, Louis Pauwels, Jacques Bergier, and Gérard Genette. None of these critics referred to foreign Borges criticism, which in the 1950s and at the start of the 1960s was mostly Spanish-language criticism. This lack of international interaction is somewhat comparable to the behavior of the mediators at French publishing houses who, in spite of the fact that they probably knew the Argentine literary world much better than the critics, also steered clear of Argentine discussions about Borges.

On the national level, the interaction between mediators at publishing houses and in criticism was somewhat livelier. The reproduction of Ibarra’s opening lines on Borges’s statelessness in *Fictions* was the most common form of interaction. Some of Roger Caillois’s work on Borges caused processes of reproduction, but only in a very weak form. Caillois was responsible for book and magazine translations of Borges’s work, the edition of anthologies that included the Argentine author, prologues and epilogues to his work, and for by far the highest number of critical texts, and French critics referred to his activities in their reviews. However, although Caillois’s classifications of the labyrinth, fantastic literature, and metaphysics appeared widely in criticism, they were conceptualized differently and did not bear resemblance to Caillois’s larger, cosmological reflection on the unitary world. In this sense, Caillois may have offered certain classifications to other critics, but they did not reproduce larger classificatory schemes, conceptualizations, or norms. The only clear exceptions to this are Marcel Brion’s texts on Borges, which offer a stronger form of reproduction: while other critics conceptualized metaphysics in an ontological or spiritual way, Brion followed Caillois by understanding metaphysics cosmologically. Brion’s cosmological reflection on the labyrinth, for instance, took much from Caillois, although Brion also added his own reflections and took the labyrinth as a more personal and existential space. It can therefore be concluded that Caillois, in spite of his Borges activities in several institutional roles, was not an omnipresent

²⁸² See Louis, *Borges ante el fascismo*, 114-19.

trendsetter in criticism. Although French critics possibly took up his selections, classifications, and norms, Caillois did not centralize critical opinions on Borges.

The mediators at publishing houses and in criticism also shared something other than these weak and strong forms of reproduction of Néstor Ibarra's and Caillois's comments. Both types of mediator tended to domesticate or naturalize Borges's work, a tendency that well-known Borges scholars have widely described and studied.²⁸³ For the French reception, this tendency was most visible in the fact that the Argentine dimension of Borges's work was of little importance for most mediators. In a review of the *L'Herne* issue, for instance, Michel Drix claimed that "L'intérêt de la troisième partie des *Cahiers* de *L'Herne* tient précisément à cette tentative de situer Borges dans son contexte argentin."²⁸⁴ In this 1965 review, however, Drix still prefers Borges's metaphysical reflections to his Argentine side:

Pour être intéressante, cette partie argentine de l'œuvre de Borges n'est pas la plus importante. Son audience internationale est liée essentiellement à son œuvre d'essayiste et de conteur. Nous retrouvons là un autre masque de Borges: le masque métaphysique, sa plus constante préoccupation.²⁸⁵

This review thus made the opposition between a metaphysical Borges and an Argentine Borges explicit, while the opposition itself had already been present from the early reception onwards. Since this fits in well with Ibarra's opening lines, it is possible that the naturalization (or even Gallicization) of Borges's work by critics was causally related to the preface to *Fictions*, but it can also have arisen more independently.

The comparison between the mediators involved in publishing houses and those in criticism also yields several differences. This takes us to processes that are specific, not to the international or national but to the *institutional* dynamics of the reception of Borges's work in French criticism. In comparison with the denationalization and depolitization by mediators involved in the publishing houses of Gallimard and Du Rocher, especially by Caillois, French criticism was more diverse. The publication of *L'Herne* is a good example of the interest in the Argentine aspects of Borges's work. Nadeau's quotes from Borges's note on Nazism and the

²⁸³ See Sarlo, *Writer on the Edge*; Balderston, *Out of Context*; and Aizenberg, "El Borges vedado."

²⁸⁴ Drix, review of *Jorge Luis Borges. Cahiers de L'Herne*, 1964, 170.

²⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 172.

liberation of Paris show that, even if Borges was extraterritorialized, he was not stripped of his political position. Another example of a discussion in which French criticism took an independent course is on the topic of Borges's humor. Although French translators, in particular Caillois and Bénichou, were accused by other translators of passing over the humorous dimension of Borges's work, this dimension was frequently discussed in French criticism. Among the six critics I discussed together, the opposition between fear and humor was paramount, and many others also referred to Borges's humor.²⁸⁶ In this sense, I disagree with scholar Michel Lafon, who claims that, as a result of the fact that French translators ignored Borges's humor, the French reading of Borges's work is generally a tragic one.²⁸⁷

Several other classifications form part of larger critical discussions of Borges's work, such as those of metaphysics, of the fantastic, and of infinity. Many classifications were reproduced or negotiated and therefore became expressed collectively. French criticism on Borges showed in this sense a form of homogenization or centralization of classifications of themes, genres, and of literary movements such as surrealism. In fact, this homogenization does not only apply to certain classifications but also to the types of classification used and to the book translations and other events that received attention. To give an example, French critics used few classifications of the author and his style. Borges was taken to be a short-story writer without French critics often labeling him as such, although they did compare him with other authors and, in this sense, classified him as an author. Almost all critical attention went to *Fictions*, and, to a lesser extent, to *Labyrinthes*, *Enquêtes*, and *L'Herne*, while the publication of *Histoire de l'infamie. Histoire de l'éternité*, and the awarding to Borges of the Prix International des Éditeurs in 1961 and the Cravate de Commandeur de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres in 1962 were almost ignored.

The homogenization of certain classifications is most clear in the group of six critics I discussed together. By analyzing texts by Michel Carrouges, René Marill Albérès, Maurice Nadeau, Guy Dumur, Marcel Brion, and Paul Bénichou together in one section, I have been able to show the collective dimension in their classifications:

²⁸⁶ See, among other texts, Brenner, "Nous avons lu pour vous: *Enquêtes*, 1937-1952 de Jorge-Luis Borges"; Couffon, review of *Enquêtes*; Jaccottet, "En de charmants dédales"; Lefebve, "Qui a écrit Borges"; Marissel, "L'univers de Jorge Luis Borges"; Mauriac, "Naturalisme pas mort..."; Maxence, "Mériter Borges"; Nimier, "Avez-vous lu Borgès?"; de la Rochefoucauld, "Deux écrivains argentins: Borgès et Casarès; Le plaisir et l'absence"; Tems, "Des *Enquêtes*"; and Vax, "Borges philosophe."

²⁸⁷ Lafon, "Borges y Francia, Francia y Borges," 26.

these critics all applied the theme of metaphysics or the genre of the fantastic to Borges's work, and with this they formed part of an even larger group that used these classifications in French criticism. Interestingly, even though the six critics were not (all) institutionally connected through the magazines in which they published, they were seen as a sort of group by other French critics. Étiemble's review of Borges, for instance, refers to critics who use terms such as *métaphysique* and *absurde* to discuss Borges's work, which was in fact the case for Carrouges, Nadeau, Dumur, Brion, and Bénichou.²⁸⁸ Genette probably also referred to the same critics when he distanced himself from the interest in mystification, in metaphysics, and in fantastic literature in Borges's work. The collectivity of these classifications was not (exclusively) due to direct processes of interaction on Borges's work, but also the result of a shared literary conception. The six critics most likely shared norms that preceded their texts on Borges.

Another group also shared certain classifications and thus formed another unity within the diversity of Borges criticism. Key mediators Maurice Blanchot and Gérard Genette, and more peripheral ones such as Maurice-Jean Lefebve, Michel Foucault, and Alain Robbe-Grillet, all discussed infinity in Borges's work and distanced themselves from traditional views on authorship and character development. For this group of critics, these two topics were closely linked to a discussion of the relationship between the book and reality, and on pantheism in Borges's work. In comparison with the six previous critics, this group was institutionally more closely related through the magazine *Tel quel*. The interaction between Blanchot, Genette, and the others was also more direct, as several cases of direct reproduction can be observed. The example of Genette's texts also makes it clear that he, and other critics such as Étiemble, tried to distinguish themselves from the critics who wrote on the metaphysical and the fantastic in Borges, even though these classifications were still a frame of reference even for Genette. In spite of the centralization of the classifications used by these two groups of critics, the homogenization was obviously not complete. Key mediators such as Bénichou and Nadeau gave their own shades of meaning to the theme of metaphysics or the genre of the fantastic, and the individual poetical projects of key mediators such as Étiemble, Blanchot, Pauwels, Bergier, and Genette are clearly visible in their texts on Borges. Pauwels and Bergier's classifications are clearly related to discussions on

²⁸⁸ See Étiemble, "Un homme à tuer: Jorge Luis Borges, cosmopolite," 518.

metaphysics, the fantastic, and the notion of infinity, yet they are used for a very particular poetical program.

The reasons for this homogenization in French Borges criticism cannot be easily pinpointed. To a certain extent, these processes were related to certain hegemonic literary movements, and perhaps also to dominant mediators. Caillois did not function as a dominant trendsetter in criticism, but another mediator may well have taken on this central and centralizing role. Borges himself played a role through the peritexts of his book translations, but in general he did not function as a key mediator through interviews or other texts. As a large number of critics reacted directly or indirectly to Jean-Paul Sartre in their Borges reviews, it is possible that he had a role, not in steering discussions about Borges but in offering a critical framework that Borges critics could use. Nadeau, Étiemble, Blanchot, Pauwels, Bergier, and perhaps Carrouges took up classifications and norms that were related to Sartre's discourse on committed literature: Nadeau showed that Borges had a political side that would also attract existentialists, while Étiemble, Blanchot, Pauwels, and Bergier distanced themselves from Sartre's view of commitment in literature by praising Borges's work. In this sense, it is possible that Sartre indirectly centralized discussions on the Argentine author. Another plausible cause of centralization is that most magazines and books in which the key mediators published were centralized in Paris. This small nucleus could therefore have boosted interaction between Borges mediators. This centralization differed from the situation in the United States, where the selections and classifications of mediators, both in publishing houses and in criticism, were more heterogeneous—a topic to which I will now turn.

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PART III: BORGES IN THE UNITED STATES
(1934-1968)



Chapter 1. Early translations and publications of Borges's work in the United States

The United States was initially just as early in picking up Borges's work as France was. As early as 1934, translations of Borges's poetry were published in magazines and anthologies. His poems, which in the 1934 anthology *The Modernist Trend in Spanish American Poetry* were underrepresented and tentatively seen, together with poems by Arturo Torres-Río and Pablo Neruda, as "the elements from which a new American poetry will be evolved,"¹ were already well represented among those by more than ninety other poets in the successful *Anthology of Contemporary Latin-American Poetry* edited by Dudley Fitts in 1942.² The first prose translation, "The Circular Ruins," was published no later than 1946 in the surrealist magazine *View* in New York.³ Until the first book translations were published in 1962, other individual translations appeared in very diverse media: Borges was published in university literary magazines such as *New Mexico Quarterly*, *Michigan Alumnus Quarterly Review*, *Texas Quarterly*, and *Prairie Schooner*; magazines focused on inter-American contacts such as *Panorama*, *Américas*, and *Odyssey Review*; anthologies on Latin American or Spanish-language literature such as the ones on poetry that I quoted; anthologies and magazines on mystery fiction and fantasy such as *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine* and *Fantastic Universe*; and in avant-garde and experimental publications such as *View*, *The Tiger's Eye*, *The Black Mountain Review*, and *New Directions in Prose and Poetry*.

As these individual translations were made by a large and diverse group of translators, mediators were not lacking either, although some of them did complain about a lack of interest in Borges's work. In a personal account of the first thirty-five years of *Sur*, Victoria Ocampo recalls the lack of enthusiasm from important magazines in the United States when she proposed to translate Borges's texts as early

¹ Graig, introduction to *The Modernist Trend in Spanish American Poetry*, 28.

² Borges, "Calle desconocida: An Unknown Street. La guitarra: The Guitar"; and "Inscripción sepulcral: Sepulcral Inscription. A Rafael Cansinos Assens: To Rafael Cansinos Assens. Antelación de amor: Love's Priority. Casas como ángeles: Houses like Angels. Un patio: Patio. La noche que en el Sur lo velaron: The Night They Kept Vigil in the South." Borges himself reviewed Fitts's 1942 anthology: he comments negatively on its poetry selection but praises Robert Stuart Fitzgerald's translation of his poem "Antelación de amor." See Borges, review of *An Anthology of Contemporary Latin-American Poetry*.

³ Borges, "Circular Ruins," *View* 5, no. 6 (January, 1946).

as the 1930s.⁴ Ocampo only came to play a minor role in the publication of Borges's work in the United States. In the 1950s and 1960s, the two translators who would later work on the first two book translations, Anthony Kerrigan (*Ficciones*) and Donald A. Yates (*Labyrinths*, in collaboration with James E. Irby), encountered difficulties in getting translations placed in magazines. The Irish-American translator Kerrigan, for instance, has given an account of how he was unable to place his translations in the magazines he approached for publication, and how he felt Borges's work was misunderstood: his 1957 translation of "Tres versiones de Judas" in *The Black Mountain Review* appeared in the book review section of the little magazine.⁵ At the same time, however, influential magazines, in terms of both circulation and institutional position, issued individual translations. These included *Partisan Review* and the paperback magazine *New World Writing* in the 1940s and 1950s, and *Harper's Bazaar* and *The Paris Review* in the 1960s. It is difficult to further trace and understand this interest (or lack of it) from magazines, because archival material on this matter is widely dispersed. For an understanding of the initial interest in Borges's work until 1968, it is therefore practical to focus on the publishing houses that considered translating Borges in book form, or actually did so. It is here that a clear temporal contrast emerges between Borges's speedy French lift-off in 1951 and 1953 and the slow take-off of his work in book form in the United States in 1962.

The New York publishing world took an early interest in Borges. As early as 1949, Harriet de Onís suggested publishing *El Aleph* and the Argentine anthology *La muerte y la brújula* to Knopf in New York, the main publisher of Latin American fiction in the United States until the 1960s. De Onís, who was the wife of the influential Spanish literary scholar and professor at Columbia University Federico de Onís, functioned as an important gatekeeper and as Knopf's translator of choice. Around the same time, Blanche Knopf asked Borges about English publishing rights for the 1944 Argentine edition of *Ficciones* directly after a trip to Paris and, after receiving no reply, tried the same in 1954 via Bradley Literary Agency in Paris, which represented Gallimard's rights in the United States.⁶

⁴ Ocampo, "Vida de la revista *Sur*," 20.

⁵ Kerrigan, "Tangential Comment on a Borgesian Theme," 7-8; and Borges, "Books & Comment: Three Versions of Judas." For Donald Yates, see Yates to Irby, November 3, 1960, private correspondence. All letters between Donald A. Yates and James E. Irby are courtesy of the latter.

⁶ Shirley Chidsey (secretary to Mrs. Knopf) to Borges, June 23, 1952, box 99, folder 16; and Chidsey to Jeanne Eteve (c/o Mrs. William A. Bradley), January 29, 1954, box 144, folder 1, Alfred A. Knopf Inc. Records.

The fact that these initiatives did not materialize in early book translations can be partly explained by the choices of Alfred Knopf and his staff: several scholars have observed that the publisher and his staff showed a lack of enthusiasm or even a disdain for Latin American literature, even when the profile of the Latin American Boom authors was rising in the 1960s.⁷ Scholars have also claimed that Blanche Knopf and Harriet de Onís's choices tended toward the regional and the folkloric,⁸ although they were precisely the mediators who took the initiative in publishing Borges at Knopf. As María Eugenia Mudrovic has indicated for the period up to and including the 1950s, Knopf's catalogue was extensive and heterogeneous, with authors such as Ricardo Palma, Alfonso Reyes, María Luisa Bombal, Eduardo Mallea, Ciro Alegría, Germán Arciniegas, Alejo Carpentier, Ernesto Sábato, Adolfo Costa du Rels, and José Suárez Carreño.⁹ In comparison with Gallimard's also disparate collection *La Croix du Sud*, for instance, Knopf's publisher's list was less restrictive in its preference for the Latin American picturesque. In fact, the eventual decision not to publish Borges also seems to have been based on other, more commercial reasons, as becomes clear from editor Herbert Weinstock's reaction to de Onís's proposal for *El Aleph* and *La muerte y la brújula*:

I'm afraid that they are utterly untranslatable, at least into anything that could be expected to sell more than 750 copies in the United States. That they are remarkable is beyond argument, but their peculiar variety of remarkableness seems to me to legislate against them as anything but \$50-a-pound caviar to the general (including me). I'd decline with appropriate expressions of astonishment.¹⁰

De Onís later proposed an anthology of Borges's work, which after some discussion was also turned down by Knopf's editor with the comment that it was "a natural for the Grove Press, Meridian Books, or even New Directions."¹¹

⁷ See Levine, "Latin American Novel in English Translation," 298-301; and Cohn, *Latin American Literary Boom*, 11-14.

⁸ Ibid. In an anthology of Latin American folklore in literature, de Onís included Borges's poem "General Quiroga Goes to Death in a Coach." See Borges, "General Quiroga Goes to Death in a Coach."

⁹ Mudrovic, "Reading Latin American Literature Abroad," 131-32.

¹⁰ Herbert Weinstock, manuscript records on *El Aleph* and *La muerte y la brújula*, submitted by Harriet de Onís, November 23, 1949, and January 28, 1952, box 1118, folder 5, Alfred A. Knopf Inc. Records.

¹¹ Weinstock, manuscript record on an anthology of Borges stories, submitted by de Onís, January 23, 1957, box 1118, folder 5, Alfred A. Knopf Inc. Records. In 1963, the firm again declined de Onís's proposal to publish Borges's work, see Cohn, *Latin American Literary Boom*, 11.

Two of these more experimental publishing houses, New York-based New Directions and Grove Press, would in fact publish the first two book translations in the United States, respectively *Labyrinths* and *Ficciones*, in 1962. New Directions was early in including Borges's work in its 1949 yearbook *New Directions in Prose and Poetry*.¹² After accidentally forgetting about Kerrigan's proposal of a Borges anthology,¹³ the publishing house went ahead with preparing *Labyrinths* with Yates, who had also already offered to translate *La muerte y la brújula* to Grove Press and Knopf.¹⁴ Inversely, after Borges won the Prix International des Éditeurs, in which Grove Press was involved as one of the participating publishing houses, Grove went on to publish *Ficciones* with Kerrigan, who had tried to translate and edit a Borges book, partly together with Alastair Reid, at Atlantic Press, the University of Michigan Press, and New Directions.¹⁵

In the years after the publication of *Labyrinths* and *Ficciones*, the University of Texas Press published *Dreamtigers (El hacedor)* and *Other Inquisitions, 1937-1952* in 1964 and Grove Press issued its second volume, *A Personal Anthology*, in 1967.¹⁶ After that, in the years following Borges's stay at Harvard in 1967, where he met Norman Thomas di Giovanni, who would work together with Borges on the translations of his books, Borges's work was issued almost exclusively at the large and more commercial publisher E. P. Dutton. Thus, in contrast with the French situation in which Roger Caillois had a dominant position at Gallimard, the introduction of Borges's work in the United States was "made" by various publishers, editors, and translators who all took different positions in the reception process. Before turning to how these mediators selected and classified Borges's work in English book

¹² Borges, "Two Stories: Investigations of the Writings of Herbert Quain. The Circular Ruins."

¹³ Although it is not impossible that New Directions intentionally decided not to have Kerrigan edit and translate Borges's work, there is no indication of this in the correspondence of New Directions. See, for instance, Robert MacGregor to Kerrigan, October 8, 1959, item (2021), folder 2, New Directions Publishing Corp. Records.

¹⁴ Yates to Judith Smith, June 3, 1958; Smith to Yates, June 20, 1958, Grove Press Records; and Weinstock, manuscript record on *La muerte y la brújula*, submitted by Yates, November 22, 1955, box 1118, folder 5, Alfred A. Knopf Inc. Records. It is not clear why Grove Press finally decided not to publish *La muerte y la brújula* in 1958: an internal report written by Donald Allen is fairly positive about Yates's translations, Borges's reputation, and sales possibilities, although it does reveal the little appeal that Borges's work has for Allen. Allen, internal report on *La muerte y la brújula*, submitted by Yates, June 15, 1958, Grove Press Records. Although Yates's proposal was rejected, the publishing house did write to Borges in 1959 and 1960 inquiring about rights, but Emecé did not reply to these letters until March, 1961, just two months before Formentor. Richard Seaver to Borges, November 18, 1959; and August 26, 1960; Carlos V. Frías (Emecé) to Seaver, March 21, 1961, Grove Press Records.

¹⁵ Kerrigan to Seaver, May 4, 1961; Kerrigan to Seaver, June 2, 1961, Grove Press Records; and 1958 correspondence between Kerrigan and James Laughlin, item (912), New Directions Publishing Corp. Records. For Alastair Reid's attempts to publish Borges in the mid-1950s, see Rostagno, "Casa de las Américas and the Center for Inter-American Relations," 111.

¹⁶ Borges, *Labyrinths; Ficciones; Dreamtigers; Other Inquisitions; and A Personal Anthology*.

publications, I will first look into the profiles of the publishing houses and the positions of key mediators in the translation and publication process of Borges's work until 1968.

1. Publishing houses and the positions of key publishers, editors, and translators in the early reception of Borges's work in the United States

The first two publishing houses in the United States that issued Borges's work in 1962 were similar in their focus on foreign experimental and modernist literature. New Directions published a relatively high number of foreign works, as well as modern classics and contemporary US writing. The early New Directions publications included surrealist-leaning work by Raymond Queneau and Alfred Jarry, but also Jean-Paul Sartre, Franz Kafka, Vladimir Nabokov, and Ezra Pound. Some Spanish-language authors—Federico García Lorca, Rafael Alberti, and Pablo Neruda—were issued before *Labyrinths*, and in the 1960s New Directions published several titles by Octavio Paz and Nicanor Parra. Likewise, Grove Press had its base in (mainly European) experimentalism and modernism. Although its publisher's list was more experimental than that of New Directions, its early publishing policy of the 1950s and 60s has nevertheless been described as one of "cautious mainstream experimentation, carefully balancing the acceptable and the unacceptable, the readable and the unreadable, the commercial and the uncommercial."¹⁷ As well as *Ficciones* and *A Personal Anthology*, the publishing house issued literature ranging from the Beat generation, the French 'pataphysicians, Samuel Beckett and other playwrights associated with the theatre of the absurd, to *nouveau roman* writers such as Alain Robbe-Grillet.¹⁸

The 1964 translations at the University of Texas Press appeared in a very different context of Latin American texts when *Dreamtigers* and *Other Inquisitions* were published as part of the Texas Pan-American Series. This book series included fiction titles such as *The Invention of Morel and Other Stories from "La Trama Celeste"* by Adolfo Bioy Casares, *The Burning Plain and Other Stories* by Juan Rulfo, *Barren Lives* by Graciliano Ramos, and *Recollections of Things to Come* by Elena Garro—translations from the 1960s that were all sponsored through the Latin American translation

¹⁷ Zurbrugg, "Within a Budding Grove," 158.

¹⁸ For Grove's publisher's list, see also Gontarski, "Life and Times of Grove Press."

program of the Association of American University Presses (AAUP). As *Labyrinths*, *Ficciones*, *A Personal Anthology*, and the later Dutton titles received many more reviews (see the final, chronological bibliography), it can be concluded that the two Borges translations issued by the University of Texas Press were not as successful as the previous and later ones, and the available sales figures point in the same direction.¹⁹ These differences may well have been caused by a diverging critical evaluation of the individual volumes, but it is clear that the profile of the University of Texas Press was also in play: the institutional position, network of editors and other agents, distribution channels, and the translators involved in the university presses were generally more closely linked to the academic field than to the literary field at large. Borges may thus have been more visible for critics and readers at the New York-based experimental publishers or at the commercial press of E. P. Dutton than for those at a press that published translations in very limited quantities and within a specialist collection.²⁰ Moreover, promotion could have been a determining factor in the circulation of the translations, at least in the case of the later Dutton translations. Deborah Cohn's article on the translation program of the AAUP and the later translation program of the Center for Inter-American Relations has shown the differences in book promotion between the two programs: marketing in the AAUP program was left to the individual university presses, whereas the Center for Inter-American Relations collaborated with the publishing houses themselves in order to promote Latin American translations.²¹ For Borges's later work, for instance, the Center and E. P. Dutton made a collective effort to promote *The Book of Imaginary*

¹⁹ No complete information on sales is available. *Labyrinths* sold between ten and twenty thousand copies a year between the end of the 1960s and the end of the 1970s, with a peak of 19,556 copies in 1971. Item (2022), New Directions Publishing Corp. Records. For *Ficciones*, the royalty forms in the Grove Press Records indicate that the hardback edition of 2,596 copies sold out between 1962 and the end of 1964; the forms for the paperback edition that was also published in 1962 have not been located. By contrast, *Dreamtigers*, the better selling title of the two University of Texas Press titles, had a lifetime sale of 33,692 in July 2008 according to the University of Texas Press Records, which equates to far fewer than a thousand copies a year. *Other Inquisitions* was reissued by two other publishers, Washington Square Press and Simon and Schuster, which makes its sales figures difficult to track down. The sales figures for *A Personal Anthology* are not known. As for the Dutton titles, correspondence indicates that *The Book of Imaginary Beings* was already going into a second printing of two thousand less than half a year after publication. Marian Skedgell (managing editor at Dutton) to José Guillermo Castillo (director of the Literature Department of the Center for Inter-American Relations), January 27, 1970, box 5, folder 1, Review: Latin American Literature and Arts Author Files. Similarly, in a 2005 interview Dutton's editor John Macrae III indicates that the same book sold more than ten thousand copies. Cohn, *Latin American Literary Boom*, 16. While these sales figures are tentative, it can be concluded that *Labyrinths* was probably the Borges title that sold best in the United States, at least until 1970.

²⁰ Read, "University of Texas Press," 24.

²¹ Cohn, "Tale of Two Translation Programs," 153.

Beings, published in 1969, and the Center financially supported this title and *Selected Poems, 1923-1967*, which was issued by Delacorte Press in 1972.²²

The mediators involved in these publishing houses and their translation and promotion programs played a crucial role in the circulation of Borges's work. What were the positions of the mediators in the translation and publication process of the early book translations? I will select those mediators who took a key part in the decisions about the presentation (selection of texts, title, preface and other peritexts, and translation) of the book translations of Borges's work. As well as this main criterion for determining the key positions of the mediators, I will study the frequency with which the mediators wrote peritexts or other texts on Borges and translated his work; their institutional positions; and their combined fulfillment of institutional roles for mediating Borges's work. Below, I will briefly discuss the extent to which the mediators involved in the publication process complied with these four criteria. My actual discussion of the key publishers, editors, and translators will also be determined by the availability of material on these mediators and by the availability of material on a number of specific topics such as translation issues and the role of Borges himself.

The publishers and editors of the publishing houses generally had a decisive hand in the publication of the book translations of Borges's work. In the reception process in the United States there were also external translators and editors (two functions that were usually combined); their implications for the publishing process and additional activities on Borges differed greatly with each book translation and mediator. For *Labyrinths*, and to a lesser extent for *Ficciones* and *A Personal Anthology*, they played a role in the selection and translation of the texts, the composition of the peritexts, and the contact with other translators.²³

At New Directions, its founder, James Laughlin, and one of its editors, Robert MacGregor, took charge of the publishing process of *Labyrinths* as far as the commission of certain peritexts—the book jacket, the preface—and the supervision of the work of the external translators-editors was concerned. The translators-editors,

²² José Guillermo Castillo to Seymour Lawrence (Delacorte Press), December 13, 1968; Castillo to John Macrae (Dutton), July 18, 1969, box 5, folder 1, Review: Latin American Literature and Arts Author Files.

²³ Apart from Donald Yates and James Irby, who edited *Labyrinths*, and Anthony Kerrigan, who edited *Ficciones* and *A Personal Anthology*, several translators contributed translations to the volumes. I will briefly discuss Alastair Reid's position because of his considerable contribution to the two Grove Press volumes; the other translators of the three volumes (John M. Fein, Harriet de Onís, Julian Palley, Dudley Fitts, Helen Temple, Ruthven Todd, Anthony Bonner, Elaine Kerrigan, Irving Feldman, Jill Jarrell, Carmen Feldman Álvarez del Olmo, and Edwin Honig) will be omitted.

Donald A. Yates and James E. Irby played a decisive role in the selection of Borges's texts, in other peritexts, and of course in the translation. The young academic Yates became the editor of *Labyrinths* after having come across Borges's work for the first time in 1954 in a course taught by the Argentine professor Enrique Anderson Imbert at the University of Michigan. He later asked Irby, a former graduate school classmate at Michigan, to join him in editing and translating the book. Both students finished their PhD theses under Anderson Imbert's direction at around the time of the publication of *Labyrinths*. While both Yates and Irby thus had a relatively "young" position in the literary field, they were very active and would continue to be involved in the study of Borges and other Latin American writers. Yates was a regular contributor to literary magazines, journals, and newspapers and a compiler of many anthologies on Latin American and detective literature. After finishing his dissertation and translating and editing *Labyrinths*, Yates went to Argentina in 1962 on a Fulbright grant, where he would meet Borges regularly.²⁴ He later also published translations of Marco Denevi, Adolfo Bioy Casares, and Manuel Peyrou. Irby met Borges in Texas in 1961, where he carried out one of the early extensive interviews with the author, later included in the special Borges issue of the French *L'Herne*.²⁵ He would later also publish several prologues and academic articles on Borges.



Figure 5: Borges and Donald Yates, first meeting, 1962



Figure 6: James Irby in the 1960s

At Grove Press, Richard Seaver was the most important editor involved in the publication of *Ficciones* as well as *A Personal Anthology*—Grove's publisher Barney Rosset did not occupy himself with these translations. Seaver approached Anthony

²⁴ Yates, *Life in Letters*; and Stavans and Yates, "Mode of Truth."

²⁵ Borges, "Encuentro con Borges," interview by Irby.

Kerrigan to translate *Ficciones* after the Prix International des Éditeurs had been awarded in Mallorca, where Kerrigan lived.²⁶ Kerrigan had already completed several translations by that time, of Miguel de Unamuno and Pío Baroja among other writers, and felt disregarded when his idea of a Borges anthology for New Directions was handed over to the young academic Yates, who had close contacts with the New York publishing scene.²⁷ For *Ficciones* and *A Personal Anthology*, Kerrigan wrote several peritexts, but the choice of the volume, title, and other peritexts were mainly made by the publishing house. Kerrigan, who grew up in Cuba, made his Borges translations while living in Palma de Mallorca and Dublin, and his activities were not exclusively focused on the US literary field. Several of his translations of and texts about Borges appeared in Spain, the United Kingdom, Australia, and Canada.²⁸ In the 1960s, Kerrigan never met Borges—and actually wrote an article on *not* meeting him in Madrid in 1963²⁹—but he would eventually meet him in the 1970s and 1980s. The Scottish poet, author, and essayist Alastair Reid, who also lived in Palma de Mallorca at the end of the 1950s and start of the 1960s,³⁰ assisted Kerrigan in the Borges translations. Although an important contributor to the *New Yorker* and a translator himself, Reid was not in frequent contact with Grove Press for the two Borges translations. In the 1970s (and also more recently), he translated individual poems and poetry volumes by Borges, such as the 1977 edition of *The Gold of the Tigers*.

By contrast, the (external) translators of the University of Texas Press volumes had a less decisive hand in the publishing process of Borges's work. Borges's 1961

²⁶ Kerrigan, "Interview with Tony Kerrigan," by Doyle, Anthony Kerrigan Papers, 12. Interview in manuscript form of several hours conducted by Michael Doyle in the Spring of 1984 at Kerrigan's house in South Bend, Indiana. Two parts of the interview were published as "Interview with Anthony Kerrigan" and "Anthony Kerrigan: The Attainment of Excellence in Translation."

²⁷ Kerrigan expressed great hostility toward New Directions and its first editor Yates after his own proposal to do a Borges anthology had been lost and forgotten at the publishing house, and therefore rushed into editing *Ficciones* at Grove. In a letter dated from 1961, he states: "The inner secret of the matter, and the reason I would like to take the field in full armor, is that N.D. was one of the publishers which engaged me in lengthy correspondence with Laughlin on a Borges anthology, until they suddenly turned over the project to a middlewestern gymnastics professor interested in detective stories who appeared on the scene in person. Mr. L. had gone off skiing, and my folder of stories and correspondence was declared 'lost.'" Kerrigan to Seaver, May 4, 1961, Grove Press Records.

²⁸ Three book publications on Borges that are worth mentioning are *Three versions of Judas*, *Poems*, and *Irish Strategies*, all translated by Kerrigan. Also, several of Kerrigan's translations of important stories such as "Las ruinas circulares" and "La biblioteca de Babel" were issued in the early 1960s in the British magazine *Encounter*, an anti-communist literary magazine supported by the Congress for Cultural Freedom that was also distributed in the United States. Borges, "The Circular Ruins. The Library of Babel"; and "Six Poems: Matthew XXV. A Compass. My Entire Life. Houses Like Angels. A Key in Salonica. The Card-Trick."

²⁹ See Kerrigan, "Borges à Madrid"; and "Borges in Madrid."

³⁰ Reid, "Digging Up Scotland," 76; and "Neruda and Borges," 60.

stay as an Edward L. Tinker professor at the Spanish Department of the University of Texas in Austin served as an impetus for *Dreamtigers*, the translation of *El hacedor*. Its publication was initiated by the director of the publishing house, Frank Wardlaw, but it is probable that Borges himself had a hand in the selection of this particular volume. Although Borges met Mildred Boyer, then associate professor at the University of Texas and the prose translator of the volume, and Miguel Enguíanos, who wrote the introduction, during his stay in Texas, their roles, and that of Harold Morland, the British author who translated the poetry for *Dreamtigers*, were of secondary importance. Wardlaw and the editors of the publishing house had the final say on important issues such as the title of the book.³¹ The translation of *Other Inquisitions*, on the other hand, was initiated by a translator, Ruth L. C. Simms, rather than by the publishing house.³² In 1964, Simms had just translated Bioy Casares's *The Invention of Morel and Other Stories from "La Trama Celeste"* and had also already published an article on Borges's poetry.³³ She did not, however, take part in decisions about the way Borges was presented in book form, apart from the translation itself.

The three translators of the University of Texas Press were generally less active in writing on Borges's work than Yates, Irby, and Kerrigan. Their role in the translation and publication process was also more limited because *Dreamtigers* and *Other Inquisitions* were "direct" renderings of existing Spanish editions of Borges's work. The publication of *Labyrinths* entailed a specific selection from Borges's work in the form of an anthology. In the case of *Ficciones*, mediators also included and excluded specific peritexts for publication, even though the book was a relatively direct conversion from the original Argentine edition. Also because of the greater prestige of New Directions and Grove Press in comparison with the University of Texas Press, I will pay more attention to the mediators involved in the translations and publications of *Labyrinths* and *Ficciones*. Yates and Irby were the most central mediators, while Laughlin, MacGregor, Kerrigan, Seaver, and Borges were also key mediators in the reception process. I will dedicate the next section to these mediators of *Labyrinths* and *Ficciones* (and briefly discuss *A Personal Anthology*), while I will refer to *Dreamtigers* and *Other Inquisitions* (and also to *A Personal Anthology*) more

³¹ For the decision to publish *Dreamtigers*, see Enguíanos, introduction to *Dreamtigers*, 10. For the role of Frank Wardlaw and the editors of the University of Texas Press, see for instance Graham Blackstock to Kim Taylor, June 25, 1963, University of Texas Press Records. For Borges's stay in Austin, see Wheelock, "Borges in Austin," 65.

³² Ruth Simms, who was then working on a PhD in sociology, met Borges in Washington in 1962 at the Argentine Embassy and told him of her interest in translating *Otras inquisiciones*. See Simms to Wardlaw, November 11, 1963, University of Texas Press Records.

³³ Simms, "Un vistazo a la poesía de Jorge Luis Borges."

succinctly in two other sections on translation issues and on Borges as a mediator of his own work.³⁴

In contrast with the early translators, who had not been in frequent contact with Borges, the relatively young Norman Thomas di Giovanni came to collaborate directly with Borges on his translations. Di Giovanni, a graduate from Antioch College who had finished an English selection and translation of the Spanish poet Jorge Guillén's *Cántico* in 1965, was compiling a bilingual anthology of Latin American poetry when he discovered Borges's work in 1967. Di Giovanni met Borges that same year at Harvard University where Borges was delivering the Charles Eliot Norton lectures, and went to live in Buenos Aires soon afterwards in order to translate Borges's work in collaboration with the author.³⁵ The collaboration consisted of the author and translator discussing every translation in different versions, which yielded four book volumes: *The Book of Imaginary Beings* in 1969, *The Aleph and Other Stories, 1933-1969* in 1970, *Selected Poems, 1923-1967* in 1972, and *Doctor Brodie's Report* in 1972, all published at E. P. Dutton except for *Selected Poems*, which was published by Delacorte Press. In some cases, such as for di Giovanni and Borges's first prose translation, *The Book of Imaginary Beings*, parts of the original book were corrected and revised and new pieces were added.³⁶ For the 1972 poetry translation of *Selected Poems*, di Giovanni distributed the poems among different English translators (some of whom had already worked with him for the Guillén volume) and made prose summaries for the sake of interpretation.³⁷ These translations were made under an unprecedented financial arrangement that divided all royalties on a fifty-fifty basis between di Giovanni and Borges, until this was ended abruptly in 1972 on Borges's initiative.

By collaborating directly with the author and therefore making "authorized" translations, di Giovanni gained an important position in the translation and publication process of Borges's work. He also helped Borges write and put together several original Spanish editions and claimed that the composition of the

³⁴ The contents of *Dreamtigers* and *A Personal Anthology* were not adapted. The English version of *Otras inquisiciones* did not include the short texts from the original "Inscripciones": these were excluded because they overlapped with the same texts in *Dreamtigers*, issued in the same year and at the same publishing house as *Other Inquisitions*. See Simms to Wardlaw, March 4, 1964, University of Texas Press Records. Among Borges's book publications until 1968, I will not deal with a college edition of a selection of his stories published in Spanish in 1958 and a special and limited edition of the poem "La noche que en el Sur lo velaron" published as a booklet in 1968. Borges, *Cuentos de Jorge Luis Borges*; and *Deathwatch on the Southside*.

³⁵ Di Giovanni, *Lesson of the Master*, 9.

³⁶ Di Giovanni, "At Work with Borges," 441.

³⁷ See di Giovanni, introduction to *Selected Poems*.

“Autobiographical Notes,” published in the *New Yorker* in 1970, was a collaborative work between him and Borges in a similar way to how Bioy Casares and Borges had worked together.³⁸ Di Giovanni secured contracts, organized public lectures and trips abroad, and even helped Borges to separate from his wife Elsa Astete.³⁹ This position enabled di Giovanni to make his mark on the publication process of Borges’s work and the public presentation of the author in the United States, and in turn helped Borges to steer the reception of his own translations. As di Giovanni severely criticized the earlier Borges translators, who responded in turn, the matter of translation was widely discussed in the US literary field. These discussions were obviously held on the level of poetical and translation norms, but the different positions of the translators came into play as well. In the sections that follow, the selections and classifications of the publishers, editors, and translators will be examined, compared, and related to their norms. I will first look at the selections and classifications of the key mediators involved in the publication of *Labyrinths* and *Ficciones*, then analyze the discussions about the translations, and finally turn to the role of Borges himself.

2. *Labyrinths* and *Ficciones*: Two competing book translations

The first two 1962 book-length translations of Borges’s work, *Labyrinths* and *Ficciones*, were the first book-length presentations of Borges’s work to an English-speaking audience. For *Labyrinths*, the translators-editors had a decisive role in the selection of Borges’s texts, the title, other peritexts, and in the translation itself. In the first place, the norms of the translators-editors become clear in the division of the selected texts into three different sections. Donald Yates and James Irby divided their translation into three sections, with “Fictions,” “Essays,” and “Parables” taken from four different volumes of Borges’s works. Several “Fictions” were taken



Figure 7: Book cover *Labyrinths*, 1962

³⁸ Borges and di Giovanni, “Autobiographical Notes”; di Giovanni, “Good Reader,” 13; and di Giovanni, *Lesson of the Master*, 146-47.

³⁹ See Bioy Casares, *Borges*.

from *Ficciones* and *El Aleph*, while *Discusión* and *Otras inquisiciones* provided the essays, and the prose pieces from *El hacedor* were grouped under the title of "Parables." This last section was exclusively translated by Irby, who probably suggested its section title because of the recurrence of the parable in the titles of several pieces. Irby's introduction to *Labyrinths* deals briefly with the parable as the genre Borges turned to because of his near-blindness, and the (translated) preface by French writer André Maurois also mentions the genre.⁴⁰

Although never explicitly stated in the peritexts of *Labyrinths*, the genre classification of the parable might well have been associated with Franz Kafka's work, especially for mediators immersed in the US literary field, such as Irby. A bilingual selection of Kafka's works in different genres (notebooks, diaries, letters, fictional work) had been issued by Schocken Books in 1947 under the title *Parables in German and English* and later, in 1958 and 1961, at the same publishing house as *Parables and Paradoxes*.⁴¹ Kafka's work is mentioned several times in Maurois's preface, and on the front flap of the book: "*Labyrinths* contains thirty-eight of Borges' finest 'fictions,' essays, and parables. The stories [. . .] have been compared to those of Kafka." However, it is also true that *Labyrinths* uses the parable as a genre classification without direct reference to Kafka. In fact, Irby's introduction emphasizes the differences between the two authors.⁴² After the publication of *Labyrinths*, the classification of the parable was quickly taken up as one of the genres that constituted *El hacedor* in its English translation of 1964⁴³ (among the other genres that *Dreamtiger* was said to comprise were poems, stories, sketches, fragments, and apocryphal quotations). The parable also made its way into literary criticism.

The "Parables" were all translated by Irby, as were all but one of the "Essays." The "Fictions," however, were translated by Yates, Irby, and other translators who received suggestions from both editors on their earlier, individually published translations. This section therefore required more collaboration and common agreement between Yates and Irby, such as on the selection of pieces and on translation issues. The section of fiction stories and its selection from the corpus of *Ficciones* and *El Aleph* was paramount for Yates, Irby, and perhaps also for New Directions, as can be deduced from Irby's introduction and the subtitle of the book, *Selected Stories & Other Writings*.

⁴⁰ Irby, introduction to *Labyrinths*, xxii; Maurois, preface to *Labyrinths*, xiii-xiv.

⁴¹ Irby expresses this assumption in an e-mail message to the author, June 11, 2011.

⁴² Irby, introduction to *Labyrinths*, xix-xx.

⁴³ Enguídanos, introduction to *Dreamtigers*, 11.

For the selection of stories, one shared interest of the two compilers seems to have been the philosophical contents of Borges's fictions. In a discussion about the selection of the pieces in 1960, Yates asks his fellow anthologist: "What other pieces would you propose as highly desirable for giving a fair, full-rounded portrait of Borges the prose stylist and philosopher?"⁴⁴ The idea of Borges as a stylist became related to the editors' norms of translation, which I will deal with in the next section. With regard to the classification of Borges as a philosopher, a later text by Yates considers the philosophical nature of Borges's work the "most distinctive feature of his writings."⁴⁵ This academic article studies, among three other important aspects or "cardinal points" in Borges's work, his "fascination with philosophical and metaphysical questions that manifests itself, in part, in the incorporation of these problems as elements of his prose fiction."⁴⁶ In Irby's introduction to *Labyrinths*, "Borges's metaphysical fictions" are called "his finest creations,"⁴⁷ and in this way the philosophical qualities of Borges's work are stressed. This interest raises the question of whether the selection of stories made by Yates and Irby reflects these "philosophical" qualities of Borges's work.

The volumes *Ficciones* and *El Aleph* from which the fictions were selected could be said to include stories that develop in a recognizably Argentine context (such as "El Sur" and "Historia del guerrero y la cautiva"), as well as stories set in a more universal context, such as those in which the philosophical dimension of Borges's work (such as "Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius" and "El jardín de senderos que se bifurcan") is more apparent. I take this opposition between an Argentine Borges and a universal or philosophical Borges from already analyzed tendencies in the French reception, and also from Beatriz Sarlo's comments about Borges's reputation having cleansed him of his nationality. It is of course futile and impossible to classify a Borges story according to this dichotomy, which wrongfully supposes that a "universal" story such as "Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius" does not contain "Argentine" elements, if these classifications can be made at all. In fact, as Sarlo has also underlined, Borges's stories have a cosmopolitan as well as a national side.⁴⁸

It is interesting, however, to examine whether there is a recognizable trend in Yates and Irby's inclusion and exclusion of stories. In *Labyrinths*, some of the more

⁴⁴ Yates to Irby, April 19, 1960, private correspondence.

⁴⁵ Yates, "Four Cardinal Points of Borges," 406.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Irby, introduction to *Labyrinths*, xvii.

⁴⁸ Sarlo, *Writer on the Edge*, 6.

"Argentine" stories such as "Hombre de la esquina rosada," "El Muerto," "Biografía de Tadeo Isidoro Cruz (1829-1874)," "El Sur," and "El fin" were not included, although others that are commonly associated with universal or philosophical themes, such as "El Aleph," "Abenjacán el Bojarí, muerto en su laberinto," and "Historia de los dos reyes y los dos laberintos" were not selected either. Thus, although the philosophical quality of Borges's work was brought to the fore, the selection of pieces certainly did not give a univocal or restrictive image of the author's work. In fact, in the already quoted academic article, Yates, apart from stressing Borges's fascination with philosophical questions, also deals with Borges's consciousness of his Argentine nationality and claims that "those who would call him [Borges] 'Europeanized' and criticize his indifference to Argentine reality surely understand very little about the writer and about the true meaning of the term *criollo* as applied to the inhabitants of the city of his birth."⁴⁹

In Yates and Irby's selection of fictions, the role of the first French book translations published by Roger Caillois at Gallimard—*Fictions* of 1951 and *Labyrinthes* of 1953—is clear. Yates and Irby revealed an (initial) preference for Borges's prose over the poetry, similar to Caillois's preferences. *Labyrinthes* in France was a small selection of four stories from *El Aleph*, while the English *Labyrinths* included texts from five different volumes of Borges's work. However, three of the four stories that Caillois selected for *Labyrinthes* in France, which showed the sociologist's predilection for Borges's metaphysical qualities, were also included in the English *Labyrinths*. Caillois's exclusion of "El Aleph" from *Labyrinthes*, which was only much later published in the complete *L'Aleph*, was also repeated in Yates and Irby's choices for *Labyrinths*. "El Sur" and "El fin," published in Argentina in the new edition of *Ficciones* in 1956, were not included in the French *Fictions* until the 1980s (and only published in the 1965 translation of *El hacedor, L'auteur et autres textes*), and were not put into print in the English version of *Labyrinths* either. Another, more obvious resemblance between Caillois's mediation and that of the translators in the United States is the title of *Labyrinths / Labyrinthes* given to the two book translations. The English title had in fact been inspired by the French and German ones, as Irby explains in our e-mail correspondence.⁵⁰ However, this title was in a sense an exterior label that could easily have been otherwise and that was not at the core of Yates and

⁴⁹ Yates, "Four Cardinal Points of Borges," 405.

⁵⁰ "I don't remember how we decided on that title for the book, except that I had already seen both French and German compilations of his stories that used equivalent titles and it seemed to me a very succinct and effective one for ours as well." Irby, e-mail message to author, December 11, 2010.

Irby's selections and classifications of Borges's work.⁵¹ Whereas Caillois had translated, selected, and reflected on different types of what he called "labyrinths" and had equated Borges's labyrinth with the universe, Yates and Irby did not reflect extensively on the labyrinth in the introduction to their book translation or in other academic texts.

Other forms of transmission from France did not involve the mediation of the translators-editors. New Directions publisher James Laughlin first heard of Borges through Victoria Ocampo, but was also informed of Borges's work in the 1950s by his longtime friend Caillois. It was Caillois whom he asked for advice on a prestigious name in European literature for a preface to the translation in the United States, and who recommended Maurois.⁵² This French novelist, biographer, and story writer enjoyed considerable renown in the United States at that time and was able to transfer to the translation the prestige that the young translators-editors were deprived of, according to a logic described by Pascale Casanova: "when [the translator] has little consecrating power, the exchange of capital is entrusted to other better endowed mediators (preface-writer, analyst, prestigious critic, etc.)."⁵³ Maurois's preface was a translation of a 1961 review he published in the French cultural weekly *Les nouvelles littéraires*, a text that in 1962 was also published in *The Paris Review*.⁵⁴ In the text, Néstor Ibarra's famous introductory sentence to the French *Fictions*, "Hispano-anglo-portugais d'origine, élevé en Suisse, fixé depuis longtemps à Buenos-Aires où il naquit en 1899, personne n'a moins de patrie que Jorge Luis Borges,"⁵⁵ is reproduced almost word for word by Maurois: "Argentine by birth and temperament, but nurtured on universal literature, Borges has no spiritual homeland."⁵⁶ Moreover, in Irby's introduction included in the same volume, Borges's "Hispano-Anglo-Portuguese" origin is stressed: "Jorge Luis Borges was born on 24 August 1899 in Buenos Aires, of Spanish, English and (very remotely) Portuguese Jewish origin."⁵⁷ In his preface, Maurois also repeats Borges's epilogue to *Otras*

⁵¹ Among other titles, "Fictions," "Death and the Compass," and "The Garden of Forking Paths" were discussed. Admittedly, it is true that this last title was proposed because it opened up the labyrinthine theme of Borges's work, according to Yates. Yates to Irby, August 26 and October 12, 1960, private correspondence. This does not alter the fact, however, that for Yates and Irby the labyrinth was only one of the many themes in Borges's writings.

⁵² Laughlin to Edward Dahlberg, May 26, 1958, item (421), folder 8; and Laughlin to Caillois, August 11, 1959, item (2021), folder 2, New Directions Publishing Corp. Records.

⁵³ Casanova, "Translation as Unequal Exchange," 301.

⁵⁴ Maurois, "Un livre par mois: *Labyrinthes* de J.-L. Borges"; and Maurois, "A Note on Jorge Luis Borges."

⁵⁵ Ibarra, preface to *Fictions*, 7.

⁵⁶ Maurois, preface to *Labyrinths*, ix.

⁵⁷ Irby, introduction to *Labyrinths*, xv.

inquisiciones in which the author describes two tendencies in his own work: one to esteem religious and philosophical ideas for their aesthetic value, and another to suppose that the number of fables or metaphors that man's imagination is capable of is limited. Following this first tendency, Maurois considers Borges's work as a game with metaphysics, a conclusion at which several other French critics also arrived: "Attracted by metaphysics, but accepting no system as true, Borges makes out of all of them a game for the mind."⁵⁸ By means of this preface, interpretations that were intimately linked to the translation, publication, and critical reception of Borges's work in French were thus reproduced in the US literary field.

To summarize, it may be said that certain elements of *Labyrinths* pointed to the philosophical theme in Borges's work, but that it did not eclipse other selections and classifications. Another classification that should be mentioned here is that of Borges as a detective fiction writer and, to a lesser extent, as a science fiction writer. On the front flap of *Labyrinths*, Borges's stories are classified as "highbrow science fiction" or "intellectual detective stories were it not for the undertones of deeper meaning which place them at a far higher level." Here, Borges's stories were integrated into the genre but clearly not related to its low literary status.

This interest in the detective element was without doubt fueled by Yates, who wrote about Borges in his 1960 dissertation on the Argentine detective story.⁵⁹ A member of Mystery Writers of America, Yates wrote crime stories himself and translated Latin American fiction (Rodolfo Walsh's stories, among other works), for example for *The Saint Detective Magazine*. For *Labyrinths*, he translated detective-like stories such as "El jardín de senderos que se bifurcan," "La muerte y la brújula," and "Emma Zunz." These translations were also issued in detective magazines and anthologies including *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine* and *Tales for a Rainy Night: The 14th Mystery Writers of America Anthology*. In the 1961 anthology *Tales for a Rainy Night*, it was possibly Yates himself who applied a double stance toward detective fiction, similar to the one on the front flap of *Labyrinths*, to "La muerte y la brújula": "Certainly this is caviar to the general, but it is a rare and delicious concoction for the intellectual palate of the true connoisseur."⁶⁰ Several other stories from *Labyrinths* were included in detective or science fiction magazines and anthologies as well. The volume did not, however, aim at a selection of Borges's stories generally associated

⁵⁸ Maurois, preface to *Labyrinths*, xii.

⁵⁹ Yates, "Argentine Detective Story."

⁶⁰ Anonymous introductory note to Borges, "Death and the Compass," 159.

with the detective genre. For *Labyrinths*, Yates and Irby did not select, for instance, “Examen de la obra de Herbert Quain,” in which the narrator discusses the detective novel *The God of the Labyrinth*. And even though Yates at one point suggested the inclusion of “Las doce figuras del mundo” from *Seis problemas para don Isidro Parodi* (1942), both mediators found Borges’s work in collaboration with Adolfo Bioy Casares to be beyond the scope of the book.⁶¹

Ficciones, the other 1962 book translation, also referred to the detective element on its front flap and back cover. The publication was a “direct” conversion of the 1956 Argentine edition of *Ficciones*, and in that sense presented a less particular selection or meaning construction on the parts of translator-editor Anthony Kerrigan and Grove Press, apart from the translation itself and Kerrigan’s introduction to the book. Unlike for the long publication process of *Labyrinths*, Grove did not engage in extensive discussions with Kerrigan, Alastair Reid, or the other translators on the perceived characteristics of Borges’s work, and focused mainly on the British

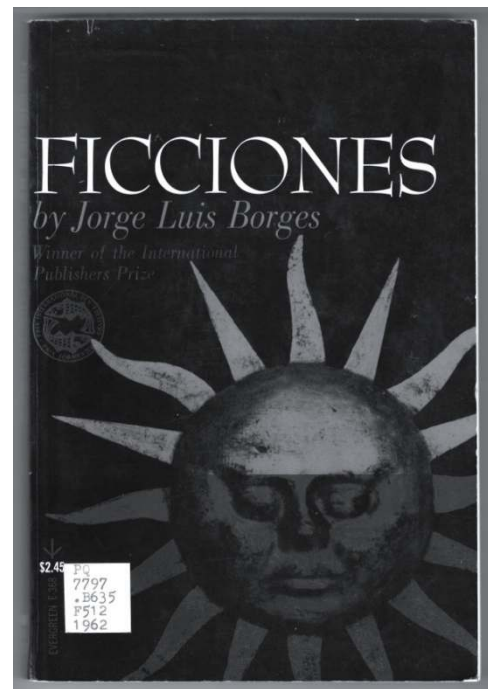


Figure 8: Book cover *Ficciones*, 1962

publishing house of Weidenfeld & Nicolson and its competitors at New Directions in the United States.⁶² In fact, in the 1950s and early 1960s, Grove was little occupied with Borges’s work. In 1958, it rejected Yates’s proposal to translate *La muerte y la brújula*. And during the meetings at Formentor in Mallorca, the Grove Press delegation preferred an author from their own catalogue, Samuel Beckett, to Borges, although the Prix International des Éditeurs was eventually awarded to both authors.⁶³ A press release from around the same time shows this lack of knowledge

⁶¹ Yates to Laughlin, March 21, 1959, item (2021), folder 1, New Directions Publishing Corp. Records; and Yates to Irby, April 19 and July 15, 1960, private correspondence.

⁶² For *Ficciones* and *A Personal Anthology*, Kerrigan also included renderings by other translators, most of whom lived in Mallorca. His correspondence with Borges and with the other translators has not been localized.

⁶³ Editor Donald Allen, who worked for both Grove Press and New Directions in the 1960s, explains the positions of the different publishers during the meetings at Formentor in a letter to New Directions editor Robert MacGregor: “The Formentor voting showed a distrust of Beckett’s work on the part of some of the Italian, Spanish and French judges: it showed a left-wing tendency to view

about or interest in Borges's work: "Among his outstanding works is the collection of short stories, 'Labyrinth,' several philosophical works, and poetry."⁶⁴ It was only at Formentor that Grove editor Richard Seaver met Kerrigan, and that the idea for a book translation began to form.⁶⁵

For the publication of *Ficciones*, Grove collaborated with its British Formentor colleague Weidenfeld & Nicolson. This collaboration brought the role of Caillois's French mediation into play again: the British publisher clearly wanted to follow the French example of anthologizing *El Aleph* and proposed a selection of *El Aleph* and *Ficciones*. This proposal was born from commercial interests in the form of a possible reprint of the translation by Penguin. British editor Barley Alison was very cautious in the negotiation of the shared costs of publication with Grove because of what he described as "a quite unusual lack of interest in the whole subject of Formentor" by the English press and the lack of "enormous sales potential" in the United Kingdom.⁶⁶ Grove's final decision to make a direct translation of *Ficciones* and ignore Weidenfeld's preferences was dictated by its wish to distinguish itself from *Labyrinths* at New Directions and to comply with the author's wishes:

Weidenfeld has been proposing that, rather than do *Ficciones* by itself, it should be combined with sections from one of the other volumes of short stories published (in France) under the title of *Le Labyrinth* [*sic*] to make a book somewhat longer than *Ficciones* but made up of approximately half of *Ficciones* and half of the stories in *Le Labyrinth* [. . .]. However, this would put us back into the anthology category and would raise the problem both of

Beckett as decadent (his despair, etc.). Against this the English, German and American judges maintained that Beckett is a major writer and that Borges is somewhat minor by comparison. At any rate in the end it was Caillois that proposed the compromise vote which was unanimously accepted by all." Allen to MacGregor, June 12, 1961, item (2021), folder 1, New Directions Publishing Corp. Records. This division between north (Beckett) and south (Borges) is confirmed in the memoir of Grove's editor Richard Seaver, *Tender Hour of Twilight*, 313. The role of Allen, who joined the Grove Press delegation to Formentor, is an interesting one as far as the first two translations of Borges's work are concerned. As an advisor for Grove, Allen wrote a fairly positive internal report on Yates's translation of *La muerte y la brújula*. After the manuscript had been rejected by Grove's Barney Rosset, Allen advised Laughlin at New Directions to contact Yates, and he later also became the copy editor of *Labyrinths*. Allen, internal report on *La muerte y la brújula*, submitted by Yates, June 15, 1958; Judith Smith to Yates, June 20, 1958, Grove Press Records; Laughlin to Yates, January 26, 1959, item (2021), folder 1; and MacGregor to Allen, January 27, 1961, item (2021), folder 8, New Directions Publishing Corp. Records.

⁶⁴ Press release for the Prix International des Éditeurs, *News from Grove Press* ([May, 1961?]): 3.

⁶⁵ Kerrigan to Seaver, May 4, 1961, Grove Press Records.

⁶⁶ Alison to Seaver, May 30 and June 13, 1961, Grove Press Records.

competing with the New Directions anthology and of disappointing the author who is interested in getting single entire volumes of his published.⁶⁷

Although Grove's *Ficciones* stood in lively interaction with the British (and French) publishing scene, the final decision was thus made on the basis of its sparse contact with the Argentine writer and New Directions. In fact, Grove Press rushed into publication and *Ficciones* was issued shortly after *Labyrinths*. As the (Argentine and) US version of *A Personal Anthology* partly took up stories from the (Argentine and) US version of *Ficciones*, which in turn were also partly included in the selection of *Labyrinths*—which again was somewhat doubled by the publication of *Dreamtigers* and *Other Inquisitions*—the early translations in the United States showed a great amount of overlap.

So far, the role of Kerrigan has hardly been studied. His limited role in the publication of a volume that was more or less transplanted from the Argentine version, and a lack of sources such as correspondence, complicates an analysis of his selections, classifications, and norms on Borges. His short introduction to *Ficciones* and foreword to *A Personal Anthology*, which briefly discuss some themes such as philosophy and philology in Borges's work and discuss various intellectual and geographical contexts in which Borges's work can be situated, show an interest in what Kerrigan called "history." For Kerrigan, Borges approaches history from the perspective of folk tradition in *A Personal Anthology*:

Borges' concern with "history" is unique. He is not taken with the grandiose Goethean-Romantic pivotal zeniths of Spenglerian cycles, or even with Unamuno's "intra-history" of dim daily existential Everyman routine, as he is moved by the epiphanies of racial and folk evolution.⁶⁸

Similarly, Borges is called a "chronicler of the harsh life of the slums" on the back cover of the hardback edition of *Ficciones*, and there is also a reference to Borges's opposition to Juan Perón. This latter, political dimension of Borges's concern with history becomes even clearer from Kerrigan's introduction to *Ficciones*, in a comment on Borges's work in general:

⁶⁷ Seaver to Kerrigan, July 12, 1961, Grove Press Records.

⁶⁸ Kerrigan, foreword to *A Personal Anthology*, vii.

The cruel jests of history are "solved" only by violence. The equal idiocy of all totalitarianism, the swinishness of Communism or Nazism, and the deadliness of conformity to an accepted form of sterility, are unmasked to no point. Men long for their deceptions. A few will blindly fight back.⁶⁹

This political view of Borges's work seems related to Kerrigan's own political background, as he gradually distanced himself from the communist sympathies he harbored in his youth. One of the reasons Kerrigan left the United States for Europe was that it was difficult for him to find employment after the FBI classified him as a communist.⁷⁰ As can be deduced from the quotations, Kerrigan's historical-political interest also implied a view of Borges as a writer who takes a marginal, peripheral position and approach to literature. According to Kerrigan, Borges is a "vindicator of heresies"⁷¹ and belongs to the minority that, as Kerrigan perhaps felt that he himself did, blindly fights back against all types of conformity. Kerrigan's peripheral status as an external translator-editor working from Mallorca and Dublin for a publishing house in the United States is therefore reflected in his classifications of Borges as a political and peripheral writer.

A look at Kerrigan's translations for *A Personal Anthology* also reveals a clear preference for Borges's prose as opposed to his poetry. Kerrigan translated most of the prose, left the poetry to Alastair Reid, and stated in his correspondence with Grove Press that "the truth is that neither is Borges himself much of a poet as such."⁷² In spite of the differences and competition between *Labyrinths* and *Ficciones*, this lack of interest in Borges's poetry was shared by all three translators-editors. Yates and Irby's *Labyrinths* did not include Borges's early poetry or his later poems from *El hacedor*, although the poem "Elegía" from *El otro, el mismo* of 1964 was included without a section heading in the 1964 paperback edition of *Labyrinths*. Their focus on the philosophical qualities and the style of Borges's work was directed to the prose fiction.⁷³

⁶⁹ Kerrigan, introduction to *Ficciones*, 11.

⁷⁰ Kerrigan, "Interview with Tony Kerrigan," by Doyle, Anthony Kerrigan Papers, 3. See also Kerrigan, "Mock-Up of a Novella of Myself," 202-204.

⁷¹ Kerrigan, introduction to *Ficciones*, 11.

⁷² Kerrigan to Seaver, October 3, 1966, Grove Press Records.

⁷³ The publisher and editor at New Directions showed a greater interest in Borges's poetry, but perhaps did not succeed in convincing Borges of their proposal for a poetry anthology, given there were no replies to the letters they sent to Borges. Laughlin to Borges, October 15, 1964; and MacGregor to Borges, November 17, 1964, item (218), New Directions Publishing Corp. Records.

This contrasts with the statements of Borges's later translator-collaborator Norman Thomas di Giovanni, who started to work with Borges at the end of the 1960s precisely because of his poetry. In an interview, di Giovanni states: "In any case, I consider him, as a writer, fundamentally a poet."⁷⁴ This interest eventually led to the first book translation of Borges's poetry, the 1972 edition of *Selected Poems*; Borges's poetry in *El hacedor* had already been issued in *Dreamtigers* in 1964. Di Giovanni also took up another group of texts that had not been issued in the United States: Borges's works in collaboration with Bioy Casares. From 1969 onward, he started translating and publishing stories from *Crónicas de Bustos Domecq*, which were partly translated in collaboration with the two authors and later appeared at Dutton in 1976.⁷⁵ After the first introduction to Borges in *Labyrinths* and *Ficciones*, and the presentation of more of his work in *Dreamtigers*, *Other Inquisitions*, and *A Personal Anthology*, it was time for di Giovanni to work on the poetry and parodic detective stories. But it was also the moment at which the fragmentation of Borges's book translations among different publishing houses and translators, and di Giovanni's wish to retranslate several of Borges's already translated prose, started to lead to serious struggles over publishing rights and to discussions about the right way to translate Borges's work.⁷⁶

3. The matter of translation: Maintaining or smoothing out Borges's style

In the early years of the reception of Borges's work, many English-language translators and reviewers stressed that Borges was a great stylist. However, they did not agree on the practices required to translate this style. I will now deal with the normative statements of different translators and other mediators on the matter of translation, more specifically on translating Borges's style, and where possible relate them to actual translation practices. I will concentrate on Donald Yates and James Irby's external translation norms concerning *Labyrinths* in order to compare them with those of the staff at New Directions and of other translators such as Anthony Kerrigan and, to a lesser extent, Alastair Reid and Mildred Boyer. I will then move on to contrast the external norms of these early Anglophone translators with those of

⁷⁴ Di Giovanni, "Borges in English," interview by Sorrentino, 180.

⁷⁵ See Bioy Casares, *Borges*, 1437.

⁷⁶ For discussions about New Directions's publishing rights, see, among other correspondence, MacGregor to Yates, January 24, 1969; and MacGregor to Borges, April 18, 1969, item (2021a), folder 1, New Directions Publishing Corp. Records.

Borges's later translator Norman Thomas di Giovanni, and discuss their debates on the translation of Borges's work. Two translators of the University of Texas Press translations, Harold Morland and Ruth Simms, will receive little attention here, as they did not engage in debates on the translation of Borges.

Labyrinths translator Irby fully developed and expressed his ideas on Borges's style in internal correspondence as well as in the public domain, such as in introductions to Borges's book translations and academic texts. In his dissertation on Borges's work, which was submitted in the same year as *Labyrinths*, he dedicates a chapter to Borges's stylistic traits, and characterizes Borges's style as "extreme condensation and intellectualization of the realities described or referred to; frequent and emphatic use of abstract, Latinized terms; profound transformation of usual relationships and realities."⁷⁷ On a methodological level, Irby's ideas were marked by formalism and New Criticism, as can be deduced from his references to theorists such as Roman Jakobson, Victor Erlich, and William Kurtz Wimsatt. This classification of Borges as a stylist was also reflected in Irby's translation norms, which stressed the importance of translating relatively literally and not effacing Borges's peculiar style. In Irby's introduction to *Labyrinths*, for instance, he underscores that the abrupt, compact, Latinized, and paradoxical style of Borges's work should be maintained in English:

Certainly, since Borges's language does not read "smoothly" in Spanish, there is no reason it should in English. [. . .] Borges's prose is in fact a modern adaptation of the Latinized Baroque *stil coupé*. He has a penchant for what seventeenth- and eighteenth-century rhetoricians called "hard" or "philosophic" words, and will often use them in their strict etymological sense, restoring radical meanings with an effect of metaphorical novelty. In the opening sentence of "The Circular Ruins," "unanimous" means quite literally "of one mind" (*unus animus*) and thus foreshadows the magician's final discovery. Elevated terms are played off against more humble and direct ones; the image joining unlike terms is frequent; heterogeneous contacts are also created by Borges's use of colons and semicolons in place of causal connectives to give static, elliptical, overlapping effects.⁷⁸

⁷⁷ Irby, "Structure of the Stories of Jorge Luis Borges," 104.

⁷⁸ Irby, introduction to *Labyrinths*, xxi-xxii. See also Irby, introduction to *Other Inquisitions*, xi-xii.

Perhaps because of the importance that Irby attributed to Borges's style, his evaluation of Simms's 1964 translation of *Other Inquisitions* turned out rather negatively. When given the proofs of Simms's translation for the purpose of writing an introduction to the volume, he expressed his objections regarding some of her implicit translation norms in a letter to the University of Texas Press. In general terms, Irby objects to the lack of literalness in Simms's translation:

I think a translator of Borges' prose should proceed on the assumption that, unless very good reasons to the contrary can be found, every word, every detail, must be considered as having a precise function, almost as in a poem, and should be rendered scrupulously and rather literally. Mrs. Simms' translations, though careful in many respects, are many times not careful enough and often smooth out some of Borges' most striking devices that are not impossible to render with reasonable accuracy in English.⁷⁹

More specifically, one of the devices that Irby finds important is the employment of opposites in Borges's work, for instance the use of paradoxical word pairs and the humorous use of the double negative. And with regard to punctuation, such as the use of (semi)colons that Irby mentions in his 1962 introduction, Irby criticizes Simms for "translating away" Borges's "peculiarness" and abruptness.

Irby's translation norms were generally in line with those of his co-translator and co-editor Yates, as is clear in the correspondence that the two maintained on translation issues regarding *Labyrinths*. Yates's agreement on the peculiarness of Borges's style can also be deduced from his evaluation of the translations included in the 1964 translation of *Dreamtigers*:

The prose translations by Mildred Boyer and those of the poems by Harold Moreland [*sic*] are largely successful in capturing the peculiar flavor of Borges's style. Their accomplishment reinforces the observation that a unique or unusual literary style in the original text is an appreciable asset to the translator.⁸⁰

⁷⁹ Irby to Barbara Spielman (associate editor of the University of Texas Press), September 7, 1964, University of Texas Press Records. Simms replied to specific translation choices in a letter to the publishing house, but never engaged in discussion about the translation of Borges's work.

⁸⁰ Yates, "Latin American Voices."

For *Labyrinths*, the editors used published pieces by other translators (John M. Fein, Harriet de Onís, Julian Palley, Dudley Fitts, and Anthony Kerrigan), discussed those translations together and proposed changes to the translators. This method of combining old and new translations actually raised concerns on Irby's part, who in his correspondence with Yates expresses doubts about the uniformity of Borges's style in an anthology translated by many hands.⁸¹ The editors themselves, in most cases Irby, took care of the large part of the translations.

However, whereas Irby and Yates had reached a common understanding on translating Borges's uncommon style, this was not necessarily a consensus shared by other mediators involved in the publication of *Labyrinths*. Their translation norms could be considered heterodox with respect to the Anglo-American tradition of domestication,⁸² a form of distinction that contrasted with their selection of prose texts and of the title, which was at least partially reproduced from Roger Caillois's French book translations. Irby and Yates's wish to translate Borges's awkwardness into English led to discussions with and among the staff of New Directions, who in their internal correspondence initially expressed doubts about the quality of the translations.⁸³ Interestingly, however, after the translators decided to comply partly with New Directions's wishes—with Yates more willing to do so than Irby⁸⁴—publisher James Laughlin also adopted part of the translators' norms on Borges's style. While editor Robert MacGregor still asked copyeditor Donald Allen to smooth out Irby's "torturing of English,"⁸⁵ Laughlin came closer to Irby's norms, and even started to echo them:

With regard to Bob's [Robert MacGregor's] phrase that Irby "tortures the English," this is certainly true, but I want to make a distinction between the torturing which Irby does, and certain characteristics of Borges' style in

⁸¹ Irby to Yates, August 6, 1960, private correspondence.

⁸² See Venuti, *Translator's Invisibility*.

⁸³ These discussions were held in much of the New Directions correspondence between 1960 and 1961, item (2021), folders 3-14, New Directions Publishing Corp. Records.

⁸⁴ Yates to Irby, October 12, 1960, private correspondence. In this letter, Yates proposes changes in several of Irby's translations in order to "avoid what seem to me to be awkwardnesses in the English version. The publishers are quite adamant on this point. They will not print English that is stilted and unnatural, prose that will puzzle the reader and perhaps interrupt his reception of the original ideas in terms of his own (English) language. That is virtually the only dictum ND has proposed. After a long discussion with them, I agreed to accept their stand. You may be confident that Borges' position was faithfully presented to them." In fact, as Yates was more willing to adapt the translations and, later, the introduction to the publishing house's wishes, Yates and Irby were temporarily at odds with each other around the publication date of *Labyrinths*.

⁸⁵ MacGregor to Allen, January 27, 1961, item (2021), folder 8, New Directions Publishing Corp. Records.

Spanish, which, almost inevitably, sound like torturing when they carried through [*sic*] with a fairly direct equivalent.

I am referring to Borges' use of "extraordinary" words, which you will quickly spot. When one first strikes these words one thinks that it is a mistake in translation, but, actually it is not, because the author has intentionally chosen these strange words to get his special effects. Most often these are words with Latin roots, and the sort which seem a bit pretentious.

When I first saw these translations I began to argue with Yates that these strange words should be toned down, that they would stick out like raisins in the loaf, and that it might be better to replace them by euphemisms or circumlocutions. I felt that we should work toward a fairly "smooth" style, concentrating on the presentation of the "story line" in the pieces. In other words, playing down the eccentricity.

In recent weeks, my feeling about this has changed, though I can't exactly explain why—perhaps it is just intuition—and I now feel that we should respect these strange words and let them "come through" fairly directly in the English translation.⁸⁶

Laughlin's letter shows striking similarities with Irby's (and Yates's) reflections on Borges's use of unusual, Latinate words, with their comments on the need for a fairly direct rendering, and also with their vocabulary (words such as "smooth"). The importance given by Laughlin to Borges's ideas or themes, or of what he calls the "'story line' in the pieces," also demonstrates the publisher's approach to Borges's text, which explains his initial reticence to maintain Borges's style, while the letter also describes his gradual agreement with the choices of the two translators.

A total agreement, however, was never accomplished, as the translators and the publishing house held different ideas on introducing Borges's work to the public. These differences of opinion about the translations and their target audience became clear when Irby's initial introduction to *Labyrinths* was rejected by the publishing house for being too "scholarly." According to Laughlin, the introduction had to be directed to a wider public, as "this piece [. . .] would give ordinary readers the

⁸⁶ Laughlin to Allen, February 1, 1961, item (2021), folder 8, New Directions Publishing Corp. Records.

impression that Borges was a ponderous bore, which he certainly isn't."⁸⁷ Later, MacGregor also made the differences explicit:

Whereas we wanted to present him in such a way that the public at large would become interested in him, you, consciously or unconsciously, wanted to make him accepted by the more important segment of the population, the critics and scholars. Thus we felt your introduction was primarily addressed to this group.⁸⁸

According to the editor, this difference in target group was also evident from the translations. Interestingly, a similar critique of academicism would be repeated by Borges's later translator-collaborator di Giovanni. While the translators-editors only partly complied with Laughlin's and MacGregor's initial translation norms, Irby completely rewrote his introduction according to the publishing house's wishes.

The main translators of the book translations at Grove Press—Kerrigan and Reid—commented in a similar way to Irby and Yates on the need to translate Borges literally. Kerrigan, who felt great hostility toward the two Borges translators at New Directions after his own proposal to edit a Borges anthology had been lost and forgotten, does appear to have shared some of their translation norms. In an interview with Michael Doyle, Kerrigan comments on Borges's style and the need for a literal rendering:

With Borges, there's no particular reason to improvise or to change. [. . .] He is such a stylist, in a sense; he doesn't strive for style, but that's his style. I think with Borges you don't have to worry about making equivalents and worrying about "this can't go into English, therefore I'll change it." I think with Borges

⁸⁷ Laughlin to Yates, September 14, 1961, item (2021), folder 11, New Directions Publishing Corp. Records.

⁸⁸ MacGregor to Irby, November 15, 1961, item (2021), folder 13, New Directions Publishing Corp. Records. In comparison with MacGregor's views on Irby's translations, his statements on Kerrigan are somewhat ambiguous. In a letter to Catherine Carver from the paperback magazine *New World Writing*, he states: "Anthony Kerrigan has a couple of translations in this volume, and I think they are by far the best." MacGregor to Carver, January 4, 1961, item (2021), folder 6. However, in a letter to Barley Alison of the British publisher Weidenfeld, he claims: "Between us, we felt that Kerrigan was best at certain aspects of Borges' work, and that other translators were able to handle other facets of this miraculously original man with a different and more sympathetic hand." MacGregor to Alison, November 8, 1961, item (2021), folder 13, New Directions Publishing Corp. Records. New Directions's choice of having Yates (and later also Irby) edit and translate *Labyrinths* seems to have stemmed from a series of coincidences (their losing Kerrigan's correspondence, Donald Allen's personal recommendation of Yates) and not from their preference for a certain translator.

almost everything comes through just as he wrote it. So I don't think the question of being literal with a writer like Borges is a problem.⁸⁹

In a similar way, Reid, translator of "Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius" in *Ficciones* and part of the poetry in *A Personal Anthology*, commented on the need to translate Borges literally.⁹⁰ One of the University of Texas Press translators, Boyer, also claimed that for her translations of contemporary writing, and Borges's *Dreamtigers* was among them, she "had trained [herself] not to take major liberties with the source text."⁹¹

These normative statements of the different Borges translators should also be contrasted with actual translation practices; that is, with the internal translation norms or internal poetics of the translators.⁹² At the level of internal translation norms, various scholars have made comparative textual studies of specific Borges stories translated by different translators such as Yates, Irby, Kerrigan, Reid, and later di Giovanni.⁹³ No story has been translated by each of the five mentioned translators, so actual detailed comparison remains impossible, but the studies do show a general similarity among the early translators of Borges's work. Miguel Ángel Montezanti's excellent study of different renderings of "La muerte y la brújula," for instance, shows how Yates and Kerrigan retain certain peculiarities of Borges's style, which sets them apart from the later translation made by di Giovanni.⁹⁴ They partly render the instances of hypallage—a transferred epithet—and oxymoron literally, whereas di Giovanni simplifies Borges's vocabulary and extends the translation to make it more explicit and "ordinary." James Remington Krause arrives at a similar conclusion on Borges and di Giovanni's joint translation of "Pedro Salvadores" and the various translations of "Las ruinas circulares," stating that di Giovanni's translations are usually less literal than the previous ones and tend to eschew Latinate words.⁹⁵

⁸⁹ Kerrigan, "Interview with Tony Kerrigan," by Doyle, Anthony Kerrigan Papers, 21.

⁹⁰ Reid, "Basilisk's Eggs," 281-82.

⁹¹ Boyer, "On Translation and Its Uses," 6.

⁹² See Hermans, *Translation in Systems*, 89.

⁹³ Hulme and Brotherstone, "Borges in English"; Macadam, "Translation as Metaphor"; Montezanti, "El traductor y la brújula"; Remington Krause, "Translation and the Reception and Influence of Latin American Literature"; and Sayers Peden, "Arduous Journey."

⁹⁴ Montezanti, "El traductor y la brújula." Alfred J. Macadam's "Translation as Metaphor" also studies the first line of the three translations of "La muerte y la brújula," but only mentions the differences, without deducing any general norms or tendencies from the three translations.

⁹⁵ Remington Krause, "Translation and the Reception and Influence of Latin American Literature." Hulme and Brotherstone, "Borges in English"; and Margaret Sayers Peden, "Arduous Journey" also study the renderings of "Las ruinas circulares," especially its famous adjective usage in "la noche unánime" in the opening line.

Although I mainly focus here on *external* translation norms, I will briefly illustrate the *internal* translation norms analyzed in the aforementioned studies with a quotation from the first line of "Las ruinas circulares," which exists in many translated versions and has been much debated:

Nadie lo vio desembarcar en la unánime noche, nadie vio la canoa de bambú sumiéndose en el fango sagrado, pero a los pocos días nadie ignoraba que el hombre taciturno venía del Sur y que su patria era una de las infinitas aldeas que están aguas arriba.⁹⁶

No one saw him disembark in the unanimous night, no one saw the bamboo canoe sinking into the sacred mud, but within a few days no one was unaware that the silent man came from the South and that his home was one of the infinite villages upstream.⁹⁷ (1962 translation by Irby)

No one saw him disembark in the unanimous night, no one saw the bamboo canoe sink into the sacred mud, but in a few days there was no one who did not know that the taciturn man came from the South and that his home had been one of those numberless villages upstream.⁹⁸ (1962 translation by Anthony Bonner)

No one saw him disembark in the unanimous night. No one saw the bamboo canoe running aground on the sacred mud. But within a few days no one was unaware that the taciturn man had come from the South and that his home had been one of the infinity of hamlets which lie upstream.⁹⁹ (1967 translation by Kerrigan)

Nobody saw him come ashore in the encompassing night, nobody saw the bamboo craft run aground in the sacred mud, but within a few days everyone

⁹⁶ Borges, "Las ruinas circulares," 539.

⁹⁷ Borges, *Labyrinths*, 45. The much more recent English translations in *Collected Fictions* come closer again to Irby's early translation, as can be deduced from the same fragment from Andrew Hurley's 1998 translation: "No one saw him slip from the boat in the unanimous night, no one saw the bamboo canoe as it sank into the sacred mud, and yet within days there was no one who did not know that the taciturn man had come there from the South, and that his homeland was one of those infinite villages that lie upriver." Borges, *Collected Fictions*, 96.

⁹⁸ Borges, *Ficciones*, 57.

⁹⁹ Borges, *Personal Anthology*, 68.

knew that the quiet man had come from the south and that his home was among the numberless villages upstream.¹⁰⁰ (1970 translation by di Giovanni in collaboration with Borges)

The comparison between these translations, which most conspicuously shows the great differences between the earlier translators (Irby, Bonner, Kerrigan) and di Giovanni, can be relatively easily related to the external norms of the translators. Similar to Irby, Yates, and Kerrigan, di Giovanni stressed that Borges was a great stylist and referred to several concrete elements also mentioned by other translators. However, in an interview about the compactness of Borges's style, held while di Giovanni was collaborating with Borges, he indicates that "a translator who works literally, translating word for word, ends by writing in that unreadable and artificial English we call *translatorese*."¹⁰¹

Di Giovanni's translations displayed a wish to adjust Borges's work according to his own and possibly Borges's norms, and to make the work more readable. He wanted to make Borges's writing clearer and explain regional and historical references for the English reader, as Matthew Howard has also noted.¹⁰² Borges's "Autobiographical Notes" published in collaboration with di Giovanni in the *New Yorker*, and Borges's comments on the stories, were added to a translation of *The Aleph and Other Stories*, with the intention of helping the reader to understand Borges's texts.¹⁰³ For *Selected Poems*, di Giovanni also included his own notes on the poems in an appendix, with several references to the autobiographical piece from *The New Yorker*. Underlying this wish to clarify Borges's work was di Giovanni's idea about the way that academia had needlessly obscured the author. He aimed at revising the "obscurities"¹⁰⁴ for which he criticized academic critics: "I knew that readers were having difficulty with Borges; worse, I knew that the universities kept him swathed in unnecessary mystery."¹⁰⁵

For di Giovanni, the early, "academic" translators were also to blame: "Alas, the diction and mistakes of poor translations of Borges into English blur his prose

¹⁰⁰ Borges, *Aleph and Other Stories*, 55.

¹⁰¹ Di Giovanni, "Borges in English," interview by Sorrentino, 174. See also di Giovanni, *Lesson of the Master*, 185.

¹⁰² Howard, "Stranger than Ficción," 43.

¹⁰³ Borges and di Giovanni, "Autobiographical Notes."

¹⁰⁴ Di Giovanni to José Guillermo Castillo, August 10, 1969, box 10, folder 13, Review: Latin American Literature and Arts Author Files.

¹⁰⁵ Di Giovanni, *Lesson of the Master*, 37. See also di Giovanni, "Borges in English," interview by Sorrentino, 131. Di Giovanni's criticism of Borges scholars has also been remarked on by Howard, "Stranger than Ficción," 43.

and make it the victim of distortion born of ignorance."¹⁰⁶ These comments seemed to apply to all early translators including Kerrigan and Reid, who taught at universities from time to time but could hardly be called academics. Di Giovanni also responded directly to Irby's commentaries on the abruptness of Borges's style. Instead of wanting to translate the abruptness of Borges's style, di Giovanni chooses to follow his own idea of style:

A second problem—perhaps the one which worries me the most—is the abruptness—so characteristic of Borgesian style—of the transitions between clauses or sentences or paragraphs. This abruptness is too sharp (and I'm glad James Irby has already pointed it out) and to soften it, I often find myself trying to intercalate *buts* and *therefores* and *however*s. The same thing happens to me with temporal nexuses, such as *after*, *later*, *from then on*, etc. In English they're so common that even though they're not in the Spanish original, I try to put them in just to satisfy my own concepts about style.¹⁰⁷

In this sense, di Giovanni tried to distinguish himself—in Pierre Bourdieu's sense—with his translation norms, and also translated *against* one of the early, academic translators.

At first sight, the opposing normative positions between the early and later translators resemble the gap between literal and liberal translation, between adequacy and acceptability, or between source-centered and target-centered renderings—all of which also played a role in the discussions on translation between Roger Caillois, Paul Bénichou and Néstor Ibarra in France. Di Giovanni's translation norms would then simply be an example of the Anglo-American tradition of domestication studied by Lawrence Venuti.¹⁰⁸ In addition, di Giovanni's statements on Borges's style being *too* terse or *too* abrupt should perhaps be seen as a "scandal" of translation; that is, an enforcement of domestic stylistic norms, with little respect for the linguistic and cultural differences of the foreign, Argentine text.¹⁰⁹ As another descriptive translation study on Borges has shown, the alterations in the text were not always minor. In the translation of "El Aleph," for instance, di Giovanni and

¹⁰⁶ Di Giovanni, *Lesson of the Master*, 56.

¹⁰⁷ Di Giovanni, "Borges in English," interview by Sorrentino, 175-76. For more comments on the early translators, see also di Giovanni and Borges, "Translation," interview by MacShane.

¹⁰⁸ Venuti, *Translator's Invisibility*.

¹⁰⁹ This is, of course, a term used by Lawrence Venuti, who mentions di Giovanni briefly in his introduction to *The Scandals of Translation*, 4-5.

Borges omitted four lines of verse and reduced nineteen lines of the narrator's commentary to three.¹¹⁰ As di Giovanni himself has stated, the process of collaboration with Borges also involved changes that were made for the new translations and that were later also adapted in the original Spanish texts.¹¹¹ For the translation of *The Book of Imaginary Beings*, new pieces for the book were written directly in English.¹¹²

In various peritexts of his translations in collaboration with the author, and also in a number of other texts, di Giovanni claimed a position as Borges translator by presenting these translations as new and "authorized" versions. The anonymous front flap of *The Aleph and Other Stories*, whether written by di Giovanni himself or by the publishing house, confirms this position by stressing the uniqueness of the joint translation, along with a repetition of di Giovanni's ideas on Borges's style and the need to make his work more readable:

The English versions are superb. They are the only translations of his work to be done with Borges' collaboration. Their lucidity and polish, while confirming the author's reputation as a great stylist, will also make Borges' writing more accessible to a wide American readership.

The fact that Borges commented on the advantages of translating in collaboration confirmed the "authorized" nature of the translations: in the foreword to *Selected Poems*, the author states that "Di Giovanni and I have gone very thoroughly over each piece, each line, and each word; the fact that I am not only a collaborator but also the writer has given us greater freedom, since we are less tied to verbal precision than to inner meanings and intentions."¹¹³ Borges also expressed his wish that future translations of *The Book of Imaginary Beings* into other languages be made from the English-language edition,¹¹⁴ which further legitimized these new versions.

The close collaboration also led to the common opinion that di Giovanni's wish to make Borges's work more accessible was in agreement with Borges's own wish to write in a more straightforward, transparent style. Di Giovanni's

¹¹⁰ Hulme and Brotherston, "Borges in English," 325-26.

¹¹¹ Di Giovanni, "At Work with Borges," 435-36.

¹¹² Di Giovanni, "In Memory of Borges," 24.

¹¹³ Borges, foreword to *Selected Poems*, xvi.

¹¹⁴ Di Giovanni, "At Work with Borges," 441-42.

collaboration coincided with a period in which Borges renounced the baroque diction of his earlier work, finding it too ornate and mannered.¹¹⁵ This agreement was first affirmed by di Giovanni himself, but was (and is) also assumed by various scholars of translation such as Matthew Howard, Rafael Olea Franco, and James Remington Krause, logically supported by Borges's own statements on the need for a liberal translation and his positive comments on di Giovanni's translations.¹¹⁶ In a 1971 article in *Books Abroad*, Di Giovanni strategically underlines this supposed complete agreement on fundamental translating principles:

In addition to the foregoing elements, Borges and I hold in common a whole groundwork of ideas which, naturally, become our own personal rules about what makes a good translation and what, specifically, makes a good English translation from the Spanish. We agree, for example, that a translation should not sound like a translation. We agree that words having Anglo-Saxon roots are preferable to words of Latin origin or, to put it another way, that the first English word suggested by the Spanish should usually be avoided [. . .]. We agree also that the text should not be approached as a sacred object but as a tool, allowing us, whenever we feel the need, to add or subtract from it, to depart from it, or even, on rare occasions, to improve it.¹¹⁷

Borges's norms of translation or his agreement with di Giovanni's norms are, however, less univocal than one might think. In the Borges volume of Adolfo Bioy Casares's diary, which takes up many of Borges's comments, the author equally condemns several translators. Borges criticizes, for instance, the translation of *Labyrinths* for its Latinate diction and literalness, although the physical description of the volume, the translation details, and the mention of only one translator are, strangely, not in accordance with the facts:

Habla de una traducción norteamericana de sus cuentos, publicada por New Directions: "Por la ley del menor esfuerzo, el traductor siempre traduce la palabra española por la palabra inglesa más parecida. Si yo digo *habitación*,

¹¹⁵ Di Giovanni, "On Translating with Borges," 24.

¹¹⁶ Howard, "Stranger than Ficción, 47; Olea Franco, "Borges y el civilizado arte de la traducción"; Remington Krause, "Translation and the Reception and Influence of Latin American Literature"; and Borges, "Problemas de la traducción," 322-25.

¹¹⁷ Di Giovanni, "At Work with Borges," 436.

traduce *habitation* y no *room*. Resulta un estilo rarísimo y un idioma que apenas es inglés. Yo dije en alguna ocasión que una ventaja del inglés es la de ser un idioma mitad anglosajón, mitad latino. Ahora me castigan por esa frase. Parecería que más que ventaja, es un peligro, una calamidad. [. . .] El traductor es un bruto. Nosotros decimos *El Quijote*, pero en inglés no se dice *The Quixote*, sino *Don Quixote*. Bueno, naturalmente que, en un título, aparece *The Quixote*.”¹¹⁸

The criticism of di Giovanni’s translations is no less biting, and points to a distancing from his domestication of Borges’s style, in an entry on January 5, 1969:

BORGES: “Este muchacho no entiende absolutamente nada los cuentos. Sin nuestra ayuda la traducción sería peor que la alemana o la francesa. Pero va a ser buena... la traducción que nosotros hacemos. Que nunca hubiera visto las frases *ab initio* y *cum grano salis* echa una luz sobre su cultura. No creo que tenga ese gran sentido del estilo del que todo el tiempo se jacta. Generalmente los que tienen un gran sentido del estilo dan alguna prueba de tenerlo.” BIOY: “Y muchas veces, cuando nos sugiere que algo no se puede decir así en inglés, bueno, tampoco se podría decir así en español.” BORGES: “El estilo de sir Thomas Browne está hecho de formas que no se podrían emplear.” BIOY: “Y todo Shakespeare y todo Joyce.”¹¹⁹

Borges’s own position on the English translations is thus not clear, but one could wonder to what extent his public statements about these translations, for instance in di Giovanni’s book translations, and the fact that he collaborated with di Giovanni, had an impact on the reception of these translations.

The reception of the earlier translations in literary criticism, during a period in which Borges did not comment on these translations, was fairly positive. There were short positive comments on all of the early volumes except for *Ficciones*, the

¹¹⁸ Bioy Casares, *Borges*, 767. Borges makes similar but somewhat friendlier statements in a 1967 interview with Ronald Christ: Borges, “Art of Fiction XXXIX: Jorge Luis Borges; An Interview”; and in France in Borges, *Entretiens avec Jorge Luis Borges*, interviews by Charbonnier, 16-17.

¹¹⁹ Bioy Casares, *Borges*, 1263-64. See also Borges’s comments in an entry for 1971 in *ibid.*, 1344. Later, Borges also criticized Donald Yates, who collaborated more directly with him after his break with di Giovanni in *ibid.*, 1433.

translation of which was not commented upon shortly after publication.¹²⁰ The reception of Kerrigan's translations in *A Personal Anthology*, however, is somewhat contradictory, as the work is given preference over *Labyrinths* in one review because it seems to "keep more of the flavor of Borges' original Spanish,"¹²¹ while it is severely criticized in another. Movie and drama critic John Simon claims that Kerrigan misses the meaning of certain words, makes defective English sentences, and also translates too literally as he "generally settles for the easy cognate."¹²² His judgment of Reid's verse translations is somewhat more positive.

The critical reception of di Giovanni's later translations, however, is overwhelmingly positive.¹²³ Reviews of *The Aleph and Other Stories*, for instance, reveal that the translation is considered superior to or more definitive than the previous ones, in one critic's words: "this translation has an ease, a rapidity, an elegance that should make it *the* Borges in English."¹²⁴ Ronald Christ, then the recent author of *The Narrow Act: Borges' Art of Allusion* and editor of *Review*, the literary journal of the Center for Inter-American Relations, similarly states in the weekly *The Nation* that "this translation is definitive, superseding all others, which in the future can only exist as more or less perceptive commentaries on it,"¹²⁵ commenting directly on some of the early translators:

In the past Borges has been presented by some trustworthy translators, like James Irby, and some thoroughly inappropriate ones, like Anthony Kerrigan; but now, working in daily sessions, in close collaboration with his personally chosen translator, Norman Thomas di Giovanni, in the familiar atmosphere of his native Buenos Aires, Borges is re-creating his own work in English.¹²⁶

¹²⁰ For *Labyrinths*, see Zoll, "Reviews," 243; and Brain-Munk, Corvalán, and Lima, "Symposium on Jorge Luis Borges," 12. For *Dreamtigers*, see Stabb, review of *Dreamtigers*; Yates, "Latin American Voices"; and Updike, "Books: The Author as Librarian," 234. For *Other Inquisitions*, see Mason, review of *Other Inquisitions*; and Dulsey, review of *Other Inquisitions*, 354. For *A Personal Anthology*, see Ossman, "Labyrinth of Borges."

¹²¹ Ossman, "Labyrinth of Borges."

¹²² Simon, "Magician," 12.

¹²³ See also Remington Krause, "Translation and the Reception and Influence of Latin American Literature." In this thesis, James Remington Krause claims that the quality of translations (in this case of di Giovanni's translations) correlates directly with their positive critical reception. Here, I have tried to show how this reception also depended on factors that were external to the translations, such as the prestige ascribed to the direct collaboration between di Giovanni and Borges, and the impact of Borges's own comments.

¹²⁴ Finn, "Fantasist of the Intellect," 32. See also Smith, "Of Life and Dreams"; and Lask, "Storyteller and Magician."

¹²⁵ Christ, *Narrow Act*; and "Borges Translated," 283.

¹²⁶ Christ, "Borges Translated," 282-83.

The question of the reaction of these same and other translators to the new and “authorized” translations is an intriguing one as well. Interestingly enough, the collaboration between Borges and di Giovanni, and Borges’s public comments on translation, led to a change in the poetics of translation of earlier translators, at least in the case of Irby. In a 1976 discussion panel on the translation of Borges’s work held at a conference at Orono in Maine, for instance, Irby accounts for the particular circumstances under which *Labyrinths* came about and points to a possible change in his own conception of translation under the influence of Borges’s changed views:

Well, at the time that I undertook to do the translations that appear in *Labyrinths*, [. . .] I sat down and started working on a doctoral dissertation with a great deal of ambition, and I wanted to devise theories of Borges’s work and his language as well. And so, engaged in this academic activity, I was inclined to try to be literal and to reproduce, as best I could understand them, the manner, shifts, and surprises, and extraordinary leaps which I found in his prose. I think, looking back upon those translations that I did many years ago, I now find them overloaded with Latinate diction [. . .]. And if I were doing these translations now, I would moderate that aspect of them, but perhaps this is conjecture of course not as much as I think Borges would like. Now, I recognize that there has been a change in his style and in his aesthetic.¹²⁷

The differences between the “academic” (Irby) and “non-academic” (di Giovanni) translators had not been bridged, but the two positions had become closer under the influence of Borges’s own comments.

Even though they supposedly had Borges’s approval, di Giovanni’s translations were criticized by different translators in the 1970s. In the aforementioned discussion panel, the translators almost unanimously condemned di Giovanni’s work. Most of the criticism was directed toward di Giovanni’s method for *Selected Poems*, for which he made prose summaries of poems, which were then divided and sent to different translators, some of whom had not mastered Spanish. William Ferguson, a professor of Spanish at Boston University who collaborated on the volume, criticized di Giovanni’s method of strictly monitoring their translations:

¹²⁷ Barnstone et al., “On Translating Borges,” moderated by Hayes, 245-46.

With DiGiovanni it was a question of bargaining; he'd give you one particle if you took out one noun, that kind of thing. [. . .] This procedure also occasioned a purification of the Spanish texts—"purification" was DiGiovanni's word, and we were never entirely sure what it meant.¹²⁸

On other occasions, Kerrigan has also criticized di Giovanni's translation practice.¹²⁹ Given the positive reception of di Giovanni's new translations in literary criticism and Irby's change of position, the impact of Borges's statements, and perhaps of di Giovanni's comments on the "authorized" nature of the translations, is, however, beyond dispute. This mediating role of Borges's comments on translation will be followed up in the next section, which analyzes Borges's comments on his own work and its autobiographical quality.

4. Borges as an author figure and as a mediator

An important indicator of the prominence of Borges's work in the United States is the fact that his first extensive autobiography was originally issued in English and only later appeared in the Spanish-speaking world.¹³⁰ Written in collaboration with Norman Thomas di Giovanni and published in the prestigious weekly magazine *The New Yorker* in 1970, the "Autobiographical Notes" not only confirm the presence of Borges's work in the United States, but also the presence of a certain idea of Borges based on this work; that is, as an author figure with a particular biography. In apparent contradiction of the author's work, which partially entails a critique of traditional autobiography, the autobiographical perspective on his work came to play an important role. Borges's frequent visits to the country could also have made him into a direct mediator in the translation, publication, and critical reception of his own work.

In *Borges: Entre autorretrato y automitografía*, Robin Lefere claims that Borges actively created his own image, especially in his (autobiographical) writings and

¹²⁸ Ibid., 248. Borges himself was probably aware of these discussions, as Bioy Casares's diary mentions on January 26, 1970 that "colegas norteamericanos culpan a Di Giovanni de estar *horning in*, con traducciones ayudadas por los autores. BORGES: 'Le dije a Di Giovanni que no debe hablar mal de todos los otros traductores.'" Bioy Casares, *Borges*, 1313.

¹²⁹ Kerrigan, "Interview with Tony Kerrigan," by Doyle, Anthony Kerrigan Papers; and "Funes in Madrid."

¹³⁰ Borges and di Giovanni, "Autobiographical Notes." Also published in *The Aleph and Other Stories*, under the title "An Autobiographical Essay."

interviews.¹³¹ Here, I will look at the situation in the United States up to 1968, as far as the *reception* of this self-portrayal or self-mythography is concerned. Rather than studying the figure of Borges himself, I will analyze how various mediators in publishing houses and in literary criticism reproduced this image of the author. This attention for reproduction does not pass over the fact that Borges actively contributed to his own reception by means of his fictional and non-fictional writings, by giving interviews, by visiting the United States, and via personal contacts with mediators in the period leading up to the autobiography. In fact, the question of whether Borges functioned as a direct mediator for the publication and translation process, and for literary criticism of his work, should also be taken into account. In this sense, Borges could have taken on two different institutional roles: as an author creating his author figure in texts, peritexts, and interviews, and as a mediator in the translation, publication, and critical reception of his own work in the United States. The difference between the author figure Borges presented and his role as a direct mediator seems somewhat artificial, because Borges could have created an image of himself through direct contact, and because the interviews the author gave mostly took place through direct contact. It does correspond roughly, however, to the difference between more public forms of writing (fictional writing, non-fictional writing, interviews) and the more private processes of transmission of information that took place when Borges entered into contact with mediators of his work in the United States. The two concepts also distinguish between the image that Borges and his readers could have (co-)created and the more factual information about Borges's role in the reception process.

Following a chronological line, the first moment at which Borges was able to mediate his own work through direct contact was in 1961, when he visited the United States as an Edward L. Tinker professor at the University of Texas. During his stay, Borges taught contemporary Argentine poetry and the work of Leopoldo Lugones, and also traveled the country to give lectures at various universities, the Library of Congress in Washington, and the Organization of American States (OAS). At a time when none of his now well-known stories had been published in book form in the United States and Borges himself had only recently turned to poetry again in *El hacedor* (1960), the author was classified as a poet in literary criticism. Whereas the awarding of the Prix International des Éditeurs for *Ficciones* was not prominently mentioned in the press, the critics did discuss his visit to the United States and talked

¹³¹ Lefere, *Borges: Entre autorretrato y automitografía*, 8-9.

about his biography and poetry. Without mentioning specific poetry works, the title of an anonymous notice announces "The Poet Borges to Teach Argentine Poetry Here" and, in articles on Borges's trip, he is called a poet and a poet-author.¹³² In another article Borges is presented as an ultraist poet, his recent poetry of *El hacedor* being ignored: "In Argentina, the famous poet, Jorge Luis Borges, who is now giving a series of lectures in America, has developed an allusive and highly personal style of ultra-ist [*sic*] poetry and poetic prose, greatly admired by readers of Spanish."¹³³ Although the role of Borges himself in this presentation is not clear, his then declared preference for poetry and lectures on poetry contributed to his classification as a poet rather than as a writer of short stories.

More indirectly, the author figure of Borges and hence the biographical perspective on his work came to play a role as early as 1962 in the first book publication of *Labyrinths*, despite the fact that Borges did not play a role in the publishing process of that volume. New Directions publisher James Laughlin brought the autobiographical point of view to the fore by proposing to put "Borges y yo" on the back of the jacket,¹³⁴ a proposal to which *Labyrinths* translators-editors Donald Yates and James Irby consented. Laughlin's preference for the selection of biographical elements is also clear from his wish to publish biographical material as an introduction to Borges's work, instead of the more scholarly introduction that was initially written by Irby. Although Irby ultimately wrote the new introduction, Laughlin urged Yates in a letter to take over the task and requested "a few pages on his life just the human story,"¹³⁵ in order to publish more quickly. Irby's final introduction included biographical information and stressed the autobiographical nature of Borges's work by referring several times to "Borges y yo." A photograph of Borges, taken by New Directions designer Gilda Kuhlman in 1962, which shows the author deep in thought, perhaps somewhat troubled, was included as frontispiece. These peritexts, taken together, gave prominence to the autobiographical dimension of Borges's work, contrasting with Yates and Irby's selections, classifications, and

¹³² "Poet Borges to Teach Argentine Poetry Here," *The Summer Texan* (August 4, 1961). See also "Argentine Poet Will Appear Here Tuesday," *The Albuquerque Tribune* (December 4, 1961); Dessoff, "Argentine Poet-Author Fits Neatly into Comaraderie [*sic*] of Artists' Luncheon"; González Lanuza, "Five Argentine Poets"; White, "Authors Will Honor Argentine Poet Here"; and Yates, "Author's Query."

¹³³ Adams, "Literary Letter from South America," 54-55.

¹³⁴ Laughlin to Yates, October 15, 1961, item (2021), folder 12, New Directions Publishing Corp. Records.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*

norms, which were more focused on the philosophical and formal, stylistic aspects of Borges's work.

In *Ficciones*, (auto)biographical elements were also part of the peritextual presentation of the volume. The back cover provided biographical information and situated Borges simultaneously in different intellectual, literary, and geographical contexts: "In the story form, Borges became the chronicler of the harsh life of the slums. With Ricardo Güiraldes, he founded the journal *Proa*. His later work shows evidence of concern with metaphysics and the occult, as well as with the detective story and the work of James Joyce." Apart from paying much attention to the "Argentine" dimension of Borges's work, this back cover of the hardback edition also included a photo of Borges and quoted one of his first interviews in the United States, in which Borges talked about his blindness.¹³⁶ This again stressed the autobiographical dimension of his work. Borges's role in the publication process of *Ficciones* limited itself to his stated preference for a complete edition of *Ficciones* rather than for another anthology. As Borges himself had little contact with the publishers and editors at New Directions and Grove Press, and was not in frequent contact with his early translators either, this autobiographical dimension in the book volumes is likely to have arisen by other, more indirect means and because of other, for instance promotional, reasons.

In contrast with the first two book translations, for which Borges hardly played a role as a mediator in the translation and publication process, Borges contributed more directly to the translation of *El hacedor* in the United States, as the idea for publication originated during his 1961 stay in Texas. Although it was Frank Wardlaw, of the University of Texas Press, who asked Borges for permission to publish one of his books,¹³⁷ Borges may well have influenced the selection of this particular volume of poetry and prose, which he considered his favorite at that time. In this way, *Dreamtigers*, the translation of one of Borges's most autobiographical works, was issued in 1964, relatively early in the US reception history, particularly in comparison with France, where *L'auteur* was published in 1965 after *Ficciones*, parts of *El Aleph*, *Otras inquisiciones*, *Historia universal de la infamia*, *Historia de la eternidad*, and in the same year as *Antiguas literaturas germánicas* and *Manual de zoología fantástica*. However, Borges's role in the publishing process of *El hacedor* itself was still limited, as he was not involved in the choice of peritexts for the US edition: an

¹³⁶ Borges, "Argentine Here on Lecture Tour," interview by Talese.

¹³⁷ Enguídanos, introduction to *Dreamtigers*, 10.

introduction was written by Miguel Enguídanos and the title was changed to *Dreamtigers*, whereas Borges had initially thought of the title *El hacedor* as a Spanish translation of the term "The Maker."¹³⁸ The introduction, and other paratexts such as promotional texts from the publishing house, could nevertheless be said to have reproduced the author figure of Borges by echoing his author figure as presented in the fictional texts and the statements in his epilogue to *El hacedor*.

For the fictional texts, Lefere points out a general contrast in *El hacedor* between the affirmation or even celebration of the author figure (for instance as *poeta vates* or *hacedor*) and the negation of the individuality and personality of the author himself. Whereas in "Everything and Nothing," the *nadería* of the maker and the poverty of his personality is stressed, in "Borges y yo" the author's personality is confirmed, although the traditional author role is criticized for falsifying or magnifying the real "I." As Lefere states, in *El hacedor* the criticism of the traditional conception of the author paradoxically reaffirms the figure of the author in general and of Borges in particular.¹³⁹ The figure of the author is also stressed in Borges's epilogue to *El hacedor* included in *Dreamtigers*, where the author depicts himself as a literary figure, a bookman: "De cuantos libros he entregado a la imprenta, ninguno, creo, es tan personal como esta colecticia y desordenada *silva de varia lección*, precisamente porque abunda en reflejos y en interpolaciones. Pocas cosas me han ocurrido y muchas he leído."¹⁴⁰

These statements on the personal nature of the volume are reproduced in the catalogue text and the leaflet for *Dreamtigers*. In the catalogue text, the volume is presented as a personal book: "In highly personal mood, and with intimate glimpses into the poet's world, it depicts the interplay of imagination and reality in our lives."¹⁴¹ In the leaflet, the volume is called "the most personal of Borges' books."¹⁴² Enguídanos's introduction also closely echoes Borges's statements. Enguídanos, a Spanish scholar and professor of Spanish in Austin, had already published on Borges in 1958 in the Spanish magazine *Papeles de Son Armandans*, and later in 1961 in the magazine of the University of Texas in Austin, *Texas Quarterly*, an essay that was published along with four texts from *El hacedor*. In his introduction to *Dreamtigers*,

¹³⁸ Bioy Casares, *Borges*, 889. The publishing house decided on the final title, see Graham Blackstock to Kim Taylor, June 25, 1963, University of Texas Press Records.

¹³⁹ Lefere, *Borges: Entre autorretrato y automitografía*, 97-109. See also Lefere, *Borges y los poderes de la literatura*, 241-47.

¹⁴⁰ Borges, epilogue to *El hacedor*.

¹⁴¹ "Dreamtigers (*El Hacedor*)," *Catalogue University of Texas Press* (Fall-Winter, 1963).

¹⁴² *Dreamtigers*, by Jorge Luis Borges, *Presentation Leaflet University of Texas Press* (1964).

Enguídanos does not deal with the elegiac or tragic character of the book, or what Paul de Man, in his review of *Dreamtigers*, calls its violence and somberness. Instead, he stresses the intimate and personal nature of the book by referring to Borges's own statements on the volume:

Borges considered *El hacedor* I don't know whether he may have changed his mind *his* book, the book most likely, in his opinion, to be remembered when all the rest are forgotten. And the book Borges loved to play with this idea that would make his earlier works unnecessary, including his two extraordinary collections of stories, *Ficciones* and *El Aleph*.¹⁴³

Further on in the introduction, the personal nature of Borges's book is again underlined by means of a quote from Borges's epilogue, in which he describes how "a man sets himself the task of portraying the world" but then shortly before his death "discovers that that patient labyrinth of lines traces the image of his face."¹⁴⁴ Enguídanos concludes therefore:

If, after all, the face is merely the mirror of the soul, it is not hard to guess the ultimate meaning of the game of illusion Jorge Luis Borges proposes to the reader in this book: the separate parts that constitute *El hacedor* narratives, poems, parables, reflections, and interpolations when read as a whole, trace the image of the poet's face: face-mirror-image of the soul of the creator, of the maker.¹⁴⁵

As well as this reproduction of the figure of Borges by publishers, editors, and other mediators involved in the publication of *Dreamtigers*, the figure was reproduced in literary criticism. In reviews of *Dreamtigers*, it is precisely the quoted part of Borges's epilogue that is most frequently cited. In the Austin newspaper *The American Statesman*, for instance, the quotation is taken up and Borges's *Dreamtigers* is said to be "the autobiography of his personality."¹⁴⁶ The quote is also cited in a joint

¹⁴³ Enguídanos, introduction to *Dreamtigers*, 10-11.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 15-16.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁶ Roach, "Patient Labyrinth of Lines." For this quote, see also Adams, "Intricate Argentine"; Borges, "Jorge Luis Borges, or the Consolation by Philosophy," interview by Harss and Dohmann; Bottorff, "Personal Anthology"; Heiney, "Calvino and Borges: Some Implications of Fantasy"; Maloff,

review of *Ficciones*, *Labyrinths*, and *Dreamtigers* in the newspaper *The Christian Science Monitor*¹⁴⁷ and in *The Los Angeles Times*, where it is stated that “‘Dreamtigers’ miniscule selections [. . .] do, indeed, trace the spiritual substance and the yearnings of both the man and the poet.”¹⁴⁸ Again, Borges is classified as a poet.

A similar process can be observed for the 1967 publication of *A Personal Anthology* by Grove Press. In the original *Antología personal*, the personal and autobiographical perspective is stressed by means of its title and selection of autobiographical texts. These were adopted in the United States and included “El Sur,” “Página para recordar al coronel Suárez,

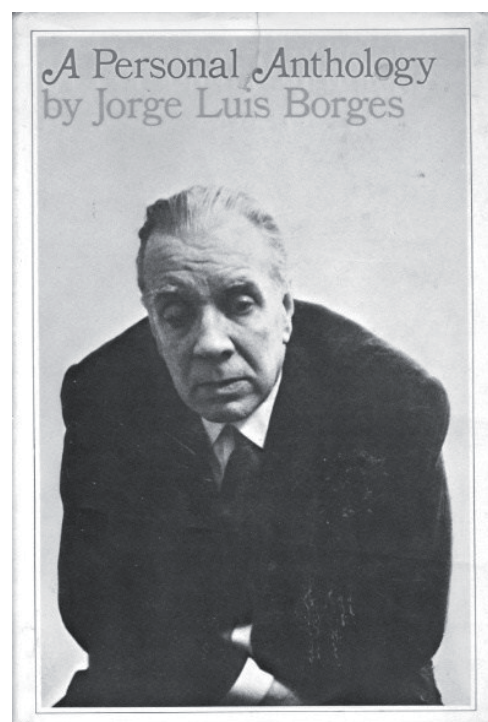


Figure 9: Book cover *A Personal Anthology*, 1967

vencedor en Junín,” “El hacedor,” “Poema de los dones,” and “Borges y yo.” In the peritexts of the English translation of the volume, the personal nature of the volume is underscored not least by the front cover of the hardback edition, which for the first time in the United States shows a photograph of Borges—*Labyrinths* and *Ficciones* include pictures within the book and on the back cover, respectively. Interestingly, the book cover was designed by Kuhlman Associates and reproduced Gilda Kuhlman’s picture included in *Labyrinths*, so that Borges’s physical portrayal also came to be reproduced. Borges is said to have personally compiled the anthology on the front flap of *A Personal Anthology* and, in the foreword, translator-editor Anthony Kerrigan states that Borges’s fundamental theme is that of his own identity.¹⁴⁹

The already mentioned quotation about the image of the maker’s face from *El hacedor* is included as an epigraph to an exchange of letters between translators Kerrigan and Alastair Reid, used as an epilogue to *A Personal Anthology*. The figure of the author is, however, undermined in these letters, as they reflect (possibly)

“Moments of Truth”; Merivale, “Flaunting of Artifice in Vladimir Nabokov and Jorge Luis Borges”; Taylor, “Argentinian Is Writer’s Writer”; Updike, “Books: The Author as Librarian.”

¹⁴⁷ Nordell, “Argentine Mythmaker and His Labyrinth,” 5.

¹⁴⁸ Hulet, “Artist as Man Playing God,” AB17.

¹⁴⁹ Kerrigan, foreword to *A Personal Anthology*, vii.

mockingly on the question of whether Borges exists. Reid's letter, for instance, takes up Borges's idea of the *nadería* of personality and the idea of life as a dream:

We have been working on these thin volumes of his for some years now, and have we ever met him, either of us? Other people say they have, but they may well be in the plot. We made him exist in English. We may have made him exist altogether—if he has any existence at all, that is, for he tells us all the time that he is dreaming himself, or being dreamt by somebody.¹⁵⁰

These letters between Reid and Kerrigan bear resemblance to the essay Kerrigan wrote on *not* meeting Borges in 1963.¹⁵¹ The contradictory figure of the author in Borges's fictional texts, in which authorship is denied and confirmed at the same time, was in this way reflected by the translators of the anthology.

It is nevertheless clear that the figure of the author—and the figure of Borges—was reaffirmed rather than undermined in the production and reception of *A Personal Anthology*. Kerrigan never succeeded in publishing his text on not meeting Borges in the United States, and the exchange of letters was only reluctantly published by Grove Press.¹⁵² Moreover, in numerous reviews of the anthology and other texts, the quotation about the man's face was again taken up.¹⁵³ When it was also quoted in 1969 as an epilogue to the first interview book in the United States, *Conversations with Jorge Luis Borges* by Richard Burgin, Borges's figure as a creator in the text and the autobiographical perspective on his work was further established.¹⁵⁴

Quite different from the impact of these texts and peritexts by Borges were Borges's interviews, which were published in the 1960s in important newspapers, magazines, and journals such as *The New York Times*, *Kenyon Review*, *The Atlantic Monthly*, and *The Paris Review*.¹⁵⁵ According to Lefere, Borges's first international interview books (such as those by Jean de Milleret and Georges Charbonnier in France, and Richard Burgin in the United States) prefigure the "Autobiographical

¹⁵⁰ Kerrigan and Reid, editor's epilogue to *A Personal Anthology*.

¹⁵¹ Kerrigan, "Borges in Madrid."

¹⁵² Gilbert Sorrentino (editor Grove Press) to Kerrigan, November 7, 1966; and Kerrigan to Sorrentino, November 20, 1966, Grove Press Records.

¹⁵³ Bottorff, "Personal Anthology"; Maloff, "Moments of Truth"; and Taylor, "Argentinian Is Writer's Writer."

¹⁵⁴ Borges, *Conversations with Jorge Luis Borges*, interviews by Burgin.

¹⁵⁵ Borges, "Argentine Here on Lecture Tour," interview by Talese; Borges, "About Borges and Not about Borges," interview by Botsford; Borges, "Visit with Argentina's Borges," interview by Gunther; this last interview is related to John Gunther's book publication *Inside South America*; and Borges, "Art of Fiction XXXIX: Jorge Luis Borges; An Interview," by Christ.

Notes" in their stress on the writer as a man of letters who sticks to literary and philosophical themes in conversations and represents his life as exclusively literary.¹⁵⁶ The early interviews in the United States also stressed the autobiographical elements of Borges's work and served his classification as a poet and, from 1967 onward, as what Borges called a "simple" storyteller, rather than as the author of fantastic tales. Borges distanced himself from his earlier writing because he considered it too ornamental and complicated, and also declared his tiredness with mazes and mirrors. Instead, he indicated his wish to write straightforward, simple stories, short prose compositions, and classical forms of poetry, in part because of his blindness.¹⁵⁷

In an interview with Ronald Christ in *The Paris Review*, in the now well-known "The Art of Fiction" interview section of the literary magazine, Borges underlines the autobiographical inspiration of his work:

INTERVIEWER: Some readers have found that your stories are cold, impersonal, rather like some of the newer French writers. Is that your intention? BORGES: No. (*Sadly*) If that has happened, it is out of mere clumsiness. Because I have felt them very deeply. I have felt them so deeply that people might not find out that they were all more or less autobiographical. The stories were about myself, my personal experiences. I suppose it's the English diffidence, no?¹⁵⁸

In the magazine, which had already published a translation of "Funes el memorioso" in 1962, Borges also talks about the head injury that preceded the writing of his first story, "Pierre Menard, autor del Quijote." This autobiographical element was reflected in Borges's "El Sur" and later mentioned in the "Autobiographical Notes."¹⁵⁹

In the same way as Borges's declared preference for poetry and lectures on poetry during his visit to the United States in 1961 contributed to the classification of the author as a poet rather than as a short-story teller, Borges played a direct role in his classification as a poet and "simple" storyteller several years later. In 1967 and

¹⁵⁶ Lefere, *Borges: Entre autorretrato y automitografía*, 162, 186.

¹⁵⁷ See for instance Borges, "Art of Fiction XXXIX: Jorge Luis Borges; An Interview," by Christ, 148; Borges, "Jorge Luis Borges," interview by Guibert; and Borges, "Jorge Luis Borges: An Interview," by Marx and Simon.

¹⁵⁸ Borges, "Art of Fiction XXXIX: Jorge Luis Borges; An Interview," by Christ, 155.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 124.

1968, he visited the country in order to give a series of six Charles Eliot Norton Lectures at Harvard University, in which he almost exclusively talked about poetry, and not unlike his lectures in 1961 referred to Lugones several times. He also lectured and read from his work at various other places and gave interviews, one of which has already been quoted.¹⁶⁰ Comments that Borges made during his lectures, conversations, and poetry readings at Harvard and in the country were repeated by critics who wrote about Borges's stay. These critics reproduced Borges's preference for poetry and for a more classical, common style.¹⁶¹ Irby, for instance, stressed Borges's preferences in his introductory comments to a reading of Borges's poetry at the Poetry Center in New York on April 8, 1968:

Most of the poems this evening belong to this later period [poetry from the 1950s onward]. They are poems, to use Kipling's phrase, concerned with limits and renewals. Poems deceptively simple in utterance, that cultivate the artifice of simplicity which Borges now feels his prose too often neglected.¹⁶²

If Borges's statements were reproduced between 1961 and 1968 by publishers, editors, translators, and critics, his role grew from 1967 onward during his collaboration with di Giovanni. Di Giovanni, not coincidentally, had been drawn to Borges's poetry because it connected him, as he formulates it in the introduction to *Selected Poems*, to "Borges' humanity."¹⁶³ Borges's role in giving prestige to the translations made in collaboration has already been studied. His close collaboration with di Giovanni also enabled Borges to negotiate which of his books would be translated and published first in the United States. Borges and di Giovanni, for instance, opposed the publication of *Historia universal de la infamia* as the first book in the Dutton series of Borges's work, preferring the translation of *El Aleph* instead.¹⁶⁴ The inclusion of Borges's personal comments in these translations stressed the autobiographical perspective on his work, which was especially the case for *The Aleph and Other Stories*, published with Borges's comments and with the

¹⁶⁰ His talks included a conversation in the Loeb Student Center at New York University and a lecture at the Center for Inter-American Relations entitled "The Poet in Argentina."

¹⁶¹ For the classification of Borges as a poet, see "Poet, Teacher Likes U.S. Students," *Ada Evening News* (April 7, 1968); Engel, "Visiting Argentine Poet Loves People and Books" and many other articles by Thomas E. Engel; Maddocks, "In the Velvet Labyrinth"; and Wolff, "Great Literature by Borges."

¹⁶² Typescript of introductory comments, courtesy of James Irby.

¹⁶³ Di Giovanni, introduction to *Selected Poems*, xix.

¹⁶⁴ Di Giovanni to José Guillermo Castillo, August 10, 1969, box 10, folder 13, Review: Latin American Literature and Arts Author Files.

autobiographical piece about Borges's life that would further confirm his author figure in the United States.

For the period up to 1968 that is studied here, however, the impact of Borges's role as a direct mediator in the translation, publication, and critical reception of his work was limited, although the author figure in his texts had a considerable impact on the way he was presented in book form and in literary criticism. In US literary criticism up to 1968, the impact of Borges's role must also be qualified. The criticism dealt with in this section was, though extensive, frequently published in magazines and newspapers with a lower circulation or by mediators with less established positions. For most of the key critics whom I will discuss later, such as Anthony Boucher, Paul de Man, John Updike, and John Barth, however, Borges's poetry and the autobiographical and personal dimension of his work was of marginal importance. For them, Borges's stories, especially those of *Labyrinths*, and to a slightly lesser extent those of *Ficciones*, became the main point of reference.

5. Conclusion: Presenting Borges's peculiarity to the public

Borges's work in the United States had a quick lift-off with a fair number of individual magazine and anthology translations, but only started to reach a wider audience when *Labyrinths* (1962), *Ficciones* (1962), *Dreamtigers* (1964), *Other Inquisitions* (1964), and *A Personal Anthology* (1967) were published in book form. The publishers, editors, and translators who brought these book translations about all had, to a minor or major extent, a hand in the first selection and classification of Borges's work in English. Mediators Donald Yates and James Irby in particular, as well as James Laughlin, Robert MacGregor, Anthony Kerrigan, Richard Seaver, and Borges himself, played key roles. The ways in which the key mediators selected and classified Borges's work reveal the various levels (individual, institutional, national, and international) at which Borges's work was received.

At the individual level, certain selections and classifications of the mediators were directly related to their own poetical preferences. For *Labyrinths*, this is most clear from the detective element contributed by Yates, although the selection of detective-like stories and the comments on detective fiction were by no means dominant, and from Irby's formalist attention to Borges's style. Irby's interest in the compact, Latinized, and paradoxical style of Borges's work became apparent in his internal and external translation norms, which stressed the importance of translating

Borges relatively literally and maintaining his peculiar style. At the same time, these poetical norms were institutionally constrained by the publisher and editor of *New Directions*. In this sense, the position of Yates and Irby as external editors marked the extent to which they were able to make decisions about the presentation of Borges's work. The roles of Laughlin and MacGregor in intervening in the translations of the two translators-editors and in Irby's introduction, and the discussions to which this gave rise, show how organizations and institutions create and regulate norms collectively, in this case to do with the target audience and how Borges should be presented to it.

Whereas *Labyrinths* was thus the result of a process of negotiation between different kinds of mediator within the publishing house, the translation and publication of *Ficciones* was marked by a process of distinction from the competing *New Directions* translation, while Borges himself, who indicated his preference for the translation of single volumes, also played a role. Kerrigan's poetical norms played a less important role, in the first place because the book was a relatively "direct" conversion of the Argentine *Ficciones* and secondly because most of the important decisions on the presentation of the book were made at Grove Press. It is clear that the position of the external translator-editor, for Kerrigan, but also for Yates and Irby, was more limited than that of Roger Caillois's position as editor of Borges's work at Gallimard and as director of the collection *La Croix du Sud*.

The aforementioned processes of negotiation and distinction took place at the institutional level of the publishing houses; the more general, inter-institutional or national level of the transmission between the publishing trade and literary criticism will be dealt with in the following chapter and in the final conclusions. At the international level, France was central in spreading its selections and classifications to both volumes in the United States, at least in comparison with the impact of other national literary fields such as those of Argentina, Germany, the United Kingdom, and Italy. For *Ficciones*, it was mainly via the British contacts of the publishing house that the French 1953 translation of *Labyrinthes* was initially proposed as an exemplar. Grove Press considered the proposal by British publisher Weidenfeld & Nicolson to make a selection of *El Aleph* and *Ficciones* inspired by the French version, before eventually deciding on a direct translation of only *Ficciones*. For *Labyrinths*, reproduction from the French translations took place for different aspects of the anthology. The selection of more "philosophical" fictions, the editors' choice of *Labyrinths* as a title for the anthology, and the preference for prose over poetry could

be related to the role of the first French book translations published by Caillois at Gallimard. Other elements in the presentation of the anthology in the United States, such as the preface by French writer André Maurois, also point to how the French selections and classifications of Borges's work marked this US volume.

In "Acerca de la crítica de los cuentos de Borges," an article on Borges criticism up to 1979, Donald Shaw asserts that criticism of Borges's work mainly focused on his inventive capacities rather than on his literary practice.¹⁶⁵ Critics concentrated on identifying and listing Borges's ideas or themes, and passed over the specific narrative techniques he used. When applying these comments to early mediators in France and the United States, they are certainly true for Caillois, who paid little attention to the narrative quality of Borges's work. This attention to Borges's inventiveness can equally be found in Yates and Irby's thematic interest in Borges's philosophical stories. Irby's introduction explains, for instance, that the essays have been chosen "for the importance of their themes in Borges's work as a whole and for their relevance to the stories."¹⁶⁶ At the same time, however, Irby was early in reflecting on Borges's narrative techniques by focusing on different aspects of his style. The translators-editors therefore made different choices on Borges's work in their institutional roles of editor on the one hand and (academic) critic and translator on the other. As editors, Yates and Irby reproduced existing interpretations, such as those of Caillois, in order to select Borges's texts and a title for the anthology. As translator and academic critic, Irby (and perhaps also Yates) took a heterodox and foreignizing position in order to reflect on Borges's style and translate his texts, a form of distinction that contrasted with his behavior in his role as an editor.

The discussions that this heterodox position gave way to touch upon a more fundamental point in the translation and publication of Borges's work in the United States. Most discussions within *New Directions* about the translations and Irby's introduction boiled down to the question of the publishing house's audience and the way Borges's "peculiarness" should be presented to this public. In this sense, the studied selections and classifications of the key mediators can be reconsidered now from the specific perspective of how the book translations of Borges's work became targeted to a certain readership. For *New Directions*, the comments about "ordinary readers" and "the public at large" indicate a wish to reach a wider, not exclusively

¹⁶⁵ Shaw, "Acerca de la crítica de los cuentos de Borges."

¹⁶⁶ Irby, introduction to *Labyrinths*, xxii.

academic audience. As well as differences in poetical or translation norms between the translators-editors and the publishing house's staff, there were differences in interests and strategies associated with Yates and Irby's roles as translators and editors on the one hand, and Laughlin's role as publisher and MacGregor's role as editor on the other. The fact that Yates and Irby were academics with a relatively "young" position (in terms of artistic age) in the literary field was perhaps also a factor that fueled the intervention by the staff at New Directions.

This issue of the target audience was also recurrent for other publishing houses and mediators involved in the publication of Borges's book translations. In fact, the matter already played a role for a publishing house that decided not to translate Borges's work, Knopf. For editor Herbert Weinstock, it was Borges's "peculiar variety of remarkableness" that would make his work impossible to translate and sell in the United States.¹⁶⁷ At Grove Press, the matter of audience became important after editor Seaver had decided to publish *Ficciones* instead of an anthology and discovered a great overlap in content between the two US volumes. It was Kerrigan who reassured the editor by underlining the differences between the audiences of the two publishing houses, in spite of the similarities in their publishing lists:

It was a surprise to me, too: I had not seen their Table of Contents. But surely Grove has quite a different approach to the (mass) market than N.D. Most surely, your book will be (far?) cheaper: since it is smaller, and since N.D. always seems to overcharge [. . .]. Does the casual buyer, for instance, want to pay for a Bibliography, etc., of Borges (as in the N.D. anthology)? That's only for the fan, the aficionado.¹⁶⁸

As far as pricing was concerned, Kerrigan proved indeed to be right: the hardback of *Labyrinths* was sold at \$5.50; the hardback of *Ficciones* at \$3.50. Laughlin's wish to use the introduction to present Borges to ordinary readers, and MacGregor's statements on the public at large, must therefore be put in the context of the restricted audience for New Directions's publisher's list of experimental and avant-garde literature. Laughlin and MacGregor's wish to include biographical elements, to

¹⁶⁷ Weinstock, manuscript records on *El Aleph* and *La muerte y la brújula*, submitted by Harriet de Onís, November 23, 1949, and January 28, 1952, box 1118, folder 5, Alfred A. Knopf Inc. Records.

¹⁶⁸ Kerrigan to Seaver, December 17, 1961, Grove Press Records.

foreground a text such as "Borges y yo," and to adapt the translations and Irby's introduction can therefore be seen as a step toward making Borges presentable to a wider audience, but without the publishing house trying to reach outside its group of target readers and without rigorously "playing down the eccentricity" of Borges's work, to quote Laughlin.¹⁶⁹ Grove Press's *Ficciones* also included biographical information, used the awarding of the Prix International des Éditeurs for promotional reasons in its material presentation, and was reprinted as an inexpensive Evergreen paperback in the same year as the hardback edition. It was therefore, as can also be inferred from Kerrigan's letter, somewhat more directed to the mass market. This approach to the market was, however, at odds with Kerrigan's own politico-historical presentation of Borges's work as eccentric or marginal, which seems to confirm his own more peripheral position in the publication process at Grove Press.

In spite of these concerns about reaching a wider audience, *Labyrinths* and *Ficciones*, and also *Dreamtigers* and *Other Inquisitions*, were issued by publishing houses that obviously did not reach the same audience as any commercial press. The consequences that this may have had were made explicit in a 1965 review written by John Updike. In this review, Updike contrasts Borges's publication history with that of Franz Kafka:

I was prompted to read Borges seriously by a remark made internationally enough in Rumania, where, after a blanket disparagement of contemporary French and German fiction, Borges was praised by a young critic in a tone he had previously reserved for Kafka. An analogy with Kafka is inevitable, but I wonder if Borges' abrupt projection, by the university and avant-garde presses, into the bookstores will prove as momentous as Kafka's publication, by the commercial firm of Knopf, in the thirties. It is not a question of Borges' excellence.¹⁷⁰

The institutional positions of New Directions, Grove Press, and the University of Texas Press may thus have limited Borges's audience, and my study of the critical reception of Borges's work will further explore this hypothesis. In contrast with *Labyrinths* and *Ficciones*, the translation and publication process at the University of

¹⁶⁹ Laughlin to Allen, February 1, 1961, item (2021), folder 8, New Directions Publishing Corp. Records.

¹⁷⁰ Updike, "Books: The Author as Librarian," 223.

Texas Press was hardly marked by these discussions about the public and the target reader of Borges's work, perhaps not surprisingly given its academic profile.

The translations made in collaboration between Borges and di Giovanni that were issued later by the commercial press Dutton, however, represent another step in the discussion about Borges's presentation to the public. Di Giovanni's translations reflected a clear wish to adapt Borges's work according to his own (and possibly Borges's) norms of readability. His translations, positioned against those by Irby and other early translators, corresponded to di Giovanni's goal of making Borges's writing accessible to what the front flap of *The Aleph and Other Stories* calls "a wide American readership," which for di Giovanni was above all non-academic and non-informed readers. While the previously quoted sales figures do not include all of the later Dutton titles, di Giovanni's translations do indeed seem to have found a large number of readers, although *Labyrinths*, with already more than 45,000 copies sold between 1962 and 1970, also reached a very considerable readership.¹⁷¹

One could put forward the argument that Borges's presentation to the US public was less based on the publication of these translations and more on his own public presentation in lectures and interviews. This could have contributed, for instance, to the view that Borges's work was essentially autobiographical and that the author was foremost a poet rather than the fantastic storyteller of *Labyrinths* and *Ficciones*. Mediators such as publishers, editors, and critics may have stressed these aspects because they wanted to make Borges more widely accessible, although it is also probable that mediators reproduced Borges's own statements in order to reduce the risk that stems from a lack of an objective method for judging new literary texts. Borges scholar Diana Sorensen, for instance, has observed that, contrary to the French reception, the recognition of Borges in the United States was partly put into motion by his public presentation.¹⁷² However, for the early period until 1968, the role of Borges himself in literary criticism should in my view not be overestimated, as Borges's statements on the autobiographical dimension of his work and his preference for poetry were of marginal importance for critics with a key position in the critical reception. It could be assumed that the negligence of these personal dimensions of Borges's work by key critics was due to the dominant interest in Borges's inventions, ideas, and themes, as mentioned by Donald Shaw. Borges's

¹⁷¹ Item (2022), New Directions Publishing Corp. Records. See also note 19.

¹⁷² Sorensen, "Toward a Transnational Republic of Letters."

author figure presented in his fictional and non-fictional texts did in any case play a role in the making of the early book publications.

My focus on a number of key mediators has answered several questions about how they selected and classified Borges's work for translations and publications, and how these selections and classifications are related to their norms. It has, however, also limited the perspective to the behavior of these mediators, and it is to these limitations that I will now turn. A possible limitation of my focus on individual mediators is, for instance, the relative neglect of the organizations and institutions that played a role in the translation and publication of Borges's books, apart from the attention paid to the publishing houses in which the key mediators were involved. The role of the subsidy program administered by the Association of American University Presses (AAUP, 1960-1966) that sponsored *Dreamtigers* and *Other Inquisitions*, and the translation of individual texts by Borges in particular magazines in the United States, such as the numerous 1968 translations in *The Atlantic*, *The New Yorker*, and *TriQuarterly*, have, for instance, not been analyzed in detail, as none of my key mediators were actively involved in these organizations.

From an institutional perspective, I also only commented briefly on Borges being awarded the Prix International des Éditeurs, but this can perhaps be accounted for. *Ficciones* was a direct product of the prize, but its translation and publication, as well as its critical reception process, were not much affected by the meetings at Formentor. As far as the critical reception is concerned, the awarding of the prize was only briefly mentioned in some newspapers and magazines in 1961 and 1962, for instance in an interview in *Américas*, the monthly magazine published by the Organization of American States (OAS), and in an interview by Gay Talese for *The New York Times*.¹⁷³ Important national newspapers such as *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Washington Post*, *The Los Angeles Times*, and *The Christian Science Monitor*, however, did not publish articles on the occasion of the awarding of the prize.¹⁷⁴ The importance of the prize for the reception of Borges in the United States may therefore have to be qualified, as Brigitte Adriaensen and Maarten Steenmeijer also claim in their article on the role of the prize in the reception of Borges's work in general.¹⁷⁵ According to the authors, the idea that Borges's

¹⁷³ Borges, "Borges on Literature," interview by Vinacua, 2; and Borges, "Argentine Here on Lecture Tour," interview by Talese.

¹⁷⁴ For this, see the digital ProQuest database of national newspapers in the United States.

¹⁷⁵ Adriaensen and Steenmeijer, "Le mythe et la réalité."

(international) success was largely due to the prize is probably a product of Borges's own comments in his "Autobiographical Notes," which were repeated by many reviewers, biographers, and scholars of reception afterwards. It seems thus that it was not the prize that catapulted Borges on to the international scene, but rather Borges himself who gave prestige to the prize, which confirms his role in the reception of his own work. Therefore, the role of the Prix International and of Borges's first trip to the United States, which also provoked little coverage, both of which are seen by Jaime Alazraki in his study on the reception of Borges in the United States as important factors that increased the visibility of Borges,¹⁷⁶ may have to be downplayed.

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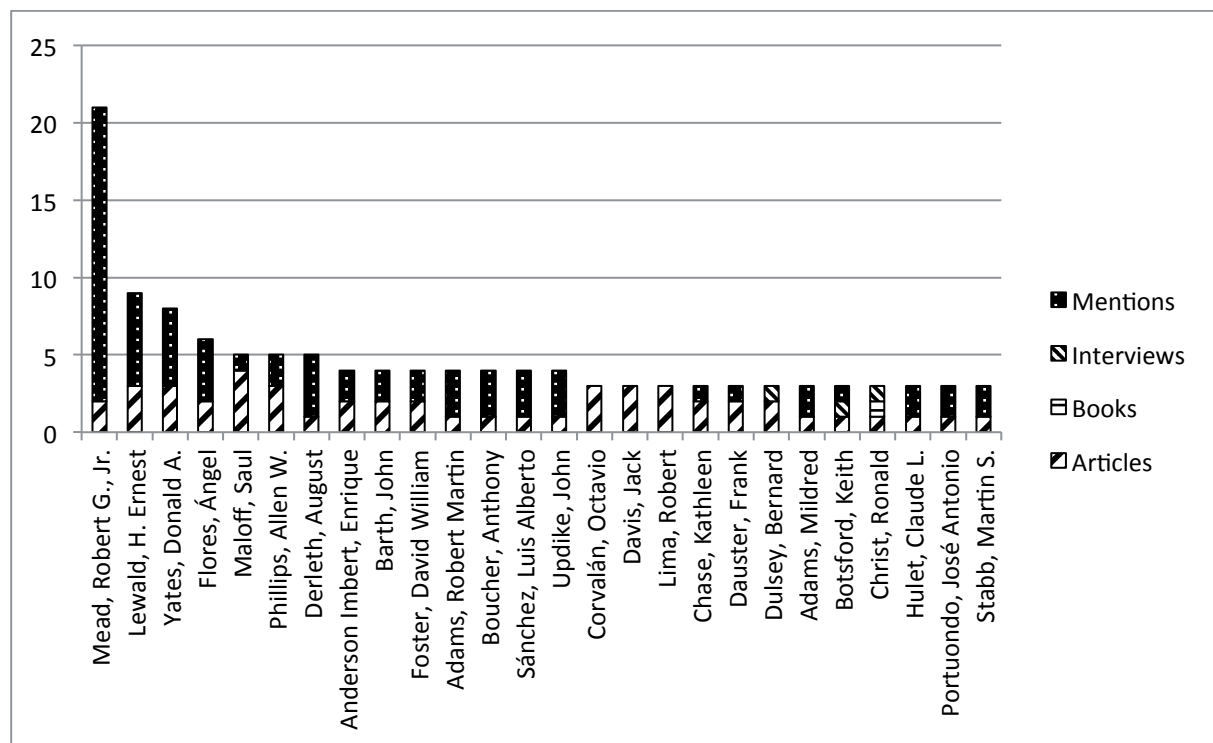
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Chapter 2. Early criticism of Borges's work in the United States

1. Literary criticism and the positions of key critics in the early reception of Borges's work in the United States

I will take a closer look at how certain critics took a key position in the reception of Borges's work in the United States up to 1968, the period I chose for the early phase of the reception. As a first criterion to limit my corpus, I will look at the frequency with which critics published on Borges during the early phase of his reception. As there were more than 200 different critics in total, only a small part of the wide panorama of critics could be shown in the form of a frequency graph. This means that only those critics who published at least three times on Borges were included in the visual representation of the number of publications (articles, books including PhD theses, interviews) and references (mentions) below.



Apart from a number of mediators whom I will deal with below, such as Donald Yates, Saul Maloff, August Derleth, John Barth, Robert Martin Adams, Anthony Boucher, Luis Alberto Sánchez, John Updike, Jack Davis, Mildred Adams, and Claude L. Hulet, all of the critics listed in the graph published in academic

media. Robert G. Mead Jr., for instance, published for scholarly journals focused on Hispanic (and Luso-Brazilian) studies. He wrote a review of the original edition of Borges's *Otras inquisiciones* in *Revista hispánica moderna* and a review of *A Personal Anthology* for *Saturday Review*, but only mentioned Borges in "The Hispanic World," a section of *Hispania* that took up short comments on new (scholarly) publications.¹⁷⁷ The relatively high number of Mead's Borges mentions illustrates the fact that a large number of the mentions in my US corpus are academic, as many of these academic texts are word searchable thanks to digital databases such as JSTOR. Other critics who published frequently on Borges, among whom were Ernest H. Lewald, Allen W. Phillips, David William Foster, Enrique Anderson Imbert, and Ángel Flores, to name only the highest-listed critics, also published frequently in academic journals such as *Hispania*, *Revista hispánica moderna*, *Books Abroad*, *Revista iberoamericana*, and, in the case of the Anderson Imbert and Flores, in their histories of Spanish American literature.¹⁷⁸

As far as frequency is concerned, academic publications on Borges were booming, especially from the 1950s onwards, as can be deduced from the chronological bibliography at the end of this thesis. This boom can be seen as part of the spectacular growth of Latin American study programs in the United States, partly brought on by the success of the Cuban Revolution in 1959 and the renewed US interest in Latin America that accompanied it.¹⁷⁹ It can equally be related to what Randall Jarrell called "The Age of Criticism" in an article first published in 1952. According to Jarrell, US criticism of the 1950s was gaining importance as far as quantity and impact were concerned, to the detriment of reading and creative writing. Jarrell observed a growing inclination for critics to base their arguments on theoretical models and try to show that criticism is a science just like the other sciences: "Criticism will soon have reached the state of scholarship."¹⁸⁰ This professionalization or academization of criticism that Jarrell describes probably had a negative effect on more public forms of criticism, which lost their connections with academic criticism under the impact of theoretical movements. Various essays on

¹⁷⁷ Mead Jr., review of *Otras inquisiciones*; and "Maze of the Unreal and Real." For the mentions, see many issues of *Hispania* between 1954 and 1964.

¹⁷⁸ For all these publications, see the final, chronological bibliography.

¹⁷⁹ Needler and Walker, "Current Status of Latin American Studies Programs."

¹⁸⁰ Jarrell, "Age of Criticism," 75.

criticism in the United States suggest that US book reviewing entered a crisis in the 1960s, a matter to which I will return in the conclusions to this chapter.¹⁸¹

In spite of the large quantity of US academic criticism of Borges's work—and the impact that critics such as Jarrell suggest it may have had—I will limit my focus here to non-academic criticism; that is, to the wider reviewing culture. This will exclude a large amount of my US corpus, but will enable me to show a type of criticism that receives little attention in traditional literary histories and histories of criticism. While literary histories usually deal with authors and literature, most histories of criticism study academic critics and criticism. By using selection criteria that do not focus exclusively on the institutional positions of critics, but on their key positions in the reception of Borges's work, I will show a different perspective and highlight critics who have received little attention, at least in their roles as journalistic and essayistic critics.

There are four reasons for excluding academic criticism from my corpus. First, it is questionable whether academic critics of Borges's work had a larger impact than their non-academic counterparts. Most of the critics included in the frequency graph are scholars whose established positions were limited to the academic field. Whereas some of the academic critics listed above have become well known in the field of Latin American studies—the most important of whom is perhaps Enrique Anderson Imbert—their positions were nevertheless restricted to this field. The two dominant groups in academic criticism in the United States, the New Critics and the New York Intellectuals,¹⁸² rarely published on Borges. None of the leading New Critics such as Allen Tate, Cleanth Brooks, and Robert Penn Warren, who built their reputations in the 1930s and 1940s and focused on the close reading of canonical texts, published on or referred to Borges. The New York Intellectuals, a school of committed leftist critics interested in avant-garde and modernist literature that was journalistically oriented but moved to universities in the early 1960s, also published sparsely on Borges. Philosopher and critic William Barrett, chronicler of the New York Intellectuals, published a short review of *Labyrinths* and *Ficciones* in *The Atlantic Monthly* in 1962, and Richard Poirier published an article in 1968 that was partly dedicated to Borges

¹⁸¹ See, among other studies, Peyre's "What is Wrong with American Book-Reviewing."

¹⁸² See, for instance, Webster, *History of Postwar American Literary Opinion*. Grant Webster focuses on the New Critics and the New York Intellectuals, although academic criticism in my period of study was of course by no means limited to these two major schools. Leading critics associated with other groups, such as the Chicago School, myth criticism, phenomenology, existentialism, hermeneutics, and structuralism, however, did not publish on Borges either. For these critics, see Leitch, *American Literary Criticism since the 1930s*.

in *Partisan Review*, the liberal forum of the Intellectuals of which Poirier was the editor at Rutgers University.¹⁸³ Not only were the positions of the academic critics who published on Borges restricted, but their texts were also issued in scholarly journals with limited diffusion outside the academic field. The journals were in many cases focused on Latin American literature and culture, and some even published exclusively in Spanish.

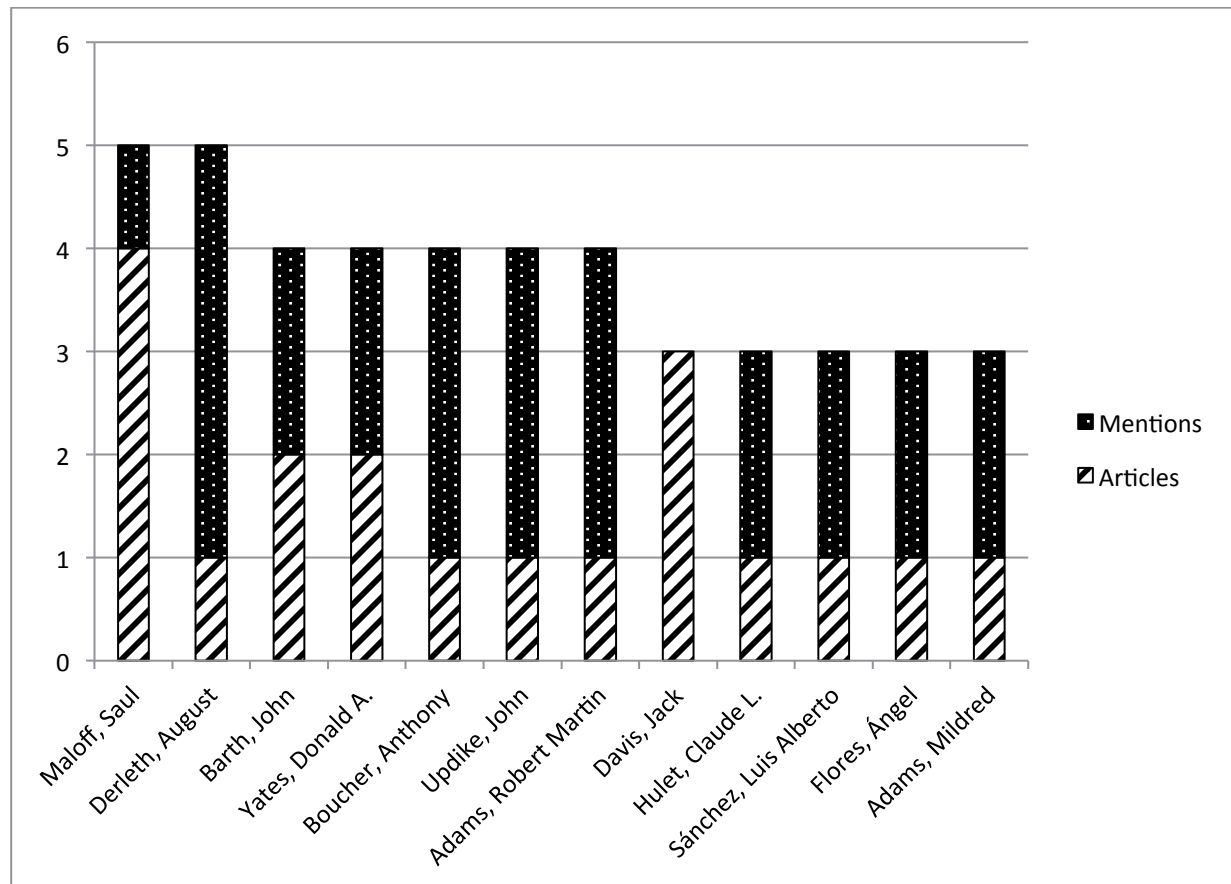
A second reason for excluding academic criticism is that doing so will make my French and US corpora more comparable. None of the early French publications on Borges were issued in academic journals or books. In this sense, in French Borges criticism there was a clearer time difference between a primary form of journalistic and essayistic criticism about relatively new books and a secondary form of academic criticism about literature that is better known and that has already earned a place in the canon. Third, my focus on criticism in newspapers and literary magazines will enable me to show the interaction between mediators responsible for the English book translations issued by publishing houses and critics who wrote about these same translations, and thus between my two chapters on Borges in the United States. By contrast, many academic critics wrote in Spanish on the original Argentine editions of Borges's work. Finally, the choice of more public forms of criticism is consistent with my interest in the norms that mediators used to evaluate Borges's work, as value judgments are more explicitly present in criticism in newspapers and literary magazines than in academic criticism. The professionalization of English-language criticism from the 1950s contributed to the elimination of the evaluative aspect of academic criticism, which sharpened the distinction between reviewing and criticism.¹⁸⁴

The difference between academic and non-academic publications is of course a subtle one, which cannot be measured easily. The presence of explicit value judgments, for instance, is no easy measure for distinguishing between academic and non-academic publications, but the medium of publication offers a clearer selection criterion. For a new frequency graph of non-academic criticism, I have therefore pragmatically chosen to exclude criticism published in journals affiliated with universities or by university presses. In this way, I did not exclude certain critics beforehand, as many combined their institutional role as scholar with that of journalistic reviewer, and published on Borges in both these roles. In the frequency

¹⁸³ Barrett, "Reader's Choice"; and Poirier, "Politics of Self-Parody."

¹⁸⁴ See Pool, *Faint Praise: The Plight of Book Reviewing in America*; and McDonald, *Death of the Critic*.

count, all critics who published at least three times on Borges were again taken up in the graph.



Although critics in the United States chose a wide range of publication types, critics who published frequently on Borges in non-academic media limited themselves to articles and mentions. Looking more closely at the names and publications of the critics who frequently wrote on Borges will give an idea of their positions in the reception of the author's work. The mere number of publications and references falls short of fully explaining the positions of some critics in the reception process, as it was also important, for instance, that these texts were published by prestigious critics. As well as the frequency criterion, I will therefore study the institutional positions of the mediators, the institutional roles they combined in order to mediate the author's work, and their impact through repeated publication.

These four criteria of frequency, institutional position, combination of institutional roles, and impact together offer no absolute measures but can be used to compare critics of Borges with one another. I will take the critics from the second frequency graph, relate them to these other criteria, and look at which critics

complied with at least two of the four criteria. Eventually, I will deal with five key critics in detail—Saul Maloff, John Barth, Anthony Boucher, John Updike, and Paul de Man—but also pay attention to others who were, in different ways, related to these critics.

It has to be remarked first of all that the frequency graph excludes a critic who seems to have been very prolific: Thomas E. Engel. A closer look at Engel's fifteen articles on Borges, however, quickly reveals that they were all almost the same, but with different titles and subtitles, and were also all published around the same date in 1968. The articles can therefore be considered as one and the same publication written for the syndicated press, as a consequence of which they are not included in the graph. Engel's publication was made for the Associated Press (AP) and included in regional newspapers such as *The Portsmouth Herald*, *Winona Daily News*, *Gettysburg Times*, *Fitchburg Sentinel*, and many others.¹⁸⁵ Given that Engel also did not gain prestige as a critic in the US literary field, I will therefore not consider him a key mediator of Borges's work.

The first critic in the frequency graph is the short-story writer and critic Saul Maloff, whom I will consider as a key critic. His importance for Borges mainly lies in the frequency with which he published on Borges's work in highly visible periodicals. His four reviews on the Argentine writer deal with *Labyrinths*, *Ficciones*, and *A Personal Anthology*, and two of these were published in *Newsweek* and the travel magazine *Holiday*, periodicals with a high circulation but perhaps a lower prestige than for instance *The New York Review of Books* or *The New York Times Book Review*.¹⁸⁶ Maloff worked at literature departments of different universities and colleges, was books editor of *Newsweek* in the 1960s, and published in other important periodicals such as *The New Yorker*, *The New Republic*, *The New York Times Book Review*, *The Nation*, *Texas Quarterly*, and *Critique*. In spite of this, his institutional position was somewhat less established than those of other Borges critics such as John Updike, perhaps because some of the magazines in which he published were directed at a large audience, but mostly because he did not gain equal prestige as a novelist. The possible impact of Maloff on other mediators will be studied in the section dedicated to his reviews, but the fact that one of his reviews was taken up in

¹⁸⁵ To cite only four, see Engel, "Argentine Poet, Essayist Teaching at Harvard"; "Visitor Praises Americans"; "Visiting Argentine Poet Loves People and Books"; and "Argentina's Poet Leads Two Lives."

¹⁸⁶ Maloff, "Eerie Emblems of a Bizarre, Terrifying World"; "Critical Eye"; "Moments of Truth"; and "Critics' Choices for Christmas." Maloff refers to Borges in: Maloff, review of *Into the Mainstream*.

1969 in *Review*, the magazine that reprinted US reviews on Latin American literature, gives a first indication of this influence.¹⁸⁷ Maloff's Borges reviews can be considered representative of certain critical discussions of the author, as his classifications also appeared in texts by other critics. In the section on Maloff, I will deal with some of these other critics, such as movie and drama critic John Simon and two critics associated with the Congress for Cultural Freedom: the Belgian-born US critic and translator Keith Botsford and the British translator J. M. Cohen. These critics were less important for the reception of Borges's work, as they wrote less frequently on the author and published in less important periodicals, but will be discussed briefly together with Maloff in order to show the existence of diverging and converging selections, classifications, and norms.

The American writer and anthologist August Derleth is the second critic ranked in the frequency graph, having published several times on Borges. All his publications, however, appeared in the regional newspaper *The Capital Times* of Madison, Wisconsin, and mostly only mentioned Borges.¹⁸⁸ Even though Derleth was successful as a regional writer and prolific in other genres such as science fiction and detective fiction, his institutional position was not as central as those of critics who published in *The New York Review of Books* or *The New York Times Book Review*. Now best remembered as the first publisher of H. P. Lovecraft's writings, Derleth does therefore not meet more than one criterion for key mediators in the reception of Borges's work.

Third place in the graph is occupied by John Barth, who matches all four criteria for key mediators. Barth commented on Borges's work in four different texts in the 1960s, and continued to do so later on. As Barth has himself indicated, his discovery of Borges's work took place when he was already a professor of English in his mid-thirties at the State University of New York at Buffalo, when he was finishing his fourth novel and first major literary success, *Giles Goat-Boy*, published in 1966.¹⁸⁹ Because of the success of his fictional work, which he furthermore combined with a university professorship, Barth's position in the 1960s was well established. His 1967 essay "The Literature of Exhaustion," as well as another 1980 essay, "The Literature of Replenishment," was published in the prestigious magazine *The Atlantic Monthly*

¹⁸⁷ Maloff, Lange, and Simon, review of *A Personal Anthology*.

¹⁸⁸ Derleth, "Books of the Times," *The Capital Times* (October 1, 1961); "Books of the Times," *The Capital Times* (July 5, 1962); "Best Books of 1962 as Selected by August Derleth"; "Books of the Times," *The Capital Times* (July 25, 1963); and "Outstanding 1967 Books, Selected by August Derleth." The second item is a review; the others are mentions.

¹⁸⁹ See Barth, "Borges & I."

and reprinted several times.¹⁹⁰ His fictional work, in particular *Lost in the Funhouse* from 1968, has been related to Borges's work by several critics. I will focus on Barth's non-fictional, critical work in my discussion of this key mediator.

When discussing Barth, I will also refer to other critics who shared several classifications and norms with him, in particular a norm I will call "humanlikeness." This norm refers to the prescription that literature needs to represent or express human experiences, and also implies a partially realist (mimetic) poetics. These critics include John Plotz and Richard Poirier, who can be considered as more peripheral in the reception of Borges's work as far as frequency, institutional position, combination of institutional roles, and impact on other mediators are concerned. While Plotz only mentioned Borges in an article for *Harvard Crimson*, Poirier's role was somewhat more important, as he published an essay partially dedicated to Borges in *Partisan Review* and held a more central institutional position. In the 1960s, Poirier published texts for *Harper's*, *The New York Review of Books*, and *Partisan Review* and worked as professor of English literature at Rutgers University. The two critics will be dealt with in the discussion of Barth's work.

The role of Donald Yates, who is fourth in the graph, has been discussed previously. In contrast with other mediators involved in translations and publications of Borges's work, such as James Irby, Anthony Kerrigan, and Alastair Reid, Yates also published articles on Borges in *The New York Times* and *The New York Times Book Review*. The graph thus makes it clear that, although Yates's work on Borges also played a role in criticism, none of the mediators involved in the translation and publication process of Borges's books dominated the critical panorama as far as frequency is concerned, in contrast with Roger Caillois in France. Whereas most critics who published frequently on Borges perhaps evidently only did so after the first book translations in the United States, Yates and three critics who spoke Spanish, Luis Alberto Sánchez, Ángel Flores, and Mildred Adams, also published on Borges before 1962, mostly by briefly mentioning the Argentine author.

Also included in the frequency graph is Anthony Boucher, the pen name for William Anthony Parker White. Boucher wrote mystery novels and science fiction stories and was co-founder and co-editor of *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction*. He published four times on Borges in the 1960s, each case in his "Criminals at Large" column for *The New York Times* and *The New York Times Book Review*, a highly visible weekly series of reviews on detective fiction that ran from 1949 until his death

¹⁹⁰ Barth, "Literature of Exhaustion"; and "Literature of Replenishment."

in 1968.¹⁹¹ Apart from his criticism of Borges's work, he was also early in rendering "El jardín de senderos que se bifurcan" into English in 1948 as a regular translator for *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine*.¹⁹² A noted anthologist in the detective fiction and science fiction field, Boucher included Borges's work in an anthology of *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine* and in annual anthologies such as *Best Detective Stories of the Year*.¹⁹³ In contrast with the other key critics, Boucher was the only one who combined his role as a Borges critic with those of translator and anthologist of his work. As a reviewer for a high-profile column who also combined this role with those of translator and editor, his institutional position was fairly central, although his discussions did take place within the more specialized field of detective fiction. Boucher thus meets the criteria of frequency, combination of roles, and institutional position thanks to the periodicals in which he published.

In discussing Boucher's classification of Borges as a detective writer in particular, I will also refer very briefly to two other critics. The first is US writer, translator, and critic Mildred Adams, who is also listed in the frequency graph. Adams published in the same periodicals as Boucher, in *The New York Times* and *The New York Times Book Review*, but did so less frequently and without working as a Borges translator too.¹⁹⁴ She worked as a freelance journalist for *The New York Times* in Spain in the 1920s and 1930s and translated several volumes by the Spanish philosopher José Ortega y Gasset, as well as serving as the US advisor to *Revista de Occidente* in Madrid and *Sur* in Buenos Aires. As she also commented on the genre of the detective in her only review of Borges, her publication will be mentioned in the discussion of Boucher's work. A second critic who will be briefly referred to is the science fiction writer and editor Judith Merrill, a pseudonym for Judith Josephine Grossman. Just like Boucher before her, Merrill was a book critic and a book review editor for *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction*. Her role for the classification of Borges as a science fiction writer was also similar to that of Boucher for detective fiction, as she reviewed Borges's work for *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction*

¹⁹¹ Boucher, "Criminals at Large," *The New York Times* (June 10, 1962); "Criminals at Large," *The New York Times* (August 4, 1963); "Criminals at Large," *The New York Times Book Review* (November 3, 1963); and "Criminals at Large," *The New York Times Book Review* (December 31, 1967).

¹⁹² Borges, "Garden of Forking Paths," *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine* 12, no. 57 (August, 1948).

¹⁹³ Borges, "Garden of Forking Paths," in *The Quintessence of Queen: Best Prize Stories from 12 Years of "Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine"*; "Two Labyrinthine Tales: Theme of the Traitor and the Hero," in *Best Detective Stories of the Year: 18th Annual Collection*; "Two Labyrinthine Tales: The Two Kings and the Two Labyrinths," in *Best Detective Stories of the Year: 18th Annual Collection*; and "Dead Man," in *Best Detective Stories of the Year: 23rd Annual Collection*.

¹⁹⁴ For her review, see Adams, "Miniatures of a Giant." For two mentions, see "Literary Letter from South America"; and "First Lady."

and included his work in an anthology on science fiction.¹⁹⁵ Her work on Borges was, however, much less extensive than that of Boucher—she is not listed in the graph—and less visible than in his review column, and will therefore only serve as a brief point of comparison.

The next critic in the frequency graph is John Updike, an author who combined his prolific work as a novelist, short-story writer, poet, and dramatist with an equally fertile production of essays and book reviews. When asked about the reasons behind this prolific critical production, Updike stated: “I do it [. . .] when some author, like Spark or Borges, excites me and I want to share the good news.”¹⁹⁶ He wrote a long review in 1965 and mentioned the Argentine author on three other occasions (and in fact continued to refer to him in later texts).¹⁹⁷ Updike had already established his name at the time of his publications on Borges. As a fiction author, novels such as *Rabbit, Run* from 1960 had confirmed his reputation in US fiction. As a critic, he wrote in highly visible and prestigious magazines and newspapers such as *The New Yorker*, *The New York Review of Books*, *The New York Times Book Review*, and *The Paris Review*. If one provisionally defines impact as the repeated publication of a text, Updike’s first review of Borges can be considered influential, as it was reproduced in Updike’s own collection *Picked-Up Pieces* and in several Spanish and English anthologies of Borges criticism.

Other critics in the frequency graph include Robert Martin Adams, Jack Davis, Claude L. Hulet, Luis Alberto Sánchez, and Ángel Flores. Although they frequently published on Borges, their work was restricted to periodicals and books that reached a smaller audience in comparison with, for instance, Maloff and Boucher. Perhaps in relation to this, their institutional positions seem to have been less established than those of some other critics listed here. Adams, for instance, referred twice to Borges in the prestigious *New York Review of Books*, but, apart from one other mention, wrote only one article on Borges for *The Hudson Review*, a magazine that published longer studies.¹⁹⁸ Davis only published on Borges for *Harvard Crimson*, particularly on Borges’s Charles Eliot Norton Lectures at Harvard University.¹⁹⁹ Hulet wrote three

¹⁹⁵ Merrill, “Books: Labyrinths”; and Borges, “Circular Ruins,” in *The Year’s Best S-F*.

¹⁹⁶ Updike, “Art of Fiction XLIII: John Updike,” interview by Samuels.

¹⁹⁷ Updike, “Books: The Author as Librarian”; “Books: Grove Is My Press, and Avant My Garde”; “Writers I Have Met”; and “Art of Fiction XLIII: John Updike,” interview by Samuels.

¹⁹⁸ For the review, see Adams, “Intricate Argentine.” For the mentions, see “Throwing Up Absurd,” “Nabokov’s Game”; and “Down among the Phenomena.”

¹⁹⁹ Davis, “Jorge Luis Borges”; “Bogus”; and “Borges Lecturing.”

times on Borges for *The Los Angeles Times*: one very brief review and two mentions.²⁰⁰ Sánchez published his three pieces in *La nueva democracia*, a New York-based periodical that published in Spanish.²⁰¹ Lastly, Flores also published on Borges in Spanish, in his literary history published in New York, and mentioned the author in *Américas*, the magazine of the OAS, and in an annual encyclopedia.²⁰² His work on Borges, which was of a rather scholarly nature, was thus not published in high-profile periodicals and books either.

Boucher, Maloff, Updike, and Barth comply with the frequency criterion and at least one other criterion each. By contrast, the last key critic I will discuss meets the criteria of institutional position and impact but not those of frequency and the combination of institutional roles. With only one text on Borges, a review in *The New York Review of Books* in 1964, the Belgian-born literary critic Paul de Man is not included in the graph. This text, however, was published in one of the most prestigious review media, and was later frequently taken up in other publications, such as in Jaime Alazraki's anthology *Critical Essays on Jorge Luis Borges* and in de Man's own *Critical Writings, 1953-1978*.²⁰³ At the time of his review of Borges, de Man had defended his thesis at Harvard University in 1960 and worked at the University of Zurich and Cornell University. Between 1963 and 1966, he also wrote reviews for *The New York Review of Books*, mainly on French authors such as Albert Camus, André Gide, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Jean Giraudoux. Particularly from 1970 onwards, de Man would make a reputation for himself as Sterling Professor of Humanities and chair of the department of comparative literature at Yale University, where the Yale School of deconstructive critics such as J. Hillis Miller, Geoffrey H. Hartman, and Jacques Derrida came into being. His contribution to collaborationist newspapers during the Second World War, which would lead to a reconsideration of his work, only became known after his death in 1983. In the 1960s, de Man already derived his institutional position partly from his academic work. Of the works of the five key critics discussed here, it is his that are most closely related to academic literary criticism, in sharp contrast with Updike, for instance, who wished to remain far from academic criticism.²⁰⁴ This does not automatically exclude de Man from my corpus, as I focus on non-academic criticism rather than exclude certain academic critics outright. In

²⁰⁰ Respectively Hulet, "Artist as Man Playing God"; "Surprise: Spanish Novel Permeated by Violence"; and "A Dialog with the Latin Literati."

²⁰¹ Sánchez, "Civilización o cultura"; "Una historia parcial y deformada"; and "Jorge Luis Borges."

²⁰² Respectively Flores, "Jorge Luis Borges"; "Inside the Killer"; and "Latin American Literature."

²⁰³ De Man, "Modern Master."

²⁰⁴ See for instance Updike, preface to *Odd Jobs*, xxi.

his institutional role as a journalistic critic, de Man complies with my selection criteria for key critics based on his institutional position and the impact of his article through repeated publication. I will thus mainly focus on de Man's norms for selecting and classifying Borges's work for *The New York Review of Books*, although I will also refer to his role and norms as an academic critic.

I will now discuss how key critics selected and classified Borges's work and how these selections and classifications relate to their norms. I will deal respectively with Boucher, Maloff, de Man, Updike, and Barth, roughly following a chronological order, although the first two critics wrote on Borges during the whole reception period. In order to better understand the selections, classifications, and norms of the five critics, I will in some cases analyze the extent to which these differed or corresponded with those of other, more peripheral mediators, and therefore also briefly refer to Adams, Merrill, Simon, Botsford, Cohen, Plotz, and Poirier. As in my chapters on Borges in France, my approach will thus vary between the sections, as I will particularly focus on the collective transmission of selections, classifications, and norms in certain sections (particularly the section on Maloff), whereas I will concentrate more individually on how mediators articulated and used their poetical preferences in others (particularly the sections on de Man and Updike).

2. Anthony Boucher: Borges and the emancipation of the detective story

On its front flap, *Labyrinths* offered a reference to the genre of the detective, and also to science fiction. At the same time, adjectives such as "highbrow" and "intellectual" in the same peritext prevented a complete identification of Borges's work with detective stories. The 1962 book volume did not, however, intend to give a representative image of the detective dimension in Borges's work, as Donald Yates and James Irby found Borges's work in collaboration with Adolfo Bioy Casares to be beyond the scope of the book translation.²⁰⁵ After publication, this choice led Yates and Robert MacGregor at New Directions to ponder whether the editing process had "weeded out the detective story element in Borges." That was in any case the opinion

²⁰⁵ Yates to James Laughlin, March 21, 1959, item (2012), folder 1, New Directions Publishing Corp. Records; and Yates to Irby, April 19 and July 15, 1960, private correspondence.

of Yates's long-time friend Anthony Boucher, who in internal correspondence criticized the exclusion of stories such as "Examen de la obra de Herbert Quain."²⁰⁶

Boucher's role in the reception of Borges's work was not limited to his criticism of translated book volumes, but started earlier with his work as a translator and editor for magazines. As early as 1948, he translated Borges's "El jardín de senderos que se bifurcan," which won a prize in the category of "Best Foreign Stories" in the annual contest for best detective stories of *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine*.²⁰⁷ In the case of that magazine, Boucher's role was limited to that of the translation, and it was magazine editor Frederic Dannay, one of the two mystery writers of the pseudonym Ellery Queen, who rejected a second Borges story offered by Boucher, "La muerte y la brújula."²⁰⁸ In an anonymous comment on Borges's prize-winning story, it is also probably Dannay who refers to the theme of the labyrinth in Borges's work:

In all his work, especially in his fiction, the author employs the motif of a labyrinth—it is a persistent monomania, recurring in subtly changing variations, like (Mr. Boucher reminds us) the crutches in the paintings of Salvador Dali [*sic*]. In "The Garden of Forking Paths," Señor Borges's labyrinthine theme reaches its fullest expression.²⁰⁹

In cases where Boucher himself includes Borges's work, as an editor of an anthology of *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine* and in several annual anthologies of *Best Detective Stories of the Year*, he comments on the stories he selects. In 1963, for

²⁰⁶ MacGregor to Yates, June 12, 1962, item (2012), folder 16, New Directions Publishing Corp. Records; and Yates, e-mail message to author, June 2, 2011.

²⁰⁷ Borges, "Garden of Forking Paths," *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine* 12, no. 57 (August, 1948).

²⁰⁸ See Marks, "Editor," 77. Jeffrey Marks does not give a reason for this rejection. Borges claimed he met Fred Dannay, or at least one of the authors of the pseudonym Ellery Queen, during his 1967 stay in the United States for the Charles Eliot Norton Lectures: "Durante ese viaje tuve la oportunidad de conocer en Nueva York a Ellery Queen o, mejor dicho, a uno de los autores que con ese nombre escribían novelas policiales. Eran dos primos que inventaron a ese excelente escritor; hacían más o menos lo mismo que habíamos hecho Bioy y yo con Bustos-Domecq, con la diferencia que la producción de ellos era más constante que la nuestra, e individualmente ellos habían desaparecido para convertirse en ese detective escritor. Por aquel tiempo el Mister Magazine, una publicación de los Estados Unidos, me otorga un premio por mi cuento El jardín de senderos que se bifurcan." Alifano, *Borges, biografía verbal*, 121; italics in the original. It seems, however, that this meeting took place in April 1976 in New York. Yates, e-mail message to author, November 12, 2012. Borges also met Anthony Boucher at an earlier date. Adolfo Bioy Casares's diary informs on Borges's view of this encounter during his first visit to the United States: "[Lunes, 26 de febrero de 1962] Tuve una conversación técnica con Anthony Boucher: una persona muy viva, muy cordial, muy vulgar, sumamente indulgente con las soluciones mecánicas del *locked-room puzzle*, y que conoce detalladamente las obras de Peyrou y de Bustos Domecq." Bioy Casares, *Borges*, 757.

²⁰⁹ "Prize Winner from Argentina," *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine*, 101.

instance, he relates two of Borges's stories, which he entitles "Two Labyrinthine Tales," with the labyrinth":

The concept of the labyrinth is an obsession with Borges: his *New Directions* collection is aptly titled, and you will have noticed the recurrence of the word in the story above ["Theme of the Traitor and the Hero"]. One of his latest and shortest stories ["The Two Kings and the Two Labyrinths"] presents the labyrinth as a weapon of death.²¹⁰

The relationship between Borges's stories and detective fiction is not explicitly questioned in these short comments. Some of Boucher's general comments on detective fiction suggest that, for him, the genre should not be narrowly applied as a genre category. In the introduction to the quoted *Best Detective Stories of the Year* anthology, for instance, Boucher states that "the mystery-crime-suspense field is a constantly widening one; and I've tried to sample a variety of its types."²¹¹

In his role as a critic for his weekly review column on crime and detective fiction in *The New York Times* and *The New York Times Book Review*, Boucher incorporated Borges several times as a writer of detective fiction, in a double movement of claiming Borges for detective fiction and claiming detective fiction for more intellectual literature. Before Boucher included the Argentine writer for the first time in this "Criminals at Large" section in 1962, his work had already been reviewed in the general literary pages of *The New York Times Book Review* by Mildred Adams, a US writer and critic of Spanish literature. In her review of Borges's first two book translations, Adams not only puts "La muerte y la brújula" in the detective genre, but also "La biblioteca de Babel," a story that Borges himself had called one of his "fantasies" in his prologue to *El jardín de senderos que se bifurcan*, also translated in the English version of *Ficciones*.²¹²

In that same year, Boucher first reviewed *Labyrinths* and *Ficciones* in his column "Criminals at Large." In this text, he criticizes the contemporary tendency to separate art and entertainment. He claims that many critics think entertainment cannot be art, and presents Borges and the Swiss writer Friedrich Dürrenmatt to overcome this misconception:

²¹⁰ Opening note to Borges, "Two Labyrinthine Tales: The Two Kings and the Two Labyrinths," 57.

²¹¹ Boucher, introduction to *Best Detective Stories of the Year: 18th Annual Collection*, 9.

²¹² Adams, "Miniatures of a Giant," 4. For the English version, see Borges, prologue to *Ficciones*, 15. The original refers to these pieces as "fantásticas."

As a partial corrective, I would like to direct the attention of enthusiasts of mystery and suspense to two international figures who are accepted as artists by the literary Establishment (and therefore not normally reviewed in this column), and whose best work ranks at least as high in the rolls of entertaining crime fiction as it does in more literary listings.²¹³

It was clear that Borges, because of his status as a highbrow literary author, could not easily be classified as a mystery or crime writer (and therefore could not, according to Boucher, be reviewed *normally* in his column). Rather than relating Borges's work to the labyrinth or other themes, or giving his own interpretation or even a description of the work, Boucher underlines the literary quality of Borges's work in combination with the author's passion and esteem for detective fiction:

His stories and essays are remarkable for any number of reasons—from acute criticism to splendidly imaginative fantasy. What concerns us here is that his writing includes some of the most distinguished contemporary short stories of crime and detection. There is no faintest trace of superiority in Borges's attitude toward the mystery story; he is a fan, a scholar, a translator and an editor of detective fiction. I hope his fellow enthusiasts of crime will discover and rejoice in his dazzlingly plotted tales with their uniquely Borgian flavor.²¹⁴

In his other, somewhat later columns, Boucher also refers to Borges's texts from *Labyrinths* and *Ficciones*. As he does not refer to specific stories or other texts, the content of both volumes seems to be included in the detective genre as a whole. This is, however, not the case with the poems, essays, and stories anthologized in *A Personal Anthology*, which Boucher is more hesitant to include in his field: "These classic short stories remind me that I have not yet listed the, to my mind, best new collections of shorts in 1967. [. . .] And you might add, though only a few of its stories fall in our field, Jorge Luis Borges's "A Personal Anthology" (Grove, \$5)."²¹⁵ Again, Boucher does not give his own judgment or analysis of *A Personal Anthology*, but limits himself to a reference to Borges's work in the context of the genre of the

²¹³ Boucher, "Criminals at Large," *The New York Times* (June 10, 1962).

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*

²¹⁵ Boucher, "Criminals at Large," *The New York Times Book Review* (December, 31, 1967).

detective, as his main aim in "Criminals at Large" is to place more literary quality under the genre.

For Boucher, this aim corresponded with a larger qualitative development in detective fiction in the United States, as he indicates in *The Quintessence of Queen: Best Prize Stories from 12 Years of "Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine,"* an anthology that also includes his translation of Borges's "El jardín de senderos que se bifurcan." In his introduction to this anthology, he refers to the emancipation of the detective short story in the United States, especially with regard to British stories:

Today American short stories of crime and detection not only lead in the international suspense market but often demand attention as literature. No less than four series of annual anthologies, predominantly of American stories, sustain a gratifying high standard. This happy change has been effected almost solely through the existence of *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine*, which celebrated its 21st anniversary in 1962.²¹⁶

In attributing the qualitative development of crime and detective fiction to *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine*, Boucher was, of course, congratulating himself. But the appraisal for detective fiction and the widening of the genre was a tendency that also applied to other traditionally lowbrow genres such as science fiction. In the introduction to *The Mirror of Infinity: A Critics' Anthology of Science Fiction* from 1970, for instance, which features a translation of "La biblioteca de Babel," it is claimed that

it has slowly become apparent to students of literature that science fiction deserves serious attention, not as a manifestation of pop culture but as an expressive and distinctive branch of the narrative art. Universities have begun to offer courses in the fiction of speculative thought.²¹⁷

As well as this perceived qualitative development, Boucher's view of detective fiction as a widening genre was shared by mediators of science fiction. In another, 1966 anthology that includes a translation of Borges's "Las ruinas circulares," the science fiction writer and editor Judith Merrill states: "This is not a collection of science-fiction stories. It does have some science fiction in it—I think. (It gets a little more

²¹⁶ Boucher, introduction to *The Quintessence of Queen*, ix.

²¹⁷ Silverberg, introduction to *The Mirror of Infinity*, x.

difficult each year to decide which ones are *really* science fiction—and frankly I don't much try anymore.)."²¹⁸ In including Borges's work in a science fiction anthology and reviewing his work for *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction*, Merril played a similar, but minor role for the classification of Borges as a science fiction writer (and perhaps simultaneously for the intellectual status of science fiction) to the role that Boucher played for Borges in detective fiction.²¹⁹

In the 1950s, Boucher had also played an important role in the dissemination of science fiction literature as a co-founder and co-editor of *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction*. For the reception of Borges's work, however, Boucher's role amounted to classifying the author's work as detective fiction, first as a translator and anthologist, and later as a critic, as his Borges activities in all these roles were focused on this genre and not on science fiction. Interestingly, Boucher limited this classification to the already translated volumes of *Labyrinths*, *Ficciones*, and *A Personal Anthology*: Borges's work in collaboration with Bioy Casares was only translated after 1969 by Norman Thomas di Giovanni, first in magazines and later in book form, and was perhaps excluded by Boucher for this reason.

The more than twenty reviews in the United States in which Borges was classified in the genre of the detective in the 1960s suggest Boucher's impact on criticism, but it must be noted that several of these reviews preceded Boucher's first 1962 text on Borges in "Criminals at Large."²²⁰ Rather than echoing Boucher's reviews, they may have reproduced the genre classification of the detective (and science fiction) in the peritexts of *Labyrinths* and perhaps also *Ficciones*. Boucher's interpretation of Borges's work in "Criminals at Large" nonetheless secured a place for Borges in a highly visible review medium and, at least partly thanks to Boucher's texts on Borges, the detective story gained literary status in the United States. In this

²¹⁸ Merril, introduction to *The Year's Best S-F*; and Borges, "Circular Ruins," in *The Year's Best S-F*.

²¹⁹ Merril, "Books: Labyrinths." Borges's work is placed under the genre of science fiction several times in US criticism, though notably less so than under detective fiction. See, for instance, Appel, "Vladimir Nabokov"; Derleth, "Books of the Times," *The Capital Times* (July 5, 1962); Fadiman, "Reading I've Liked: *Labyrinths*"; Hall, review of *Ficciones* and of *Labyrinths*; and Wilcock, "World of Jorge Luis Borges."

²²⁰ To mention only the ones after Boucher's first 1962 text on Borges: "Ficciones," in *Masterplots 1963 Annual: Essay-Reviews of 100 Outstanding Books Published in the United States during 1962*; Bliven, "Books: Stunt Man"; Borges, "Jorge Luis Borges, or the Consolation by Philosophy," interview by Hars and Dohmann; Christ, review of *A Personal Anthology*; Dulsey, "Two Translations of Jorge Luis Borges"; Fadiman, "Reading I've Liked: *Labyrinths*"; Hall, review of *Ficciones* and of *Labyrinths*; Heiney, "Calvino and Borges: Some Implications of Fantasy"; Merivale, "Flaunting of Artifice"; Murillo, *Cyclical Night: Irony in James Joyce and Jorge Luis Borges*; Nordell, "Argentine Mythmaker and His Labyrinth"; Oates, "Intellectual's Intellectual and Writer's Writer"; Simon, "Magician"; Spivakovsky, "In Search of Arabic Influences on Borges"; Updike, "Books: The Author as Librarian"; and Wolff, "Great Literature by Borges." These reviews refer explicitly to the detective genre, and some also deal with the genre of the mystery novel or story.

way, Boucher's efforts paved the way for the increasing status of crime fiction from 1970 onwards, "a time during which mainstream fiction increasingly assimilated characteristic themes and techniques of the noir thriller," according to Lee Horsley's historical review of the genre.²²¹

3. Saul Maloff: The genre of the parable and Borges's terrifying world

Saul Maloff's reviews of mostly mainstream fiction, in magazines with a high circulation such as *Newsweek* and *Holiday*, established his name as a popular reviewer. As a 1968 winner of one of the George Polk Memorial Awards for distinguished achievement in journalism, his book reviewing was described as "a popularly angled, compressed method of appraisal that succeeds in transmitting sensitive interpretations of new books."²²² In a 1967 review of Borges's work, Maloff probably has his audience of *Newsweek* in mind when he presents Borges as a difficult writer who may be caviar to the general public:

Borges is tough meat. Swallowed whole, he will either stick in the craw or nourish as few writers of our time do. He does not seek to please. He will not compromise with his readers any more than he would with Juan Perón, whose regime he despised. He insists that the reader go *all* the way to meet him. He will never achieve mass popularity, but it is likely that he is one of the few living writers whose permanence is assured.²²³

The volumes of *Labyrinths*, *Ficciones*, and *A Personal Anthology* thus also came to be reviewed in magazines that reached a wide audience, in spite of the positions of the experimental publishing houses New Directions and Grove Press, and John Updike's skeptical comments about Borges's projection into bookstores.

Maloff's first, 1962 review of Borges's work—in *Saturday Review*, a weekly literary magazine with a moderate-to-conservative tone—²²⁴ aimed primarily to situate the Argentine writer's texts in a genre. The peritexts of *Labyrinths* and *Ficciones* played a role in this respect:

²²¹ Horsley, *Noir Thriller*, 184.

²²² "9 Get Polk Awards for Work in News," *The New York Times* (March 29, 1968).

²²³ Maloff, "Moments of Truth," 92.

²²⁴ Chielens, "Saturday Review of Literature," 301.

Most of the selections in "Ficciones" have been included in "Labyrinths," which contains as well as essays on literary and philosophical themes, along with some "Parables," so that altogether we are given a reasonably adequate representation of the forms Borges has preferred since he abandoned verse. However, although the editors had no alternative, the very term "Ficciones" is an unfortunate one, conveying as it does the sound and implication of our word "fiction" with which it has little in common. The pieces seldom run to more than a few pages in length; they contain no characters or scenes as we normally understand them, and hardly any narrative in the usual sense; they do not, in sum, have the feel—the rhythm and shape, the sound and sense—of fiction. Much more does the form look and feel like parable and allegory, a kind of intense and resonant, highly colored and relentlessly compressed prose that strives toward, and often attains, the condition of poetry. Nothing is given and nothing is concluded: it is all evocation, all suggestion, and what is evoked and suggested is not obscure, but mysterious.²²⁵

Here, parables (or allegories) are employed to describe all of Borges's prose texts, among other reasons because of their shortness and what could be called their indeterminacy, whereas in *Labyrinths* they had been used to classify only the prose pieces from *El hacedor*. In *Dreamtigers*, the parable also came to apply to a whole body of texts, including Borges's poetry, when Borges's stories, tales, and poems were introduced as "poetic parables."²²⁶ The classification of Borges's texts as parables in *Labyrinths* and *Dreamtigers* was widely taken up in reviews: these reviews lacked any definitions or further reflections on the matter, but used it as a genre classification for Borges's texts, often with reference to Franz Kafka's work.²²⁷ Interestingly, in France,

²²⁵ Maloff, "Eerie Emblems of a Bizarre, Terrifying World."

²²⁶ Enguídanos, introduction to *Dreamtigers*, 14.

²²⁷ The long list of reviews that refer to parables includes: "Ficciones," in *Masterplots 1963 Annual: Essay-Reviews of 100 Outstanding Books Published in the United States During 1962*; "Books—Authors: Selections of Borges' Works," *The New York Times* (February 22, 1962); Review of *Labyrinths*, *Booklist* 58, no. 22 (July 15, 1962); Review of *A Personal Anthology*, *Kirkus Reviews* 45, no. 4 (February 15, 1967); Review of *A Personal Anthology*, *Book Views* 1, no. 6 (April, 1967); Review of *A Personal Anthology*, *Choice* (January, 1968); "Man of Many Mirrors," review of *Dreamtigers*; "Jorge Luis Borges, Charles Eliot Norton Professor of Poetry," press release, Harvard University, *University News Office* (October 22, 1967); "Argentine Author Borges Appointed to Norton Chair," *Harvard Crimson* (October 23, 1967); Adams, "Intricate Argentine"; Adams, "Miniatures of a Giant"; Ashbery, "Game with Shifting Mirrors"; Bagby, "Concept of Time of Jorge Luis Borges"; Capouya, "Reason without Brutality"; D.T. "Anthology of an Argentine Writer"; Davis, "Jorge Luis Borges: Silhouette"; Derleth, "Books of the Times," *The Capital Times* (July 5, 1962); Dulsey, "Two Translations of Jorge Luis Borges"; Gauss Jackson, "Books in Brief"; Hall, review of *Ficciones* and of *Labyrinths*; Halperen, review of *Dreamtigers*; Kitching, review of *Labyrinths*; Lange, "Scope of Jorge Luis Borges"; Mead Jr., "Maze of the Unreal and

where *El hacedor* was translated only after many other book translations, the classification of the parable was rarely used. In the United States, the prominence of the parable even led Ronald Christ of the quoted *Paris Review* interview to ask about Borges's perspective on his own stories and their relation to parables, to which Borges replied:

BORGES: No, no. They're not meant to be parables. I mean if they are parables... (*long pause*)... that is, if they are parables, they have *happened* to be parables, but my intention has never been to write parables. INTERVIEWER: Not like Kafka's parables then? BORGES: In the case of Kafka we know very little.²²⁸

Paul de Man responded to this genre classification by setting Borges's texts apart from Kafka's parables, as I will discuss later. Maloff, for his part, had spoken of parables without questioning their application to Borges, and apart from the shortness and indeterminacy of Borges's texts, it is not directly clear what the term means for Maloff.

A more concrete idea of Maloff's view on the genre of Borges's texts is provided by a later polemic in which Maloff had to defend one of his previous reviews about another short-story writer. In *The New York Times Book Review*, Maloff mostly reviewed mainstream fiction from the United States, and focused particularly on collections of short stories. In a negative review of Alfred Chester's 1964 book of short stories *Behold Goliath*, Maloff had referred to "tales which are closer in conception to fable than to story as that latter term is usually understood—fables that transact freely with dream and nightmare, by intention putting at issue the world which is the common ground of fiction."²²⁹ In a letter to the editor, essayist Susan Sontag then accused Maloff of misrepresenting the book and giving invalid arguments. In his reply, Maloff explains that his judgment was particular to Chester's book and not to the genre of fables in general, as Sontag had understood it:

Real"; Merivale, "Flaunting of Artifice"; Merrill, "Books: Labyrinths"; Murillo, *Cyclical Night: Irony in James Joyce and Jorge Luis Borges*; Oates, "Intellectual's Intellectual and Writer's Writer"; Olson, "On Brink of Reality with Jorge Borges"; Ossman, "Labyrinth of Borges"; Roach, "Patient Labyrinth of Lines"; Schott, "Bizarre New World of Jorge Borges"; Simon, "Magician"; Stern, "Dust of Italy"; Taylor, "Argentinian Is Writer's Writer"; Trejo, review of *Labyrinths*; Updike, "Books: The Author as Librarian"; White, "Authors Will Honor Argentine Poet Here"; Williams, "Book Reviews: Is Woman's Place in the Home?"; Wolff, "Great Literature by Borges"; Yeiser, "Of International Stature"; Zaniello, "Outopia [*sic*] in Jorge Luis Borges' Fiction"; and Zoll, "Reviews."

²²⁸ Borges, "Art of Fiction XXXIX: Jorge Luis Borges; An Interview," by Christ, 136.

²²⁹ Maloff, "Loveless World's Last Hope for Meaning," 38.

Miss Sontag, while she was at it, chose to misread my remark about "fable . . . dream and nightmare." This was certainly not meant to dispraise; the house of fiction has many windows, etc. I was describing, not judging; trying to place, not blame. The judgment which followed attached not to the "mode," but to the book at hand and none other; not to the universal, but to the particular. The mode itself, which is large and accommodating, I associate with some of the writers I admire most—Borges, say, or Malamud, or Purdy—to name only three among the living.²³⁰

Maloff thus uses the mode of the fable to describe a magical, non-realistic genre used by Borges, and US authors such as Bernard Malamud and James Purdy—and this definition perhaps applies to his view of parables and allegories as well. As becomes clear from Maloff's Borges review in *Saturday Review*, he associates parables and allegories with dreams and especially with nightmares. In this review, Borges's work is said to create a "bizarre and terrifying world" that looks like a dream or nightmare.²³¹ Maloff places this world in the surrealist literary tradition, and relates it in particular to Kafka's work and "his febrile and chilling evocation of a nightmare world."²³²

Movie and drama critic John Simon also reflected more extensively on the parable as a genre, but this time by casting doubt on this classification because of Borges's combination of different forms. In a 1967 review of *A Personal Anthology* for *Book Week*, he states:

As for the choice of forms, Borges has written poems, essays, short stories, and even, in collaboration, detective fiction. But his most characteristic mode is a kind of tale that partakes of the myth, the parable, the essay, and the prose poem, and whose forebears are Kafka and Mallarme [sic]. To make matters more complicated, the myth, though perhaps based on existing mythologies, departs from them; the parable, though clearly such, leaves us in doubt about its moral; the prose poetry conflicts disturbingly with the cerebral, metaphysical themes; and the essayistic element undercuts the narrative and stresses its fictitiousness, its nonexistence.²³³

²³⁰ Maloff, "Letters to the Editor," 18.

²³¹ Maloff, "Eerie Emblems of a Bizarre, Terrifying World," 34.

²³² Ibid.

²³³ Simon, "Magician," 4.

Simon thus shows how Borges breaks through different modes or genres, and perhaps similarly to Maloff, reflects on the non-realist mode of Borges's (and Kafka's) fables or parables. In fact, Simon observes that for Borges "reality is illusion and illusion is reality: being one and the same, both are equally real or unreal,"²³⁴ and even applies a classification from art criticism to describe this ambiguity: "the most magnificent thing about Borges is his style, which deserves that phrase much tossed about in art criticism, magic realism. It is difficult to say whether what he writes is the sheer matter-of-fact description of the ineffable, or the most lyrical hyperbole for something utterly mundane."²³⁵ Simon, who later also interviewed the Argentine author together with Patricia Marx and wrote a review of *The Book of Imaginary Beings*,²³⁶ and Maloff were thus two exceptions among critics who used parables to make a quick and implicit association with short texts and Kafka's work, as they tried to further define and problematize the genre of Borges's work.

To return to Maloff's reviews, it has to be noted that the parable is only one of the classifications used. He also refers to the theme of the labyrinth, used repeatedly by Anthony Boucher and other critics, which he conceptualizes in a negative way. He identifies Borges's labyrinth with a terrifying nightmare:

Borges's nightmares are rational ones, eerie emblems of the world we apprehend by the imagination: these nightmares are lucid and austere. Their controlling metaphor is of the world as labyrinth—a metaphor that recurs constantly throughout the work—a labyrinth in which we all wander, perpetually lost, implacably pursued by the murderous stranger who acts out of inscrutable motives that are fantastically reasonable, perhaps because we possess a secret for the having of which we are killed.²³⁷

In some of Maloff's reviews, he sees the labyrinthine world of dream and nightmare depicted in Borges's work as having an autobiographical inspiration. In a 1965 review of *Labyrinths* and *Ficciones* for travel magazine *Holiday*, the critic takes up one of Borges's earliest interviews in the United States. In this interview with the prestigious author and critic Gay Talese, held during Borges's stay in the United

²³⁴ Ibid.

²³⁵ Ibid.

²³⁶ Borges, "Jorge Luis Borges: An Interview," by Marx and Simon; and Simon, "Of Dragons and Other Necessary Monsters."

²³⁷ Maloff, "Eerie Emblems of a Bizarre, Terrifying World," 34.

States in 1961, Borges argues that: "Once the outside world interfered too much. Now the world is all inside me. And I see better, for I can see all the things I dream."²³⁸ According to Maloff, the dreams and nightmares in Borges's work are provoked by his own hallucinations and fears, and also those of the reader, as is suggested by the use of personal pronouns in Maloff's review:

He is a pedant of hallucination, a technologist of contemporary nightmare who inventories his delusional world with meticulous detail. It is an eerie, moonlit landscape, and the "things" he dreams are unprecedented objects of some ruined, outlandish civilization that uncannily echoes our own. [. . .] Dread and anxiety surround the motiveless acts; it is as if failure to find the pattern in the labyrinth would exact of those faceless creatures some unspeakable penalty. At this harrowing point, just when his cerebral puzzles [. . .] seem most remote from our own anguish, Borges icily makes the fatal connection."²³⁹

In Maloff's 1967 review of *A Personal Anthology*, a book that stresses the figure of Borges, the personal inspiration behind Borges's work is also underscored. This shows that the figure of the author—that is, a certain (autobiographical) image of Borges based on his work—had an impact on at least one of the key critics. Here, Maloff suggests that the nightmares Borges has been tracing might be his own by taking up Borges's much quoted epilogue from *Dreamtigers*:

Borges once wrote, and he might have been speaking about himself and his spectral, phantasmagoric art: "Through the years, a man peoples a space with images of provinces, kingdoms, mountains, bays, ships, islands, fishes, rooms, tools, stars, horses and people. Shortly before his death, he discovers that the patient labyrinth of lines traces the image of his own face."²⁴⁰

Whereas Maloff's reflections on the parable were part of a larger discussion about the genre of Borges's texts, his elaborate interpretation of the Argentine writer's work as fearful or as provoking fear stands more on its own in reviewing in the United States,

²³⁸ Maloff, "Critical Eye," 165.

²³⁹ *Ibid.*, 166; italics added.

²⁴⁰ Maloff, "Moments of Truth," 93. The quotation from the epilogue of *A Personal Anthology* differs slightly from the original. In another review of this volume for the lay Catholic weekly *Commonweal*, Maloff repeats some of the same ideas, see Maloff, "Critics' Choices for Christmas," 308-11.

although I will deal with one other exception below. In France, on the other hand, the question of whether Borges's work showed a metaphysical anxiety was widely discussed, while the humorous nature of Borges's work was stressed at the same time.

In the United States, another critic reflected on the fearful nature of Borges's work: Keith Botsford, a writer, magazine editor, and translator whose work can be situated in anti-communist circles, expressed similar statements to Maloff, although his institutional position and the conclusion at which he arrived were very different. A comparison between Maloff and Botsford is valuable not only because it can help to elucidate the discussion about the theme of fear, but also because Botsford's work can serve as an example of the reception of Borges's work by mediators involved in the anti-communist and pro-capitalist Congress for Cultural Freedom (CCF).²⁴¹ Founded in 1950 and covertly funded by the CIA, the CCF was a Cold War advocacy group that aimed to undermine the Soviet Union's "peace offensive" with its cultural strategy. In the early 1960s, Botsford worked for the CCF as traveling representative in Latin America, and as such was involved in the CCF's effort to discredit communist writers, for instance in the attempt to prevent Pablo Neruda from receiving the Nobel Prize in 1964.²⁴² Botsford was already Deputy International Secretary of International P.E.N. and the director of the National Translation Center funded by the Ford Foundation at the University of Texas in Austin when he wrote on Borges in the 1960s.²⁴³

In a 1967 article on Borges for the magazine *The Atlantic Monthly*, Botsford claims that

there is a Borges universe, which is like ours and yet somehow disquietingly different, alien; magic. Its deceptions are many and marvelous. Some are deceits of language, others of style; some are games and others puzzles, enigmas; some are illusions, others dreams or nightmares; some are *his* fears, some are ours.²⁴⁴

²⁴¹ For the role of the CCF in the international diffusion of Borges's work, see also Mudrovcic, "Borges y el Congreso por la Libertad de la Cultura."

²⁴² Saunders, *Cultural Cold War*, 349-51.

²⁴³ Borges, "About Borges and Not about Borges," interview by Botsford; and Botsford, "Writings of Jorge Luis Borges." See also Botsford's translation of a Borges poem in Borges, "Benares" and his reference to Borges in Botsford, "My Friend Fuentes." The interview was published in an academic journal and therefore not included in my frequency count.

²⁴⁴ Botsford, "Writings of Jorge Luis Borges," 99; italics in the original.

According to Botsford, Borges's stories are dominated by fear or "written as a defense against that fear."²⁴⁵ Although he criticizes Borges for describing an inhuman world from which there is much missing, he does appreciate the presence of fear in Borges's work:

He would leave me cold if it were not for this one fact: that he describes his world and its attendant fears and horrors in such a way that, though these are at first foreign to us, we are able to accept them as reasonable and possible. For Borges never violates the possible; even, I feel, he writes firmly in the *probable*, and that is why he is so profoundly disquieting. His art lies in making what we most fear, and what we do not, consequently, willingly face, eminently plausible."²⁴⁶

For Botsford, then, the fear in Borges's work makes the author more human. Similarly to Maloff's explanation for the presence of fear in Borges's work, Botsford also refers to Borges's autobiographical use of dreams and nightmares. However, according to Botsford the autobiographical inspiration of Borges's work does not come from Borges's dream world, but from his real world in Argentina:

If I had to hazard a guess at explaining why Borges created his world, I would speculate that he did so in order to escape—starting in the mid-thirties—from his own *race, milieu, and moment*, and that the Borges world is no more than a substitute for the abandoned real world of his early years. It is the Argentinianism of Borges, not the cosmopolitanism, the Porteño, not the universal, that is the most bewildering and least known aspect of his work.²⁴⁷

Botsford contextualizes Borges as an Argentine writer, whereas Maloff relates the presence of fear to the dreamlike aspects of Borges's work and life. Going against the emphasis on the phantasmagoric aspects of Borges's work, Botsford thus stresses Borges's reality and realism and in fact calls the author a "realist about an unreal country, time, and reality."²⁴⁸ For Botsford, this Argentine reality is also and above all political, as is clear from his frequent references to the Juan Perón regime. In another,

²⁴⁵ Ibid., 101.

²⁴⁶ Ibid.

²⁴⁷ Ibid., 103.

²⁴⁸ Ibid., 101.

1964 text based on a number of dialogues with Borges that took place in Buenos Aires and London, Botsford also expresses his views on the presence of fear in Borges's work, and specifically refers to the relationship between his work and Argentina as a society always on the verge of a civil war.²⁴⁹

This focus on the relationship between Borges's work and Argentine reality, especially Argentina's political reality, should perhaps come as no surprise when Botsford's stays in Latin America and his political affiliations are taken into account. In fact, Botsford's reception of Borges's work may be seen as part of a larger reception process by English-language mediators involved in the CCF. In a short text in the British cultural-political magazine of the CCF, *Encounter*, a text to which Botsford referred in his dialogues with Borges, the British translator J. M. Cohen also focuses on the Argentine nature of Borges's work. His text includes a biographical sketch with faulty information on the Perón years and claims that Borges is above all else an Argentine writer, for instance in his preferences for European literature and in his lack of local color, for according to Cohen

the most characteristic feature of Argentinianism [in Borges]—as seen in the neighbourhood of Buenos Aires—is the absence of “camels”—trees, hills, villages, church-towers—of anything indeed higher or more arresting than the chimney of the city's electricity works. In reflecting this emptiness Borges is supremely Argentinian.²⁵⁰

Encounter, the most visible and successful of the CCF magazines, published many translations of Borges's work, which in one case also included a translator's note by Cohen on the story “Hombre de la esquina rosada,” presented as one of Borges's “principal contributions to the mythology of Buenos Aires.”²⁵¹

Both Botsford and Cohen can hardly be considered key mediators in the reception of Borges's work in the United States. The effect of Botsford's essay in *The Atlantic*, for instance, is by no means comparable to that of John Barth's essay published in 1967 in the same magazine. *Encounter*, and thus Cohen's essay in the magazine, was, although distributed in the United States, principally directed at an English-speaking audience outside the country. Their work on Borges is thus not

²⁴⁹ Borges, “About Borges and Not about Borges,” interview by Botsford, 727.

²⁵⁰ Cohen, “Notes & Topics: Borges,” 49.

²⁵¹ Cohen, translator's note to Borges, “Man of the Red Corner,” 11.

analyzed in detail here, as it is the comparison with the key mediators that matters. Botsford's texts, and also those of Cohen, closely reflect Borges's comments in interviews—which is evident in Botsford's dialogues—and in this way participate in the autobiographical tendency already found in Maloff's reviews and others that stressed the figure of the author. What sets Botsford and Cohen apart from key mediators in the United States, such as Anthony Boucher, Saul Maloff, Paul de Man, John Updike, and John Barth, however, is their reading of Argentine (political) reality in relation to Borges's work. Botsford's emphasis on what he calls Borges's "metaphysical realism"²⁵² contrasts with classifications in the United States, where Borges's stance against Perón is mentioned without much further reference to Argentine political reality. This contrast is even sharper with French criticism where, as I have shown, Borges's reception could be qualified as rather denationalized, to use Beatriz Sarlo's term from *Jorge Luis Borges: A Writer on the Edge*.²⁵³ While it is true that the special Borges issue of *L'Herne* in 1964 paid more attention to Borges's background, not least by including testimonies by other Argentine writers and critics, one of the 1965 reviews of the volume still claimed that "Pour être intéressante, cette partie argentine de l'œuvre de Borges n'est pas la plus importante."²⁵⁴ Around that same time, it was Botsford who declared Borges's Argentine nature the most bewildering aspect of his work.

4. Paul de Man: Borges's style of distorted duplication

Paul de Man's only review of Borges dates from 1964 and was published in *The New York Review of Books*. Given de Man's overall interest in non-contemporary authors, the fact that he reviewed Borges could be considered surprising. In a later interview, the Belgian critic responds to his relative neglect of contemporary literature:

I feel perfectly at ease writing on eighteenth- or seventeenth-century authors and don't feel at all compelled to write on contemporaries. On the other hand, there are all kinds of contemporaries, some I feel very close to and some I feel millions of miles removed from. [. . .] Certainly I would be at any time ready

²⁵² Borges, "About Borges and Not about Borges," interview by Botsford, 731.

²⁵³ Sarlo, *Writer on the Edge*, 1-2.

²⁵⁴ Drix, review of *Jorge Luis Borges*. *Cahiers de L'Herne*, 1964, 172.

to write on Borges, certainly on the fiction of Blanchot, but if you ask me on what contemporary French authors²⁵⁵

In the 1960s, however, de Man did publish on contemporary French authors for *The New York Review of Books*. He reviewed books by André Gide, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Albert Camus for this magazine, and this “French” context is clearly visible in his review of Borges. The top of de Man’s review indicates that *Dreamtigers* and the new, paperback edition of *Labyrinths*, both from 1964, are the volumes under review, but he also cites books by Borges that had only been translated in France, such as *Historia universal de la infamia*. Moreover, he compares Borges’s work with that of the French existentialists:

Like Kafka and contemporary French existential writers, he is often seen as a moralist, in rebellion against the times. But such an approach is misleading. It is true that, especially in his earlier works, Borges writes about villains: The collection *History of Infamy* (*Historia universal de la infamia*, 1935) contains an engaging gallery of scoundrels. But Borges does not consider infamy primarily as a moral theme; the stories in now [*sic*] way suggest an indictment of society or of human nature or of destiny. Nor do they suggest the lighthearted view of Gide’s Nietzschean hero Lafcadio. Instead, infamy functions here as an aesthetic, formal principle.²⁵⁶

The references to Franz Kafka and the French existentialists serve here to set Borges apart from the (French) tradition of the *moralistes*. As Tony Judt has shown, the French use of the term moralist does not have the pejorative sense that is common in English, as it refers to a truth-teller who, from a distance, reflects critically on the human condition. The opinions of the *moraliste* were disquieting for his public as well as for himself.²⁵⁷ According to de Man, unlike the French existentialists Borges is not a moralist in the thematic sense that his stories criticize society, but rather uses the theme of infamy because “the artist has to wear the mask of the villain [. . .] to create a style.”²⁵⁸ De Man repeats the contrast between the existentialists and Borges in another fragment of his review:

²⁵⁵ De Man, “Interview with Paul de Man,” by Rosso, 120.

²⁵⁶ De Man, “Modern Master,” 8.

²⁵⁷ Judt, “Albert Camus and the Discomforts of Ambivalence,” 121-22.

²⁵⁸ De Man, “Modern Master,” 8.

Borges's theme of infamy could be just another form of *fin-de-siècle* aestheticism, a late gasp of romantic agony. Or, perhaps worse, he might be writing out of moral despair as an escape from the trappings of style. But such assumptions go against the grain of a writer whose commitment to style remains unshakable; whatever Borges's existential anxieties may be, they have little in common with Sartre's robustly prosaic view of literature, with the earnestness of Camus's moralism, or with the weighty profundity of German existential thought. Rather, they are the consistent expansion of a purely poetic consciousness to its furthest limits.²⁵⁹

As well as emphasizing Borges's style, a matter to which I will return, de Man implicitly praises Borges in this fragment by referring to Sartre and Camus. Whereas de Man considered Borges's work to be a representation of a purely poetic consciousness that did not refer to the reality of an actual experience of the self, he saw the work of both French writers as a reflection of their subjectivity. It was precisely this representation of experience that de Man found deficient in the contemporary publications of Sartre and Camus. In a 1964 review of Sartre's *The Words*, he states: "If the Sartre who considers literature to be a 'critical mirror' of the self were to write his autobiography, it would be a very different kind of book. *The Words* is not yet the work that gives back the man who, for a moment, came close to speaking for an entire generation."²⁶⁰ In another review a year later, de Man criticizes Camus on the same grounds. His review of Camus's *Notebooks* predicts that the French writer will have no lasting success, because the expression of his own experience is not clear and insightful enough. As de Man claims, Camus fails to connect with his own self: "As the notebooks progress, and especially after the war, such happy conjunctions between the writer's experience and his literary work become less and less frequent."²⁶¹ For de Man, this disjunction between the writer's experience and his work becomes all the more apparent because of an inadequate style: "Without the unifying surface of a controlled style to hide them, the contradictions [in the *Notebooks*] are much more apparent than in the novels or the essays."²⁶²

²⁵⁹ Ibid.

²⁶⁰ De Man, "Sartre's Confessions."

²⁶¹ De Man, "Mask of Albert Camus."

²⁶² Ibid.

A surprising contrast emerges thus between de Man's reviews of the two French writers and of Borges, all three for *The New York Review of Books*. Whereas Camus and Sartre are criticized for not representing their personal consciousness, Borges's work is not expected to give such a form of representation or referentiality. It could therefore be asked why de Man does not expect this subjectivity in the writing of Borges. An analogy between Borges's work and eighteenth-century literature that de Man establishes later in his review clarifies these expectations:

The stories that make up the bulk of Borges's literary work are not moral fables or parables like Kafka's, to which they are often misleadingly compared, even less attempts at psychological analysis. The least inadequate literary analogy would be with the eighteenth-century *conte philosophique*: their world is the representation, not of an actual experience, but of an intellectual proposition. One does not expect the same kind of psychological insight or the same immediacy of personal experience from *Candide* as from *Madame Bovary*, and Borges should be read with expectations closer to those one brings to Voltaire's tale than to a nineteenth-century novel. He differs, however, from his eighteenth-century antecedents in that the subject of the stories is the creation of style itself; in this Borges is very definitely post-romantic and even post-symbolist.²⁶³

With the reference to Kafka's parables, de Man responds to the much-repeated qualification for Borges's work in literary criticism in the United States, which was initiated with Donald Yates and James Irby's regrouping of texts from *El hacedor* under the title of parables in the table of contents for *Labyrinths* and reproduced by Saul Maloff and other critics. De Man's comparison between Borges's stories and the *conte philosophique* is confusing at first sight, because writers such as Voltaire were linked to the tradition of the *moralistes*. Rather than comparing the societal critiques contained in the works, however, de Man compares Borges's stories and the *conte philosophique* on the level of representation. For de Man, Borges's stories were not expected to represent personal experience. In contrast with the "humanism" of the French existentialists, in which language unproblematically represented the author's consciousness or subjective experience, de Man became interested in a form of impersonal consciousness rooted in language itself; that is, in consciousness as a

²⁶³ De Man, "Modern Master," 8.

rhetorical effect.²⁶⁴ With his review of Borges, de Man therefore implicitly distanced himself from more "referential" writers such as Sartre and Camus.

What de Man stresses in Borges's work is his style, which in his review seems to refer both to the linguistic medium that represents a world or a phenomenal experience, and to a system that problematizes (in de Man's words, distorts and disorders) this representation. This style makes Borges "very definitely post-romantic and even post-symbolist,"²⁶⁵ and he is therefore modern a qualification that appears only in the title of de Man's review, "A Modern Master"—in spite of Borges's use of a genre similar to the eighteenth-century *conte philosophique*. For de Man, style is in fact what Borges's work is all about:

His main characters are prototypes for the writer, and his worlds are prototypes for a highly stylized kind of poetry or fiction. For all their variety of tone and setting, the different stories all have a similar point of departure, a similar structure, a similar climax, and a similar outcome; the inner cogency that links these four moments together constitutes Borges's distinctive style, as well as his comment upon this style. His stories are about the style in which they are written.²⁶⁶

De Man's move from an interest in the self to an interest in style did not only imply a distancing from a humanist conception of existentialism, but was also part of a gradual distancing from his fellow Belgian professor Georges Poulet, with whom de Man worked at the University of Zurich in the 1960s. Poulet practiced what has been called a criticism of consciousness, a phenomenological reading that tried to reconstruct the work's expression of the self. De Man's gradual critical change, in which the notion of self was replaced by language as the structure of the self, can be perceived in his 1964 review of Borges, and also in his texts on Poulet from the 1960s. In his 1969 "The Literary Self as Origin: The Work of Georges Poulet," later included in *Blindness and Insight*, for instance, de Man reinterprets Poulet's work by freeing it from the notion of subjectivity and stating that Poulet's belief in the existence of an original self is defeated by his own critical results.²⁶⁷ De Man's distancing from

²⁶⁴ See Waters, introduction to *Critical Writings, 1953-1978*, xxx-xl.

²⁶⁵ De Man, "Modern Master," 8.

²⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 8-9.

²⁶⁷ De Man, "Literary Self as Origin." See also de Man's criticism of Poulet in "Modern Poetics in France and Germany (1965)," 156.

Poulet can be seen in the broader context of the disposal of an existentialist concern for subjectivity and the embracing of rhetorical notions that imply the death of the author, a change that has been connected with de Man's gradual approach to the work of Jacques Derrida, whom he met in 1966 and who would later become his colleague at Yale University. In his 1971 essay on Derrida, de Man also shows how the methodology of the self can be deconstructed: "The category of the self turns out to be so double-faced that it compels the critic who uses it to retract implicitly what he affirms and to end up by offering the mystery of this paradoxical movement as his main insight."²⁶⁸ De Man's review of Borges can, in summary, be related to his institutional role as an academic in his stance toward Poulet and Derrida, while it can also be related to his role as a critic for *The New York Review of Books* in his stance toward Camus and Sartre.

In de Man's conception of Borges's style, duplication and distortion are key elements. He describes a proliferation of successive mirror images in Borges's work. For the Belgian critic, these mirrors do not all reflect reality, but distort it:

Poetic invention begins in duplicity, but it does not stop there. For the writer's particular duplicity (the dyer's image in "Hakim") stems from the fact that he presents the invented form as if it possessed the attributes of reality, thus allowing it to be mimetically reproduced, in its turn, in another mirror-image that takes the preceding pseudo-reality for *its* starting-point.²⁶⁹

The importance of duplication in Borges's work explains his preference for *mise-en-abyme* structures, or in de Man's words:

This mirror-like proliferation constitutes, for Borges, an indication of poetic success. The works of literature he most admires contain this element; he is fascinated by such mirror-effects in literature as the Elizabethan play within the play, the character Don Quixote reading *Don Quixote*, Scheherazade beginning one night to retell *verbatim* the story of *The Thousand and One Nights*. For each mirrored image is stylistically superior to the preceding one, as the

²⁶⁸ De Man, "Jacques Derrida's Reading of Rousseau," 105. In this sense, de Man's theoretical turn is somewhat similar to that of his later colleague at Yale University, J. Hillis Miller, who was Poulet's student when the latter worked in the United States at the Johns Hopkins University. See Lentricchia, *After the New Criticism*, 76-77. One of de Man's other later colleagues at Yale, Geoffrey H. Hartman, wrote a review of Borges several years later: Hartman, review of *The Aleph and Other Stories*.

²⁶⁹ De Man, "Modern Master," 9.

dyed cloth is more beautiful than the plain, the distorted translation richer than the original, Ménard's *Quixote* aesthetically more complex than Cervantes's.²⁷⁰

As de Man sees it, Borges's use of distorted duplication stems from an impossible wish for order. Borges's *mise-en-abyme* style enables the author to reach "an ordered picture of reality that contains the totality of all things."²⁷¹ De Man discusses several of Borges's stories, including "El jardín de senderos que se bifurcan," "El Aleph," and "El Zahir," in order to reflect on how these stories show a total, ordered vision of reality, but also reveal the deceitful nature of this wholeness:

The success of these poetic worlds is expressed by their all-inclusive and ordered wholeness. Their deceitful nature is harder to define, but essential to an understanding of Borges. Mirror images are indeed duplications of reality, but they change the temporal nature of this reality in an insidious fashion, even one might say especially when the imitation is altogether successful (as in Ménard's *Quixote*).²⁷²

By showing the temporal distortion of reality, Borges's stories thus also frustrate the possibility of this order. This form of distortion can be compared to de Man's reflection on allegory as a distortion of the order of the symbol. In his famous 1969 essay "The Rhetoric of Temporality," de Man would comment on allegory in Romantic texts by referring to the temporal distortion of allegory: "The meaning constituted by the allegorical sign can [. . .] consist only in the *repetition* [. . .] of a previous sign with which it can never coincide, since it is of the essence of this previous sign to be pure anteriority."²⁷³

Duplication in Borges shows the impossibility of creating an ordered, total linguistic system that refers to reality, and his style therefore problematizes the referential nature of language. In his essay on allegory, de Man would also show how the wholeness that is implicit in the Romantics' conception of symbol can be deconstructed.²⁷⁴ In his 1964 review of Borges then, rather than reflecting on allegory,

²⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 10.

²⁷¹ *Ibid.*

²⁷² *Ibid.*

²⁷³ De Man, "Rhetoric of Temporality," 207.

²⁷⁴ See also de Man, "Sign and Symbol in Hegel's *Aesthetics*."

de Man prefigures his later poetics of allegory by referring to Borges's disordering style. For de Man, this style is consistent with the idea that there is no unity of experience:

This style in Borges becomes the ordering but dissolving act that transforms the unity of experience into the enumeration of its discontinuous parts. Hence his rejection of *style lié* and his preference for what grammarians call parataxis, the mere placing of events side by side, without conjunctions; hence also his definition of his own style as baroque, "the style that deliberately exhausts (or tries to exhaust) all its possibilities." The style is a mirror, but unlike the mirror of the realists that never lets us forget for a moment its create [*sic*] what it mimics.²⁷⁵

Toward the end of his review, de Man describes the violence and somberness that he perceives in the later *Ficciones* and *Dreamtigers*, which make him conclude that Borges's stories lack a sense of salvation by way of literature:

The poetic impulse in all its perverse duplicity, belongs to man alone, marks him as essentially human. But God appears on the scene as the power of reality itself, in the form of a death that demonstrates the failure of poetry. This is the deeper reason for violence that pervades all Borges's stories. God is on the side of chaotic reality and style is powerless to conquer him.²⁷⁶

De Man says that Borges, as a storyteller, remains faithful to his style and does not leap out of language into a belief in God unlike Søren Kierkegaard and later Friedrich Schlegel to which he refers in "The Rhetoric of Temporality." As de Man states in his review, "Borges refuses to give up his poetic predicament for a leap into faith."²⁷⁷ Borges remains in a space that is also inhabited by allegory and refrains from the wish to bypass his style.

²⁷⁵ De Man, "Modern Master," 10.

²⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

5. John Updike: Borges's unreality grafted onto realism

Writer and critic John Updike produced non-fiction prolifically, mainly book reviews for *The New Yorker*. Prompted by his life-long dedication to reviewing and his experience of being reviewed as an author, he formulated six review rules included in a 1975 compilation entitled *Picked-Up Pieces*, from which I will quote at length:

1. Try to understand what the author wished to do, and do not blame him for not achieving what he did not attempt.
2. Give enough direct quotation at least one extended passage of the book's prose so the review's reader can form his own impression, can get his own taste.
3. Confirm your description of the book with quotation from the book, if only phrase-long, rather than proceeding by fuzzy *précis*.
4. Go easy on plot summary, and do not give away the ending. [. . .].
5. If the book is judged deficient, cite a successful example along the same lines, from the author's *oeuvre* or elsewhere. Try to understand the failure. Sure it's his and not yours?

To these concrete five might be added a vaguer sixth, having to do with maintaining a chemical purity in the reaction between product and appraiser. Do not accept for review a book you are predisposed to dislike, or committed by friendship to like. Do not imagine yourself a caretaker of any tradition, an enforcer of any party standards, a warrior in any ideological battle, a corrections officer of any kind. Never, never (John Aldridge, Norman Podhoretz) try to put the author "in his place," making of him a pawn in a contest with other reviewers. Review the book, not the reputation.²⁷⁸

These rules can be abbreviated to two aims: to give a fair idea of the book under review by giving enough direct quotation, and to be fair in judging the book by trying to understand the writer's intentions. Both of these aims are present in Updike's most important text on Borges, "The Author as Librarian," published in *The New Yorker* in 1965.²⁷⁹ In this review of *Dreamtigers, Other Inquisitions* and Ana María Barrenechea's book *Borges the Labyrinth Maker*, Updike quotes several essays and

²⁷⁸ Updike, foreword to *Picked-Up Pieces*, xvi-xvii.

²⁷⁹ Updike, "Books: The Author as Librarian."

poems and also stories from *Labyrinths* and *Ficciones* at great length. And it could also be stated that Updike aims to understand the writer's intentions, although his judgments are clearly marked by his own poetical preferences, as I will argue below.

During his lifetime, Updike frequently referred to Borges's work and also translated three of his poems into English with the help of word-for-word translations by Norman Thomas di Giovanni.²⁸⁰ The *New Yorker* review is his earliest and most extensive text, and will be analyzed in this section, in addition to occasional references to later texts. In this way and similar to in other sections, my analysis is limited to the early phase of Borges's work in which "The Author as Librarian" was written, but also explores a broader corpus of texts by Updike in order to grasp the (continuity of) norms guiding some of his selections and classifications.

Updike was personally interested in certain elements of Borges's work that were closely connected to his own poetics of fiction, for instance in religion. He was a Christian and religion played an important role in his fictional and non-fictional work.²⁸¹ In his review of the Argentine writer, Updike claims that "it would be wrong to think that Borges dogmatically writes as an atheist. God is often invoked by him, not always in an ironical or pantheist way."²⁸² Whereas Paul de Man thought that Borges's poetic commitment to style prevented him from believing in God, Updike opened up the possibility of Borges as a believer. According to Updike, Borges might perhaps not be a Christian, but could rather be seen as a pre-Christian who does not exclude the possible existence of God:

While Christianity is not dead in Borges, it *sleeps* in him, and its dreams are fitful. His ethical allegiance is to pre-Christian heroism, to Stoicism, to "the doctrines of Zeno's Porch and . . . the sagas," to the harsh gaucho ethos celebrated in the Argentine folk poem of Martín Fierro. Borges is a pre-Christian whom the memory of Christianity suffuses with premonitions and dread.²⁸³

²⁸⁰ The three poems were included in Borges's *Selected Poems* and Updike's *Picked-Up Pieces*. Updike also attended Borges's lectures in Cambridge in 1967 and met him for the first time in Manchester, Massachusetts. See Updike, "John Updike."

²⁸¹ This theme is discussed more extensively in an article on the image and function of Borges's work in Updike's criticism: Versteeg, "Beeld en functie van Borges in Updikes literaire kritieken (1965-2002)," 12-13. This article is based on a bachelor's thesis under my co-direction at Radboud University Nijmegen, entitled *A Giant of World Literature. The Perception and Function of 'Borges' in John Updike's Literary Criticism*.

²⁸² Updike, "Books: The Author as Librarian," 236.

²⁸³ *Ibid.*

Other important themes in Updike's fiction, such as women and sex, are brought up as lacking in Borges's work. Updike mentions Borges's "disinterest in the psychological and social worlds that women dominate"²⁸⁴ and notes that physical love appears as something remote in Borges's work. In these cases, Updike's interest in religion, women, and sex in Borges's work was directly related to his own work, and the way in which the presentation of these themes was evaluated was in keeping with his own poetics.

Updike's own poetical preferences, however, cannot easily be related to his negative comments on what the author himself has called realism. In his critical writings and fiction, Updike showed a commitment to realism and detail probably influenced by his life-long association with *The New Yorker*. Known as a chronicler of the US middle class, Updike described the details of the lives of families in his fiction work. As scholar James Schiff has shown, Updike's poetics revolved around key words such as "accuracy" and "lifelikeness." Although the writer stated on various occasions that "plain" realism did not interest him, he wanted writing to imitate life nevertheless, or as Schiff claims: "Updike continues to be primarily a realist, believing that the cardinal rule for a writer is not to lose touch with reality."²⁸⁵

Updike's realist poetics can be found in his criticism, in cases where he refers to autobiographical details, to the detailed description of the setting of a story, and to the discussion of the personal experiences of fictional characters. Although the vocabulary used in these critical texts may differ—Updike sometimes refers directly to the concept of "realism," in other cases to the "human," the "personal," or to "life"—his stated preferences seem to have been rather stable. At first sight, however, Updike's evaluations are ambiguous: he commented negatively on mimetic literature in particular on North American realism as opposed to the deliverance of (Latin American) magical realism. In the preface to *Odd Jobs*, a 1991 volume of criticism, he claims:

Most of the books reviewed are novels and most of these, by my preference, are from across the Atlantic or south of the border. The innovative power of American realism isn't what it was for Hemingway and Faulkner, and foreign solutions to the puzzle that fiction poses in this post-print, anti-teleological era

²⁸⁴ Ibid., 238.

²⁸⁵ Schiff, "Contemporary Independent Critic," 545.

held out to me hope of some magical formulae that wouldn't occur to my fellow countrymen.²⁸⁶

These foreign solutions also include Borges, as is clear from a review featured in the same volume: "Hawthorne's fantastications, by way of the homage and emulation of Jorge Luis Borges, have even helped liberate Latin Americans into magic realism, unlocking thereby the colorful inner demons of the New World's southern half."²⁸⁷ At a much earlier date, in "The Author as Librarian," Updike expresses a similar admiration for fiction that transcends realism, here formulated in terms of the "imitation of human circumstance":

Just as physical man, in his cities, has manufactured an environment whose scope and challenge and hostility eclipse that of the natural world, so literate man has heaped up a counterfeit universe capable of supporting life. Certainly the traditional novel as a transparent imitation of human circumstance has "a distracted or tired air." Ironic and blasphemous as Borges' hidden message may seem, the texture and method of his creations, though strictly inimitable, answer to a deep need in contemporary literary art the need to confess the fact of artifice.²⁸⁸

In spite of these general statements, however, Updike's interpretation of work by and on Borges is colored by his realist poetics. In his review, Updike also discusses *Borges the Labyrinth Maker* by Ana María Barrenechea, an academic study that deals with unreality in Borges's work, as the original Spanish title indicates: *La expresión de la irrealidad en la obra de Jorge Luis Borges*. Here it is precisely the study of the sense of life in Borges's work that is lacking for Updike:

Professor Barrenechea's collations [. . .] seem to me an admirable explication of his conscious philosophical concerns as they shape, adjective by adjective, his fiction. What is truly unconscious the sense of life that drives him from unequivocal philosophical and critical assertion to the essential ambiguity of fiction she scarcely touches.²⁸⁹

²⁸⁶ Updike, preface to *Odd Jobs*, xxii.

²⁸⁷ Updike, "Virtues of Playing Cricket on the Village Green," 296.

²⁸⁸ Updike, "Books: The Author as Librarian," 245-46.

²⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 238.

As Updike's review is mainly focused on *Dreamtigers* and *Other Inquisitions*, one would expect an emphasis on the more personal texts of *Dreamtigers* as opposed to the fantastic stories of *Labyrinths* and *Ficciones*. Updike indeed quotes "Borges y yo" as well as the epilogue of *Dreamtigers*, in which a man discovers the image of his face.²⁹⁰ However, he calls both volumes "accessory,"²⁹¹ shows a clear preference for Borges's short stories, and also comments in great detail on two of Borges's stories included in *Labyrinths* and *Ficciones*, respectively "La espera" and "La biblioteca de Babel."

Updike's choice and evaluation of these two stories might account more accurately for his norms regarding Borges's work. Not coincidentally, "La espera" is a more realist story than the others included in *Labyrinths*, as Updike himself indicates: "It is a rarity in Borges' *oeuvre* a story in which nothing incredible occurs."²⁹² Updike appreciates Borges's detailed description of the setting and remarks that "Borges has created an episode of criminal brutality in some ways more convincing than those in Hemingway."²⁹³ He therefore concludes that in spite of the presence of sensations of unreality in Borges's work, his fiction stems from realism: "In his essay on Hawthorne, Borges speaks of the Argentine literary aptitude for realism; his own florid fantasy is grafted onto that native stock."²⁹⁴ While Updike seems to radically dichotomize (Latin American) magical realism and realism in his later texts in *Odd Jobs*, where he generally rejects the latter, this earlier classification of Borges's work approaches anti-realism and realism in a way that resembles contemporary Latin American definitions of magical realism, which consider it both an extension of literary realism, in its concern with representation, and an opposition to the basic assumptions of rationalism and realism.²⁹⁵ This conciliation, however, stems from Updike's poetic preferences rather than from a reflection on the concept or idea of magical realism, a term that Updike did not yet use in his Borges review.

Updike also interprets a second, perhaps more fantastic story, "La biblioteca de Babel," in accordance with his realist poetics, when he underscores the personal experience of visiting a library:

²⁹⁰ Ibid., 232-33.

²⁹¹ Ibid., 238

²⁹² Ibid.

²⁹³ Ibid., 242.

²⁹⁴ Ibid., 243.

²⁹⁵ See, for instance, Leal, "Magical Realism in Spanish American Literature," 123; and Parkinson Zamora and Faris, introduction to *Magical Realism*, 6.

“The Library of Babel,” which appears in “Ficciones,” is wholly fantastic, *yet* refers to the librarian’s experience of books. Anyone who has been in the stacks of a great library will recognize the emotional aura, the wearying impression of an inexhaustible and mechanically ordered chaos, that suffuses Borges’ mythical universe.²⁹⁶

For this same story, however, a subtle criticism can be perceived, which is directed at the lack of human aspects in Borges’s work. Updike compares Borges’s work to Franz Kafka’s *The Castle* and calls the latter a “more human work, more personal and neurotic; the fantastic realities of Kafka’s fiction are projections of the narrator-hero’s anxieties, and have no communion, no interlocking structure, without him.”²⁹⁷ Although Updike praises Borges’s step beyond realism, he claims that the unreality of Borges’s work also makes it less human or makes reality *itself* less human:

What are we to make of him? The economy of his prose, the tact of his imagery, the courage of his thought are there to be admired and emulated. In resounding the note of the marvelous last struck in English by Wells and Chesterton, in permitting infinity to enter and distort his imagination, he has lifted fiction away from the flat earth where most of our novels and short stories still take place. *Yet* discouragingly large areas of truth seem excluded from his vision. Though the population of the Library somehow replenishes itself, and “fecal necessities” are provided for, neither food nor fornication is mentioned and in truth they are not generally seen in libraries. I feel in Borges a curious implication: the unrealities of physical science and the senseless repetitions of history have made the world outside the library an uninhabitable vacuum. Literature that European empire augmented with translations from remote kingdoms is now the only world capable of housing and sustaining new literature.²⁹⁸

Updike’s double stance toward realism in Borges can be perceived in the frequent use of the word “yet,” and reminds us of his review rule of trying to understand what the author wished to do. His judgment of Borges’s work paradoxically includes

²⁹⁶ Updike, “Books: The Author as Librarian,” 243; italics added.

²⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 244-45.

²⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 245; italics added.

an appreciation of detailed descriptions of the settings and of the subjective experience of human beings, together with a critique of the lack of these same elements. It was thus not the personal or autobiographical aspects of the author himself that most interested Updike, as he neglected the texts in which Borges most clearly creates an author figure, such as those of *El hacedor* and his poetry. Rather than on the figure of Borges, Updike's focus was on the human dimension of Borges's fiction and its characters.

Some of these norms came to play a role in Updike's much later comments on postmodernism. In *Odd Jobs*, Updike expresses negativity about postmodernism as an art of games detached from reality, and thereby shows the continuity in his poetical conceptions, in spite of the considerable time that had elapsed since his 1965 review of Borges. In that 1991 volume, he refers to Borges in the context of the postmodernism of the 1980s:

Most of the pieces belong to an already slightly bygone era when Ronald Reagan reigned over the United States and William Shawn over *The New Yorker*, and it seemed important to quote from Calvino and Borges at length. The presiding term was "postmodern," yet, though the concept of postmodernism comes in for a grapple several times, I remain uncertain whether it means anything more than a bored playfulness and a nagging sensation of déjà vu.²⁹⁹

In his 1965 review of Borges, Updike had called Borges "post-modern," but had done so at a time when this term was not yet reserved for the later fictional experiments by writers such as John Barth. As Updike wrote then: "Much in Borges' fiction that suggests Kafka in fact derives from Chesterton. As critic and artist both, Borges mediates between the post-modern present and the colorful, prolific, and neglected pre-moderns."³⁰⁰ Updike thus referred to Borges's neglect of what he called "modern" authors such as William Butler Yeats, T. S. Eliot, Rainer Maria Rilke, Marcel Proust, and James Joyce, and his attempt to follow in the footsteps of his favorite authors such as Herbert George Wells, Donald Shaw, Henry James, G. K. Chesterton, and Oscar Wilde.

²⁹⁹ Updike, preface to *Odd Jobs*, xxii.

³⁰⁰ Updike, "Books: The Author as Librarian," 227-28.

Updike did not, however, consider Borges a postmodernist *pur sang*, because he positively applied his norms on the presence of lived human experience to Borges's work. As early as in 1969, Updike groups together Samuel Beckett, Borges, and Vladimir Nabokov in order to stress certain "human" aspects in their work as against the idea that their work would be a purely self-conscious game. These three authors were by then important references in US literary criticism in general and for postmodernism in particular, among other reasons because Barth had named them as great examples in his 1967 essay "The Literature of Exhaustion," later considered a manifesto of postmodernism. In a review of *Ada* by Nabokov, Updike states:

Is art a game? Nabokov stakes his career on it, and there exist enterprising young critics who, in replacing Proust, Joyce, and Mann with the alliterative new trinity of Beckett, Borges, and naBokov [*sic*], imply that these wonderful old fellows make fine airtight boxes, like five-foot plastic cubes in a Minimal Art show, all inner reflection and shimmer, perfectly self-contained, detached from even the language of their composition. I think not. Art is part game, part grim erotic tussle with Things As They Are; the boxes must have holes where reality can look out and readers can look in. Beckett shows us the threadbare rudiments of our animal existence; Borges opens a window on the desolation of history's maze and the tang of heroism that blows off the Argentine plain. And "Ada," though aspiring to "an art now become pure and abstract, and therefore genuine," is full of holes, stretches and pages and phrases whose life derives from life.³⁰¹

For Updike, the "humanlikeness" of these writers' works should not be neglected. The heroism of "La espera" and the desolation of the labyrinth of Babel in Borges were experiences directly attached to life. For Updike, Borges's "boxes" therefore continued to offer a few holes where reality could look out.

³⁰¹ Updike, "Van Loves Ada, Ada Loves Van," 72-73.

6. John Barth: The technical and the human in Borges's work

In "Borges & I: a mini-memoir," John Barth describes how, around 1965, when he was finishing his fourth novel *Giles Goat-Boy*, a student in his graduate-level fiction-writing seminar at the New York State University at Buffalo urged him to read Borges's work. He recollects the overwhelming experience of discovering the Argentine author:

The experience of being stopped cold in one's tracks is not unusual among younger artists. Indeed, I have written somewhere or other that I take it to be the responsibility of alert apprentice artists—alert apprentice *anythings*—to be swept off their feet with some frequency in the fate of passionate virtuosity: great power under great control, as encountered in their predecessors both distant and immediate. So I had been upon first discovering James Joyce and Franz Kafka, for example, back in undergraduate days. It is another matter when one is half through one's thirties and for better or worse has pretty much become who one is. But upon first encountering such astonishing stories as "The Secret Miracle," "The Zahir," "Pierre Menard," "Funes the Memorious," "Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius," and the rest, I felt again that urgent, disquieting imperative from apprentice days: that everything must halt in my shop until I came to terms with this extraordinary artist.³⁰²

The assimilation of Borges's work in Barth's fiction and non-fiction is evident in abundance. Barth's collection of stories *Lost in the Funhouse* from 1968 bears the mark of his discovery, and Borges's name appears in one of the stories entitled "Life-Story."³⁰³ His 1967 essay "The Literature of Exhaustion," in particular, but also two previous short reviews and the later 1980 essay "The Literature of Replenishment," deal with Borges's work. I will focus here on Barth's early non-fictional work, but will also refer to the later essay in order to show the (lack of) continuity in Barth's classifications and norms regarding Borges's work.

In a section in the literary quarterly *American Scholar* in which different authors were asked to describe the most memorable books of the past ten years, Barth writes a short note on John Hawkes's *Second Skin*, Vladimir Nabokov's *Pale*

³⁰² Barth, "Borges & I," 230; italics in the original.

³⁰³ Barth, *Lost in the Funhouse*, 117.

Fire, and Borges's *Ficciones*. Of these three authors, Borges is singled out as being in line with Barth's own literary poetics: "Different as these three are, I suppose I'd call *Ficciones* perhaps the most memorable, because [it is] the most technically and metaphysically sympathetic to my own musings."³⁰⁴ This poetics is made more explicit in another short comment on Borges's work. In a section in *Holiday* on excellent books that failed to attract wide attention, Barth claims that *Labyrinths* is the best of the book-length selections of Borges's work in English translation. Commenting on Borges and Samuel Beckett's work, he already foreshadows the idea of exhaustion or ultimacy later expressed in "The Literature of Exhaustion":

It was a splendid exception, in the dreary history of literary prizes, for those two [Borges and Beckett], in my opinion, are the writers of the last quarter century most comparable—in their extraordinary vision, consummate gifts and probable lasting stature—to the "old masters" of 20th Century fiction: Proust, Kafka, Joyce, Mann. The irony (and the great problem for their successors) is that each of them in his way brings narrative literature to a kind of ultimacy, or finishing point: Beckett by gradually talking himself out of language altogether, Borges by beginning, as it were, from the premise that literature—indeed, intellectual history—has at this hour of the world virtually exhausted the possibilities of novelty. [. . .] Yet what makes Borges more sympathetic to me, finally, than his fellow giant is the passionate and compassionate (but never sentimental and always laconic) humanism that informs his stories. Like the great artists of other centuries, he engages the heart as well as the intelligence.³⁰⁵

Barth's preference for Borges's work over other contemporary experimental fiction is, as can be gathered from this note, related to what he calls humanism. Barth's humanism does not seem to refer to the group of philosophies and ethical movements, but could be more specifically related to "human" aspects of fiction. For Barth, fiction should engage the heart and the intelligence, a poetical statement he repeats and extends in a much later essay dedicated to his preference for Spanish-language literature: "I prefer the kind of technical fireworks that speak to my heart as well as to my mind and my funnybone—formalism with a Latino accent:

³⁰⁴ Barth, "Revolving Bookstand."

³⁰⁵ Barth, "Gift of Books."

formalismo.”³⁰⁶ Whereas the technical (and here also: playful) aspects of Barth's own fiction were quickly recognized by critics, he did not cease to emphasize the human aspects of his own work either. In a version of his introduction to the stories of *Lost in the Funhouse* that was used for live performances, Barth comments on his own work:

Finally, if the pieces are successful by my personal standards, they have to be more than just tricky. If I believed my writing were no more than the formal fun-and-games that *Time* magazine makes it out to be, I'd take up some other line of work. The subject of literature, says Aristotle, is “human life, its happiness and its misery.” I agree with Aristotle.³⁰⁷

The stories written by Borges that were important for Barth were also selected on the basis of their humanism. This is at least the case for the stories from *Ficciones* and *El Aleph* that were dealt with in the 1993 Borges memoir, written at a time when the concept of postmodernism had already become accepted:

In his own product I admire least certain of the stories that some of my higher-tech academic colleagues seem to admire most: such tales as the aforementioned “Death and the Compass,” which seem to me to have little or no human interest, only a cerebral ingenuity. Even “Pierre Menard, Author of the *Quixote*” I put in that category, inspired as is its conceit and graceful its rendition. I quite love his short-essay-mediations (such as “*Borges y yo*”), as rereadable as good poetry, but I am not floored by the poetry proper, no doubt because my Spanish is inadequate to the originals. Such stories as “Funes the Memorious,” however, and “*Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius*” are unforgettable (even though “Funes” has in my opinion a serious architectural flaw that I intend to discuss with the author if there turns out to be a heaven for postmodernists, or at least a postmortem Q & A). And his very best stories—such *Meisterstücken* as “The Secret Miracle,” “The Zahir” (which I read as an exquisitely oblique love story), “Averroes's Search,” and “The Aleph” (another love story)—are in my judgment perfect works of literature.³⁰⁸

³⁰⁶ Barth, “Spanish Connection,” 44-45.

³⁰⁷ Barth, “More Troll Than Cabbage,” 79.

³⁰⁸ Barth, “Borges & I,” 240.

This norm of what I will call humanlikeness, which also played a role in John Updike's wish for fiction to retain moorings in social reality, was important for a larger group of critics who evaluated contemporary fiction from the United States. It refers to the prescription that fiction should describe the lives of characters and their human experience. It also implies a "realistic" comment on the world outside fiction and therefore avoids a thoroughly solipsistic poetics. This norm is clear, for instance, in reviews that deal with Barth's work and also briefly refer to Borges's work, reviews in which the conception of humanlikeness is closely related to a discussion of the technique of self-consciousness and the genre of the (self-)parody in fiction.

In a review of Barth's *Lost in the Funhouse* and Nabokov's collection of stories, poems, fragments of novels, and critical essays entitled *Nabokov's Congeries*, both published in 1967, for instance, it is self-consciousness that is deemed to take away from the humanlikeness:

Barth's main fault in this book is that he is not concerned with human beings—that is, the human beings he created—but rather with his own intrusive role as author. Maybe this is not wrong, but there can be no interest in the substance of the stories, because there is no substance, only style.³⁰⁹

In this review by John Plotz, Borges's work is evaluated more positively than (at least) one of the stories in Barth's *Lost in the Funhouse*: "Indeed, in "Life-Story" the man in the story is writing a story about a man writing a story and so on. The novelty of the idea is quickly exhausted; Borges could have summarized it in a single line."³¹⁰

Richard Poirier's text on recent fiction, "The Politics of Self-Parody," shares this negative evaluation of the lack of humanlikeness. His essay is, apart from Barth's "The Literature of Exhaustion," the first that tries to reflect more extensively on a larger group of contemporary authors. Poirier's 1968 essay in *Partisan Review* starts off with a description of self-parody as a new form of parody. He states that parody has always had the function of literary criticism, but that the genre has started to aim at itself:

Thus the difference between older kinds of parody and this newer one is a measure of the difference between concepts of criticism. Very roughly, the

³⁰⁹ Plotz, "Come to the funhouse, Lolita."

³¹⁰ Ibid.

distinction is between a (to me) discredited but still dominant criticism that trusts in *a priori* standards of life, reality and history, and a criticism that finds no support in these terms.³¹¹

For Poirier, self-parody thus gives an equal status to reality and history as it gives to fiction.

Although realism as a norm has become obsolete for Poirier, he does distinguish hierarchically within the group of authors who think of the world as fictional. The critic shows a preference for the fiction of James Joyce and Vladimir Nabokov over that of authors such as Barth and Iris Murdoch. Poirier was associated with the New York Intellectuals and their magazine *Partisan Review*, and actually started serving on the editorial board of this quarterly when it moved to Rutgers University in 1963. In keeping with the modernist program of the New York Intellectuals and *Partisan Review*, Poirier prefers what he calls the "vitality" of Joyce's, and sometimes Nabokov's, work. Borges is, however, alternately presented as part of a group to which Joyce and Nabokov belong and part of the same group as Barth and Murdoch. Borges is included in the first group and therefore evaluated more positively when Poirier discusses the themes of time and memory in recent fiction: "Nostalgia for lost or desiderated orders that once let a writer participate in a cultural or social complex—such nostalgia gives enormously richer pathos to the self-parody of Joyce or Nabokov or Borges than it does to Barth or Iris Murdoch."³¹² Conversely, Poirier integrates Borges into the latter group when he claims that Borges, Barth, and Murdoch share the "debilitating assumption" that "it is interesting in and of itself to make the formal properties of fiction into the subject matter of fiction."³¹³ Poirier finds this assumption boring and exasperating as a reader, and it is for this reading experience that he criticizes Barth's *Giles Goat-Boy* in particular. He says that Barth overindulges in repetitive formal arrangement at the expense of "life": "Let's assume the triviality [of literary structuring], but only because we then can insist all the more that fiction is something that has to be *made* interesting and that 'life' is exhibited in the act of making."³¹⁴

Poirier concludes his essay with a more in-depth discussion of Borges's work. He relates Borges's work again to authors from the United States, this time to

³¹¹ Poirier, "Politics of Self-Parody," 339-40; italics in the original.

³¹² *Ibid.*, 347-48.

³¹³ *Ibid.*, 342.

³¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 344.

Thomas Pynchon and Barth. For Poirier, self-parody in Borges's work consists of a form of criticism in which fiction and criticism are no longer clearly distinguishable, a parody form that is mainly directed toward its narrators. In the end, despite comparisons between Borges on the one hand and Joyce (and Nabokov) on the other, Poirier dismisses Borges's work for the predominance of formal elements over the description of human experience:

Borges is for my taste too little concerned with the glory of the human presence within the wastes of time, with human agencies of invention, with Christs [*sic*], and he is too exclusively amused by the careers of competing systems, the failed potencies of techniques and structures. We remember the point of his texts, especially since it is so often the same point, but he gives us no people to remember or care about. Our greatest invention so far remains ourselves, what we call human beings, and enough inventing of that phenomenon still goes on to make the destiny of persons altogether more compelling in literature than the destiny of systems or of literary modes. Nothing we have created, in politics or literature, is necessary—that is the central aspect of the literature of self-parody which humanly matters.³¹⁵

Although Poirier acknowledged the problem of referentiality that is inherent in language, he thus dismissed Borges's work for being too overtly self-conscious and self-referential, according to a poetical norm that he continued to state over a long period of time, for instance in a 1982 article: "The most instructive and pleasurable occasions for reading occur, I think, when Literature is seduced by the life it proposes to create, when it half resents the fact that its powers of invention and beguilement have already been exceeded by nature's."³¹⁶

While it is possible that critics such as Plotz and Poirier reproduced the classifications of self-consciousness or parody in Borges and other authors, for instance those by Barth, what is clear in these texts is the consensus about the norm of humanlikeness. Barth's focus on humanism in fiction was thus part of a larger discussion, which did not necessarily or exclusively revolve around Borges's work. The criticism of Barth's work by Plotz, Poirier, and others also suggests that Barth

³¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 353. For a similar negative assessment of parody in John Barth's work, see Rovit, "Novel as Parody: John Barth."

³¹⁶ Poirier, "Literature, Technology, People," 73. See also Poirier, "Negotiations," interview by Taylor.

may have continuously stressed humanlikeness in order to defend his own poetical conception, in particular his interest in and use of experimental narrative techniques. In my view, Barth's position, as well as those of Plotz and Poirier, can be contrasted with the norms of some contemporary US critics who debated the demise of the subject and the "death" of the author. In the 1960s, critics such as Leonard Meyer and Leslie Fiedler (and also, partly before them, French critics such as Roland Barthes and Michel Foucault) reflected on an art that departed more fundamentally from modernism and humanism, a reflection that would become more prominent in the 1970s and 1980s, sometimes in the context of postmodernism.³¹⁷ Even though Paul de Man's work on Borges does not yet fully embrace the theory of the demise of man both as a character and as an author, as there is still a self, even though it is a mere linguistic construct, his understanding of interiority in an impersonal sense already breaks with phenomenology and existentialism and is therefore somewhat comparable to Meyer and Fiedler's aesthetic position. In general, however, it can be stated that US critics of the 1960s considered representation problematic, but still saw literature as the expression of the self, as Hans Bertens has observed: "We are [. . .] still far removed from the far more radical anti-humanism that would later be imported from France [. . .]. The self is still firmly in place [. . .], no matter how stripped of its capacities for ordering and representation."³¹⁸ The humanism that drove this position can be illustrated with Barth's early texts, studied previously, and with his later essays and collections of stories. Below, I will discuss how the norm of humanlikeness in Borges's work is related to Barth's 1967 essay "The Literature of Exhaustion."

As Barth himself has stated, "The Literature of Exhaustion" was an attempt to come to terms with his discovery of Borges's work.³¹⁹ It was published in *The Atlantic*, the literary and cultural magazine that in 1967 and 1968 would publish many poems by the Argentine writer, although the essay focuses on Borges's narrative fiction. In the essay, Barth defines a kind of "literature of exhausted possibility" or "literature of exhaustion," an exhaustion that could also be observed in other art forms:

By "exhaustion" I don't mean anything so tired as the subject of physical, moral, or intellectual decadence, only the used-upness of certain forms or the

³¹⁷ See Meyer, "End of the Renaissance?" 186; and Fiedler, "New Mutants," 382-84, 392.

³¹⁸ Bertens, *Idea of the Postmodern*, 34.

³¹⁹ See, for instance, Barth, "Borges & I," 230-31.

felt exhaustion of certain possibilities—by no means necessarily a cause for despair. That a great many Western artists for a great many years have quarreled with received definitions of artistic media, genres, and forms goes without saying: pop art, dramatic and musical “happenings,” the whole range of “intermedia” or “mixed-means” art bear recentest witness to the tradition of rebelling against Tradition.³²⁰

At the start of his essay, Barth refers to various forms of experimental art, especially to happenings and intermedia arts. The metaphor of exhaustion of traditional forms and Barth’s plea for artistic experimentalism could, as Barth himself later admitted, be related to his direct experience of Vietnam War protests and other social and political movements in the United States in the 1960s. In a later introduction to the essay, he describes the State University of New York in Buffalo as a tear-gassed university campus seething with the unrest then affecting the United States.³²¹ Although he later thus distanced himself from the described urgencies of far-reaching experimentalism by putting them into a historical context, it was already in “The Literature of Exhaustion” that he limited his own rebellion by indicating that he preferred to “rebel along traditional lines” and create the kind of art that requires expertise.³²²

When referring to literature, Barth defines this rebellion as the need to be technically up to date, as he found Joyce and Kafka to be in their time, and Beckett and Borges in his time:

The man I want to discuss a little here, Jorge Luis Borges, illustrates well the difference between a technically old-fashioned artist, a technically up-to-date civilian, and a technically up-to-date artist. In the first category I’d locate all those novelists who for better or worse write not as if the twentieth century didn’t exist, but as if the great writers of the last sixty years or so hadn’t existed (*nota bene* that our century’s more than two-thirds done; it’s dismaying to see so many of our writers following Dostoevsky or Tolstoy or Flaubert or Balzac, when the real technical question seems to me to be how to succeed not even Joyce and Kafka, but those who *succeeded* Joyce and Kafka and are now in

³²⁰ Barth, “Literature of Exhaustion,” 29.

³²¹ Barth, introductory note to “Literature of Exhaustion” in *The Friday Book*, 64.

³²² Barth, “Literature of Exhaustion,” 30.

the evenings of their own careers). In the second category are such folk as an artist-neighbor of mine in Buffalo who fashions dead Winnies-the-Pooh in sometimes monumental scale out of oilcloth stuffed with sand and impaled on stakes or hung by the neck. In the third belong the few people whose artistic thinking is as hip as any French new-novelist's, but who manage nonetheless to speak eloquently and memorably to our still-human hearts and conditions, as the great artists have always done. Of these, two of the finest living specimens that I know of are Beckett and Borges.³²³

Again, Barth emphasizes the human interest of (Beckett's and) Borges's work together with its technical experiments, which he indirectly puts in opposition here to the purely technical up-to-date nature of French *nouveau roman* writers. Further on in the essay, Barth describes this same combination by using two terms from Borges's story "Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius," algebra (technique) and fire (passion), a combination that Barth found indispensable for good literature and to which he would return in later essays.³²⁴ This emphasis on Borges's humanlikeness, which was due to Barth's continuous preference for "humanism," was possibly also a reaction to Keith Botsford's article published in the same year in *The Atlantic*, in which Botsford criticized Borges for his description of an inhuman world.³²⁵

Barth dedicates the remainder of his essay to the "felt ultimacies" that writers employ to create new work. He gives examples from Borges's work of the images, techniques, and narrative forms of exhaustion that he associates with the author—images, techniques, and narrative forms are the perhaps ill-defined words that Barth himself uses for the technical side of narration; that is, for the algebra of good literature. One of these narrative forms consists of art showing an awareness of what has been done before, for instance by means of ironic repetition. Barth refers to the composition of *Don Quijote* by Pierre Menard as done "with ironic intent by a composer quite aware of where we've been and where we are."³²⁶ For Barth, recent fiction work is composed out of the apocalyptic feeling that it is difficult and perhaps unnecessary to write original works of literature. He is inclined to side with the idea that the novel as art form might have had its best time, although he recognizes that

³²³ Ibid. For similar statements in Barth's semi-fictionalized autobiography, see Barth, *Once Upon a Time: A Floating Opera*, 351.

³²⁴ Barth, "Literature of Exhaustion," 32. See also Barth, "Algebra and Fire," 167.

³²⁵ Botsford, "Writings of Jorge Luis Borges," 101.

³²⁶ Ibid., 31.

this does not exclude the possibility of writing novels in an apocalyptic ambience. It is in this context that he sees Nabokov's and Borges's work, as well as his own:

The persistence of an art form doesn't invalidate work created in the comparable apocalyptic ambience. [. . .] If you happened to be Vladimir Nabokov, you might address that felt ultimacy by writing *Pale Fire*: a fine novel by a learned pedant, in the form of a pedantic commentary on a poem invented for the purpose. If you were Borges you might write *Labyrinths*: fictions by a learned librarian in the form of footnotes, as he describes them, to imaginary or hypothetical books. And I'll add [. . .] that if you were the author of this paper, you'd have written something like *The Sot-Weed Factor* or *Giles Boat-Boy*: novels which imitate the form of the Novel, by an author who imitates the role of Author.³²⁷

With the comments above, Barth voices the idea of (self-)parody that is found in criticism of his own work.³²⁸ Contrary to the idea of a novel that represents life directly, he describes the recent novel's deliberate imitation of another novel and of other writings. The comparison between Barth, Nabokov, Borges, and sometimes Beckett became a frequent element in US criticism. The comparison between Borges's and Nabokov's work in particular, on the basis of their use of humor and (self-)parody, became firmly established.³²⁹

³²⁷ Ibid., 32-33.

³²⁸ See Kenny, "World of Writers: Barth in the Funhouse"; Plotz, "Barth and Nabokov: Come to the Funhouse, Lolita"; Poirier, "Politics of Self-Parody"; and Rovit, "Novel as Parody: John Barth," 79.

³²⁹ See "Ficciones," in *Masterplots 1963 Annual*; Adams, "Nabokov's Game"; Appel, "Vladimir Nabokov"; Kostelanetz, "Neglected Genre," 227; Merivale, "Flaunting of Artifice"; Nordell, "Argentine Mythmaker and His Labyrinth," 5; Plotz, "Barth and Nabokov: Come to the Funhouse, Lolita"; Poirier, "Politics of Self-Parody"; Ricks, "Pale Fire"; Rovit, "Novel as Parody: John Barth," 79; Steiner, "Of Nuance and Scruple"; and Yeiser, "Of International Stature." Several later book publications only confirmed this comparison. See, for instance, Gass, *Fiction and the Figures of Life*; Stark, *Literature of Exhaustion*; Steiner, *Extraterritorial*; and Tanner, *City of Words*. Scholars have perceived most of the similarities between Borges's and Nabokov's work as parallels rather than as cases of direct influence. See for instance the comparison of Borges's work and Nabokov's *Lolita* of 1955 and *Pale Fire* of 1962 in Frisch, "Borges and Nabokov's *Lolita*"; Stark, "Borges' *Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius*"; and Kressova, "Bajo el signo de proteo." Nabokov's own comments in interviews from the 1960s show early enthusiasm followed by disillusionment. See Nabokov, "Interview with Vladimir Nabokov," interview by Toffler; Nabokov, "Interview with Vladimir Nabokov," by Appel; and Nabokov, "I Have Never Seen," by Duffy and Sheppard. A later case of direct influence that is, however, beyond dispute is in Nabokov's 1969 novel *Ada*, where the author of *The Gitanilla*, a novel reminiscent of *Lolita*, is a certain Osberg, in whom Borges can be recognized. Institutionally, Nabokov and Borges were connected in a different way, when together with Isaac Bashevis Singer they became the first authors to appear in translation in *The New Yorker* in the 1960s. See Yagoda, *About Town*, 368.

As well as irony and parody, Barth lists other images, techniques, and narrative forms that are pertinent to the literature of exhaustion. He discusses the contamination of reality by dream in "Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius" and mentions Borges's interest in *The One Thousand and One Nights* (or: *Arabian Nights*) and in the story within the story, a technique that Barth has written on and used in his fiction ever since. Barth also considers the infinite library in "La biblioteca de Babel" to be an image of the exhaustion of possibilities.³³⁰ His essay closes with the last example of an image of exhaustion, the labyrinth, for which he refers to Ana María Barrenechea's study. In a similar way to how he thinks that new fiction work has to be composed from an apocalyptic feeling, for Barth one only has to be aware of and acknowledge the existence of the possibilities of the labyrinth to create fiction: "A labyrinth, after all, is a place in which, ideally, all the possibilities of choice (of direction, in this case) are embodied, and [. . .] must be exhausted before one reaches the heart."³³¹ In this way, Barth concludes his essay with examples of what he considers Borges's technical up-to-dateness.

Barth's interest in these techniques, such as the parody, the contamination of reality by dream, and the image of the labyrinth under the impact of Borges's fiction, was not exclusive to his work: rather, it formed part of a larger movement of US authors. Other authors have received less attention here, as none explicitly commented on Borges in my period of study, and thus none functioned as key mediators as far as early Borges criticism is concerned. In several studies on the impact of Borges's work on authors such as Thomas Pynchon and Robert Coover, Borges's use of experimental narrative procedures such as the technique of alternate narration is said to have been particularly influential. Stories that were important for Pynchon and Coover according to these studies, such as "Las ruinas circulares" and "El jardín de senderos que se bifurcan," show an interest in narrative forms and were equally important for Barth.³³² This group of US authors differed from the *nouveau roman* writers in France, who mainly discussed "Tema del traidor y del héroe," Borges's preface to *La invención de Morel*, and "El arte narrativo y la magia."

³³⁰ Barth, "Literature of Exhaustion," 33-34.

³³¹ *Ibid.*, 34.

³³² For Pynchon, see See Bell-Villada, "Literature and Politics North and South"; Castillo, "Tenuous Symmetries of Art"; Green, "Borgesian Image in Innovative American Fiction"; and Rodríguez Monegal, "Game of Shifting Mirrors." For Coover, see Christ, "Forking Narratives"; Frisch, "Borges, the Postmodern, and the Literature of the Americas"; and Green, "Borgesian Image in Innovative American Fiction."

Barth's observations on the exhaustion of literature can also be placed in a broader context of US criticism in general and Borges criticism in particular. In the 1960s, several critics in the United States sensed the ending of a tradition and expressed their struggles with the existing body of modernist literature. In a 1967 article in *TriQuarterly*, the literary magazine that would take an interest in postmodern fiction and publish many texts on and by Borges from 1968 onwards,³³³ Stephen Koch claims that US writing is in need of a rebirth.³³⁴ In a 1973 interview with Coover, the author explicitly discusses the similarities between his thoughts and Barth's perceived ending, or exhaustion, of a literary tradition.³³⁵ Susan Sontag's influential essay "The Aesthetics of Silence," partly dedicated to Beckett and published together with Roland Barthes's seminal essay "The Death of the Author" in 1967, is dedicated to the use of silence in art as a reaction to the historical consciousness of what has been said and done.³³⁶

In Borges criticism the perceived exhaustion of narrative forms was observed earlier by Updike and de Man, who for their part were inspired by Borges's own observations. Updike, for instance, echoed Borges when he claimed that "the traditional novel as a transparent imitation of human circumstance has 'a distracted or tired air.'"³³⁷ And de Man took up Borges's prologue to *Historia universal de la infamia* in order to describe Borges's style as baroque, the "style that deliberately exhausts (or tries to exhaust) all its possibilities,"³³⁸ a quotation also repeated by Barth. Although these ideas of exhaustion in texts on Borges were all linked to a perception of Borges's own poetics in the form of concrete citations from his work, they were also related to diverse poetical discussions, such as the need to display artifice in Updike's case, the use of a disordering style in de Man's, and the exhaustion of certain art forms in Barth's.³³⁹

Barth's essay has had a long reception history of its own, on which he himself has commented. I will discuss it here only as far as the later inclusion or exclusion of Borges's work in or from Barth's poetical program is concerned. In his later essay "The Literature of Replenishment," partly written as a corrective for the

³³³ See in particular the articles on Borges and translations of Borges's prose and poetry in *TriQuarterly*, no. 13-14 (Fall-Winter, 1968-1969), and the special issue on Borges in *TriQuarterly*, no. 25 (Fall, 1972).

³³⁴ Koch, "Premature Speculations on the Perpetual Renaissance."

³³⁵ Coover, "Robert Coover," interview by Gado, 142.

³³⁶ Sontag, "Aesthetics of Silence."

³³⁷ Updike, "Books: The Author as Librarian," 245-46.

³³⁸ De Man, "Modern Master," 10.

³³⁹ See Lefere, "Borges ante las nociones de 'modernidad' y de 'posmodernidad,'" 57.

misunderstandings he perceived to have arisen from his previous essay, he goes against the perception of his essay as another Death of the Novel piece. Rather, Barth stresses that he wished to condemn high modernism and that the real exhaustion was not of language or literature, but of the poetics of high modernism.³⁴⁰ In "The Literature of Replenishment," Barth distances himself from the modernist artist because of his alienated role in society and the difficulty of his work. Unlike "The Literature of Exhaustion," his later essay explicitly uses the classification of postmodernism and sets it against modernism. Barth considers postmodernism a synthesis of high modernism and nineteenth-century premodernist realism, a binary definition in which there is thus also space for realism and that is at variance with some other definitions of postmodernism:

In my view, the proper program for postmodernism is neither a mere extension of the modernist program [. . .], nor a mere intensification of certain aspects of modernism, nor on the contrary a wholesale subversion or repudiation of either modernism or what I'm calling premodernism: "traditional" bourgeois realism.³⁴¹

In this combination of premodernist realism and modernist self-consciousness, the importance that Barth attaches to algebra (technique) and fire (passion) can be recognized. By seeing postmodernism as a blend of premodernism and modernism, Barth conceptualizes a postmodernism that has clear limits in the deconstruction of the realist code. Although Barth indeed attacks literary realism in his essays, I therefore do not agree with scholar John Stark's position that authors such as Barth "argue that literature should primarily be about literature, not about everyday reality."³⁴² Barth shows, as Stark for his part also confirms, that realistic fiction does not avoid artifice but merely uses a different kind of artifice. In his essays on Borges he emphasizes a form of literature that does not dehumanize the subject but discovers a new type of humanism.

As Barth himself has stated, "The Literature of Exhaustion" was groping toward a first definition of postmodernism as Barth understood it at the time. Borges, Beckett, and Nabokov served as prestigious foreign examples although they were

³⁴⁰ Barth, "Literature of Replenishment," in *The Friday Book*, 206.

³⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 201.

³⁴² Stark, *Literature of Exhaustion: Borges, Nabokov, and Barth*, 9, 126.

examples of writers “in the evenings of their own careers,” who had to be followed up by a new and national poetics. It is only in Barth’s second essay, “The Literature of Replenishment,” that a clear group of national postmodernists is identified: Barth includes William Gass, John Hawkes, Donald Barthelme, Robert Coover, Stanley Elkin, Thomas Pynchon, Kurt Vonnegut Jr., and himself in the US canon.³⁴³ In the later essay, Borges, Beckett, and Nabokov come to be seen as late modernists and are replaced by Italo Calvino and Gabriel García Márquez as foreign postmodernists.

Although in the essay itself Barth gives no arguments for the later exclusion of Borges’s work from postmodernism, two other texts suggest again a “humanist” norm. In Barth’s quoted memoir, he narrates his third encounter with Borges, in Baltimore in the 1980s, at a time when his own fiction had come under the influence of writers such as García Márquez: “Among my living literary idols, Jorge Luis Borges had been edged out by one more Latino [. . .]. Gabriel García Márquez is a writer whose genius is no doubt less refined than Borges’s but more wholly human; what’s more, he is congenitally a novelist, broadcasting on a wider range of my personal frequencies.”³⁴⁴ And in a 1997 conference on Calvino and Borges, Barth considers the combination of algebra and fire—of technique and passion—which he first related to Borges’s work, to actually be more connected to Calvino’s work:

Although I find both writers indispensable and would never presume to rank them as literary artists, by my lights Calvino perhaps comes closer to being the very model of a modern major Postmodernist—not that *that* very much matters, and whatever the capacious bag is that can contain such otherwise dissimilar spirits as Donald Barthelme, Samuel Beckett, J. L. Borges, Italo Calvino, Angela Carter, Robert Coover, Gabriel Garcia Marquez [*sic*], Elsa Morante, Vladimir Nabokov, Grace Paley, Thomas Pynchon [*sic*], *et al.* . . . What I mean is not only the fusion of algebra and fire, the great (and in Calvino’s case high-spirited) virtuosity, the massive acquaintance with and respectfully ironic recycling of what Umberto Eco calls “the already said,” and the combination of storytelling charm with zero naiveté, but also the keeping of one authorial foot in narrative antiquity while the other rests firmly in the high-tech (in Calvino’s case, the Parisian “structuralist”) narrative present.

³⁴³ Barth, “Literature of Replenishment,” in *The Friday Book*, 195.

³⁴⁴ Barth, “Borges & I,” 236.

Add to this what I have cited as our chap's perhaps larger humanity and in-the-worldness, and you have my reasons.³⁴⁵

Barth's norm of humanlikeness had not changed, but Borges's work was no longer included in the group of authors whose works were both technical and human.

7. Conclusion: A crisis in literary criticism?

The ways in which the five key critics selected and classified Borges's work point to the existence of diverse norms that were at work on the individual, institutional, national, and international levels at which this critical reception took place. At the individual level, the various selections and classifications were again fairly directly related to the poetics of the individual critics, most notably in the cases of Anthony Boucher (detective fiction), Paul de Man (style), John Updike (realism), and John Barth (the technical and the human). To take Updike's most important 1965 text on Borges as an example: although the essay expresses admiration for fiction that transcends realism, its selection and classification of Borges's work was also prompted by Updike's realist poetics, especially by an appreciation of how Borges's work is rooted in human experience. At the international level, the impact of Borges's critical reception in France can be observed when it is used as an indicator of prestige in Updike's essay. In de Man's case, the impact of French criticism was clear in his indirect distancing from the works of Georges Poulet, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Albert Camus. By not taking language for granted as a transparent medium, de Man in fact comes closer to certain French critics who published on Borges, such as Maurice Blanchot and Michel Foucault.

In order to observe the particularities of Borges criticism in the United States, the institutional level in particular requires more attention, for instance by comparing it with that in France. When focusing on the institutional level in US criticism on Borges, Borges critics who commented on the critical reception can be a good starting point. Key critics discussed here commented very little on (Borges) criticism itself, and no metacritical statements can be found among other critics either. Two key critics did specifically refer to the fact that US criticism had not yet made Borges's work well known, offering a negative judgment of the state of Borges criticism in the

³⁴⁵ Barth, "Parallels!"

United States. This idea is mentioned in Updike's essay and in de Man's only review of Borges. Two years after Borges's first two book translations in the United States, de Man, for instance, observes that Borges is little known in the United States and that the critical reception of his work still has some major steps to take: "American and English critics have called him one of the greatest writers alive today, but have not as yet (so far as I know) made substantial contributions to the interpretation of his work." For de Man, however, this situation is about to change: "There are signs [. . .] that he is being discovered in this country with some of the same enthusiasm that greeted him in France, where he received major critical attention, and has been very well translated."³⁴⁶ De Man's review was issued in *The New York Review of Books*, a periodical that had in fact been launched in 1962 to raise the level of book reviewing in the United States. Updike and de Man applied their comments to Borges criticism in particular, but one could ask how these comments on the state of Borges criticism tied in with the perceived feeling of crisis in US book reviewing in the late 1950s and early 1960s.

The so-called crisis was proclaimed in various articles that compared the situation in the United States with British and continental book reviewing. In October 1959, novelist and critic Elizabeth Hardwick denounced the decline of US book reviewing in a biting article included in a special supplement on "Writing in America" in *Harper's Magazine*. Apart from poor writing, Hardwick criticized the "flat praise and the faint dissension" that made it seem as though reviewer and author were not defending any position toward the book in question and that reduced the book review to "simple coverage" of new books.³⁴⁷ Her critique, mainly directed toward *The New York Times*, *The New York Herald Tribune's* Sunday book review sections, and the magazine *Saturday Review*, caused an upheaval that continued in *Harper's* letter section for several months.

After 1962, when *The New York Review of Books* had been launched—by Hardwick, among others—US book reviewing was criticized further. In a special issue on "The American Reading Public" of the academic journal *Daedalus*, some of the same criticism is voiced. Paris-born Henri Peyre, then Sterling Professor of French and chair of the department of Romance languages at Yale University, attacks the same review media and also mentions the US tendency not to judge too critically or

³⁴⁶ De Man, "Modern Master," 8.

³⁴⁷ Hardwick, "Decline of Book Reviewing," 140.

to commit itself.³⁴⁸ For Peyre, the great gap between academics and non-academics in the United States is problematic, as is the lack of non-academic critics of first order and with great prestige, with the exception of Edmund Wilson and Alfred Kazin, both of whom voiced similar complaints about reviewing at the start of the 1960s.³⁴⁹ This wide gap between academic criticism and journalistic criticism is also discussed in an article in the same journal by the US poet John Hollander, who refers to the detrimental effect that academic criticism has had on the quality of more public writing.³⁵⁰ Whereas in France structuralist criticism was actually reaching a wider intellectual public and French academic criticism and journalism were therefore approaching each other,³⁵¹ book reviewing in the United States was distancing itself from academic criticism. This suggests that the Age of Academic Criticism, to vary on Randall Jarrell's expression, had a negative effect on journalistic and essayistic criticism.³⁵²

Although these complaints may have been just another step in the ongoing debate about the death of criticism, it is worth looking into whether this so-called crisis can be found in my corpus of Borges criticism from the United States, apart from in Updike's and de Man's comments. The possible relationship between Borges criticism and the crisis in US reviewing can be studied more closely by comparing the critical reception of Borges's work in France and the United States. Updike, de Man, and critics such as Hardwick dealt with the quality of reviewing, but it is almost impossible to pin down these matters of style, praise, and dissension in a case study of a single author. As is clear from the two graphs on the frequency with which critics in France and the United States published on Borges in non-academic media, only two critics published three or more articles on Borges in the United States, as opposed to seven in France. The total number of articles in the United States, around 120, was also lower than the number of French articles, around 160, although these numbers may not be meaningful, as I have used different time periods for the two countries. Not surprisingly, many important magazines and newspapers in the United States only published one or two articles on Borges, which was the case for *The New York Review of Books*, *Harper's Magazine*, *New Republic*, *The Nation*, *Partisan*

³⁴⁸ Peyre, "What is Wrong with American Book-Reviewing," 136. This critique was elaborated on in Peyre's 1967 book *The Failures of Criticism*.

³⁴⁹ Peyre, "What is Wrong with American Book-Reviewing," 133; Wilson, "Every Man His Own Eckermann"; and Kazin, "Function of Criticism Today." For more critical comments on the state of US book reviewing in the 1960s, see also Podhoretz, "Book Reviewing and Everyone I Know."

³⁵⁰ Hollander, "Some Animadversions on Current Reviewing."

³⁵¹ Jurt, *Das literarische Feld*, 311.

³⁵² Jarrell, "Age of Criticism."

Review, and *The New York Herald Tribune Books*. However, *The New York Times Book Review* and *The New Yorker* did publish several articles, by Donald Yates, Mildred Adams, John Ashbery, Anthony Boucher, Naomi Bliven, John Updike, and an anonymous reviewer, possibly George Steiner.³⁵³ In comparison with France, there were thus fewer critics in the United States with an established position who wrote frequently on Borges in the period of study.

More importantly, a main difference between the critical reception in France and in the United States lies in the fact that few critics in the United States articulated classifications or norms that were shared by other Borges critics, for instance by repeating the views of their fellow critics. De Man's review, for instance, can hardly be considered representative for certain critical discussions about Borges, and no other critics seem to reproduce his selections, classifications, and norms within my period of study. The only important exception to this in the United States is the group of critics who articulated similar classifications on the technique of self-consciousness and the genre of the (self-)parody, or used a comparable norm of "humanlikeness." This group included key critics such as Barth and perhaps Updike, as well as more peripheral critics in the reception of Borges's work, such as John Plotz and Richard Poirier. In spite of the similarities, these critics applied the classifications and norms differently to Borges and other authors and did not form a homogeneous group gathered around a magazine or publishing house. As far as the norm of humanlikeness is concerned, it was collectively articulated in publications on Borges rather than reproduced from one source or critic in the early period. Without passing over the heterogeneity of the views on humanlikeness, this norm can be related to the larger and partly later critical discussion about postmodernism in the United States, in particular to the idea of the loss of the human or humanist dimension in literature in some definitions of postmodernism.³⁵⁴ In French criticism of Borges's work, by contrast, there was much more interaction within the institution: critics reproduced specific selections and classifications, such as the themes of metaphysics, fear, and humor in articles by Paul Bénichou and Maurice Nadeau, and also directly or indirectly reacted to others by means of their critical texts, which was

³⁵³ For all these publications, see the chronological bibliography. Steiner possibly wrote an anonymous review of *A Personal Anthology* for *The New Yorker* in 1967, as it was included in the "Briefly Noted" section directly after one of his essays. He also referred to the author in another, 1968 text, but would only later publish more frequently on Borges. See [Steiner?], review of *A Personal Anthology*; and Steiner, "Of Nuance and Scruple."

³⁵⁴ See, for instance, Graff, "Myth of the Postmodern Breakthrough," 32, 56; and Graff, "Babbitt at the Abyss," 208-9.

the case for René Étiemble's distancing from Sartre in *Les temps modernes*. Also in the discussion about fantastic literature and the classification of Borges's work within that genre, critics in France transmitted similar classifications and norms. Maurice Blanchot's and Gérard Genette's classifications and norms also bore many similarities to those of other mediators, which came about through processes of interaction.

This lack of interaction between mediators in US criticism, and the relatively limited number of critical texts and prestigious critics, however, do not necessarily point to the existence of a crisis in criticism in the United States. A lack of interaction within literary criticism, for instance, does not automatically suggest a deficiency in the way criticism functioned as an institution. Many other reasons can be adduced for the differences between Borges criticism in France and in the United States. These include factors pertaining to certain particularities of criticism in the United States, such as the existence of different ideas on what a book review (and perhaps also other critical texts) should consist of. As Joan Shelley Rubin has argued, before the twentieth century US criticism mainly focused on the "news value" of books; that is, on the factual description of new books. Since that time, the discussion of whether book reviews should take the "news" approach or take the form of "critical reviewing" has shaped US criticism.³⁵⁵ The perceived crisis in US criticism of the 1960s was thus perhaps simply a step in the development towards a more critical approach, or at least an attempt to steer US criticism in that direction.

The dominance of the "news" approach before the twentieth century was, again according to Rubin, partly down to the power of advertising. Although Rubin does not apply these statements to the twentieth century, this suggests that the collective transmission of selections, classifications, and norms within Borges criticism in the United States could have also been weak because of the dominance of what Jacques Dubois has called the economic scheme as opposed to the institutional scheme in the evaluation of texts.³⁵⁶ As many book review sections of newspapers and magazines in the United States depended financially on advertisements of the publishing trade, commercial considerations could have affected the form of the critical texts. Another possible explanation for the lack of interaction, or even the lack of criticism and prestigious critics, is that Borges was published by publishing houses that did not reach the same audience as a commercial press, as Updike suggested.

³⁵⁵ Rubin, "Higher Journalism' Realigned," 35.

³⁵⁶ Dubois, *L'institution de la littérature*, 39-40.

It is also possible that criticism in the United States lacked a dominant mediator or organization in the field in general, or in the reception of Borges's work in particular, that functioned as a centrifugal point. In France, for instance, Roger Caillois was not only responsible for book and magazine translations of Borges's work, the edition of anthologies that included the Argentine author, and prologues and epilogues to his work, but also for the highest number of critical texts. Next to this dominant mediator for the reception of Borges's work in particular, a number of very prestigious critics, of whom Sartre was the most important, did not play a role in discussions on Borges in particular, but were prominent in steering discussions on particular selections, literary classifications, and norms. This difference could thus have had an effect on the interaction within French Borges criticism.

Lastly, the limited period of study may also have influenced my observations. The reproduction of selections, classifications, and norms may have taken place later in the critical reception, involving the key critics discussed here. Moreover, several prestigious critics only published on Borges after 1968, when *Labyrinths*, *Ficciones*, *Dreamtigers*, *Other Inquisitions*, and *A Personal Anthology* had already been published, as was the case with Richard Burgin, William H. Gass, John Leonard, Geoffrey H. Hartman, Alfred Kazin, and Israel Shenker. Interaction may have taken place later among these critics, or between them and other, more peripheral critics. Here, many of these suggestions must go unanswered, as more research focused exclusively on US criticism in general (and on the later critical reception of Borges's work) would be needed. As Morris Dickstein observes in *Double Agent: The Critic and Society*, the history of reviewing in the United States has not yet been written.³⁵⁷

However, some interaction between mediators took place between publishing and criticism, and thus on a larger, inter-institutional or national level. The parable as a genre classification of Borges's texts in criticism was fuelled by the table of contents and peritexts of *Labyrinths*. The use of detective and science fiction as a genre classification can also be partly attributed to the peritexts of *Labyrinths* and, to a lesser degree, *Ficciones*, perhaps more convincingly so than to the role of Boucher's later reviews. Whereas these two classifications were clearly repeated by key critics, this was not so much the case for Borges's own role as a mediator and as an author figure. Borges's poetry and the autobiographical and personal dimension of his work were of marginal importance for key critics, except perhaps for Saul Maloff, who discusses the autobiographical inspiration of Borges's nightmares. Key critics

³⁵⁷ Dickstein, *Double Agent*.

dedicated the most space to Borges's stories from *Labyrinths*, *Ficciones*, and *A Personal Anthology* (several of which were duplicated in all three volumes), in spite of the fact that the headings of de Man's and Updike's texts, for instance, indicate that they reviewed other volumes such as *Dreamtigers* and *Other Inquisitions*. And despite the fact that these last two volumes were reissued (*Other Inquisitions* by Washington Square Press in 1966 and by Simon and Schuster in 1968; *Dreamtigers* as a Dutton paperback in 1970), most attention continued to go to Borges's short stories.

Whereas interaction between mediators was thus limited within the institution of criticism, and perhaps to a lesser extent also between publishing and criticism, another classification needs to be dealt with in the light of this discussion about the collective transmission of selections, classifications, and norms: the labyrinth. As I have shown previously, the labyrinth was chosen as a title for one of the first Borges translations, but this classification did not overpower other selections and classifications presented in book form, such as the classification of Borges as a stylist. Among key critics such as Boucher, Maloff, and Barth, the labyrinth was referred to as one of Borges's themes (or "motifs" or "images," in their words), but again the labyrinth was not paramount among these critics' classifications, nor among other, more peripheral critics. The labyrinth also appeared in the references to Ana María Barrenechea's 1965 book *Borges the Labyrinth Maker*, despite the fact that, yet again, the analysis of the labyrinth was not central to the book, and in fact did not figure in the original Spanish title.

It is therefore remarkable that the classification of the labyrinth became important in literary criticism in the period after 1968, this time not as a theme but rather as an indication of the *genre* of Borges's texts. In reviews of Borges's 1969 *The Book of Imaginary Beings*, for instance, the labyrinth is a point of reference frequently mentioned in the first lines, in a similar way to how the parable had opened earlier reviews. The labyrinth is used as a genre classification, for instance, in *The New York Times Book Review*: "Everywhere the 'labyrinths' of the great Argentine fabulist and poet pose ponderable questions about the ways of the mind, the relatedness of perceivers and Out There, our extreme dependence on fancy."³⁵⁸ Similarly, in a review in *Newsweek*, Geoffrey Wolff states: "He has a genius for constructing labyrinths. (The word gave him the English title for one of his books of conundrums and fictions.)"³⁵⁹ This predominance is all the more remarkable given that the

³⁵⁸ DeMott, "Book of Imaginary Beings," 53.

³⁵⁹ Wolff, "Fantastical Beasts."

peritexts of *The Book of Imaginary Beings* do not refer to the labyrinth. The labyrinth thus came to replace the parable, perhaps also in its association with Franz Kafka, as becomes clear from a comment on Borges in another review—this time of Donald Barthelme’s collection of stories *City Life*, from 1970: “[Borges’s] stories were ‘fictions,’ original creations, less reflections than subversive interrogations of reality. They were also ‘labyrinths’ which, like Kafka’s writing, dressed out their mystery in a guise of earnest lucidity and matter-of-fiction.”³⁶⁰ It is thus not clear whether it was publishing or criticism that most contributed to this final dominance of the classification of the labyrinth. Although the use of the labyrinth as a genre points to the title of *Labyrinths: Selected Stories & Other Writings*, in which the labyrinth seems to refer to Borges’s texts as a whole, it most likely seems to have been down to a combination of the two institutions.

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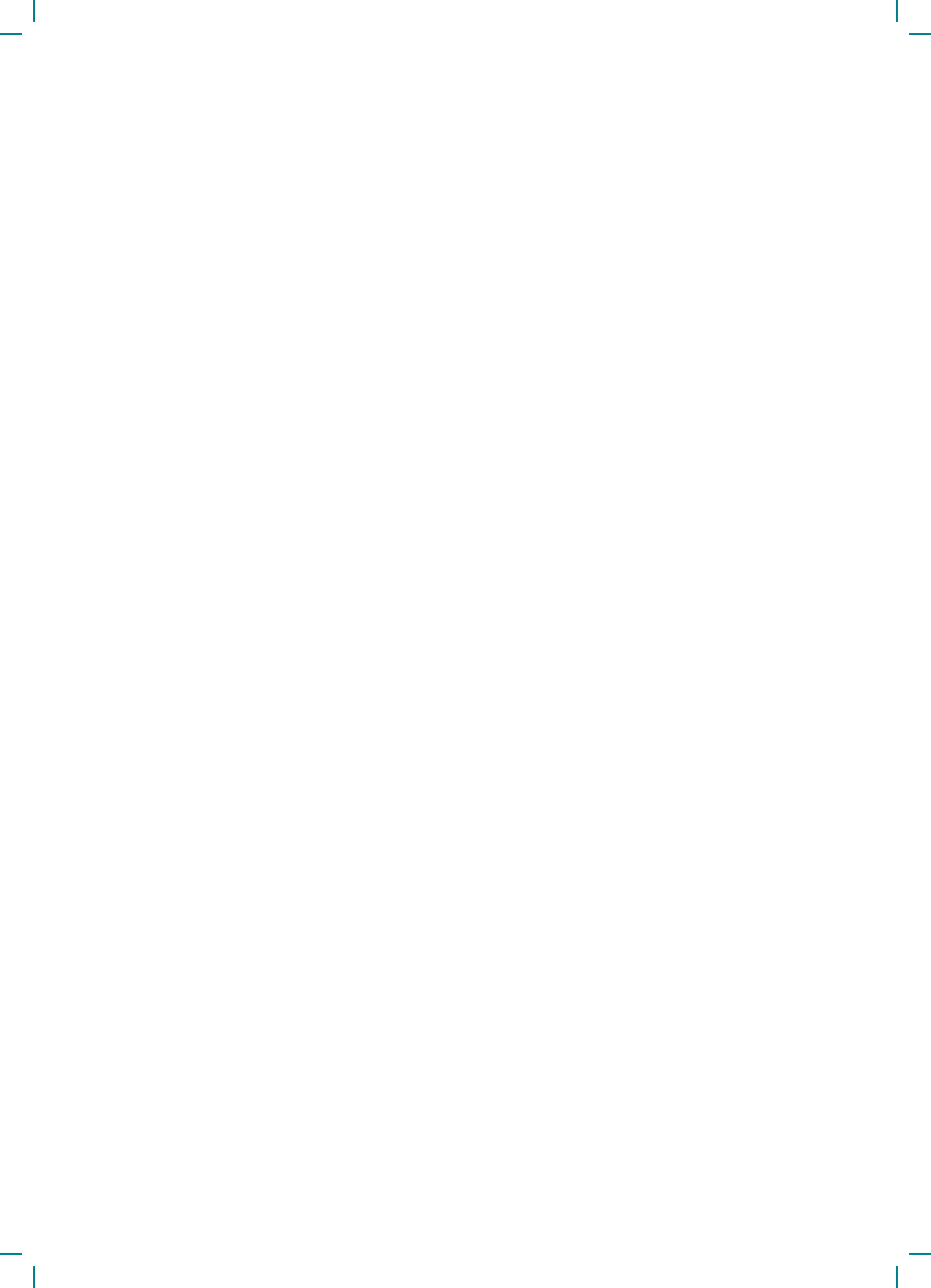
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PART IV: CONCLUSIONS



1. Conclusions: Making Borges's work abroad

In this thesis, I have studied how Jorge Luis Borges's work took on new and different forms in the early phase of his reception in France and the United States. The examples of *El Aleph*, which became *Labyrinthes* in its French book translation, and *El hacedor*, which became *Dreamtigers* in English, illustrate how various mediators created different interpretations of Borges's texts. The international reception of Borges's work involved a process of transmission in which a large number of mediators "made" Borges by selecting, translating, publishing, discussing, appropriating, and evaluating his work. The differences and similarities in the reception of his work in various countries were thus due to the fact that all of the mediators modified information as it passed through them.

For my study on the differences and similarities in the reception of Borges's work in France and the United States, I have focused on how key mediators included and excluded certain elements of his work and how they chose labels to classify it. These specific selections and classifications, and thus the changes that were made to Borges's work during the reception process, could be related to the existence of norms. The selections and classifications were governed by literary norms; that is, underlying beliefs about literature. I have examined the selections, classifications, and norms without being explicitly normative. In this way, I have not evaluated the mediators' interpretations; rather, I have analyzed them in order to further understand the behavior of the mediators. While most reception studies on Borges do not reflect on their methodology, I have tested concepts and insights from literary sociology in specific case studies. At the end of this section, I will briefly relate my conclusions to some theoretical issues and recommendations for further research.

With the help of various criteria, I selected key mediators in France and the United States. From those involved in the translations and publications of Borges's work in France, I chose Roger Caillois, Néstor Ibarra, Paul Bénichou, and Borges himself. From the mediators in French literary criticism, I studied Bénichou, Maurice Nadeau, René Étiemble, Maurice Blanchot, Louis Pauwels, Jacques Bergier, and Gérard Genette. From the publishing scene in the United States, I selected Donald Yates, James Irby, James Laughlin, Robert MacGregor, Richard Seaver, Anthony Kerrigan, and Borges as key mediators. And I have dealt with Anthony Boucher, Saul Maloff, Paul de Man, John Updike, and John Barth as key critics in the United States. By taking these mediators as a starting point and comparing them with others, I have

highlighted the various levels of reception. Differences and similarities appeared between mediators within and across organizations, institutions, and national literary fields.

In this section, I will concentrate on the reception of Borges's work at the international level, which received less attention in the separate chapters on France and the United States.¹ By comparing how selections and classifications of key mediators are shared on a national or international level, differences and similarities can be uncovered. I will try to explain these differences and similarities by looking at the role of norms, although it is difficult to fully analyze the perceptions, appreciations, and actions of the mediators. Other factors in the reception process also played a role, such as the moment of reception, the hierarchies between mediators (and between organizations, institutions, and national literary fields), and the interaction between mediators. I will first cover the differences between the two national fields, then the similarities.

Between the national literary fields of France and the United States, several structural differences can be perceived. An obvious point is that critics in the two countries focused on different fragments of Borges's work. In France, the lines from *Otras inquisiciones* about Borges's game with metaphysics were frequently repeated, whereas in the United States many critics took up Borges's epilogue to *El hacedor*, on the man's face as a patient labyrinth of lines. This can be partly explained by the importance that certain books gained when they were translated at an early stage in the reception process, as *El hacedor* was in the United States. To a certain extent, these differences can also be observed for particular texts by Borges, but it is difficult to pinpoint the exact weight of each of Borges's stories in each country, especially given my focus on a limited group of mediators. It seems that "El Aleph," "Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius," and "La escritura del Dios" were paramount in France, as opposed to "Borges y yo," "El jardín de senderos que se bifurcan," and "La muerte y la brújula" in the United States. This can again be related to the year of publication of individual and book translations. The prevalence of particular fragments, texts, and books by Borges can also be accounted for by processes of interaction, especially by processes of reproduction. Mediators reproduced comments by other mediators, and the most common form of reproduction was when critics took up fragments from the peritexts

¹ For a similar international comparison, see Wijnterp, "Crear a Borges: Los importadores de la obra de Borges en Francia y Estados Unidos."

and translations of Borges's work. In general, critics mainly repeated fragments from key mediators involved in publishing and criticism.

Certain discussions held more weight in one country than in the other. In French Borges criticism, much emphasis was placed on genre discussions, such as the classification of fantastic literature, and on literary movements, such as surrealism and existentialism. The frequent association of Borges's work with surrealism brings to mind a comment by Pierre Bourdieu, who stressed the importance of names of movements for the process of distinction among mediators.² Bourdieu's emphasis on concepts as instruments of classification is more useful for clarifying the French situation than the US one: in the United States, the genre classifications of the parable and detective fiction were mentioned frequently, but these were rarely discussed in detail and Borges's work was rarely placed in particular literary movements. The most dominant line of discussion in the United States was the status of highbrow (vs. lowbrow) fiction. In the publishing trade, different ideas about how a refined and peculiar author such as Borges should be presented to the target public competed with one another. In US criticism, the status of Borges as a highbrow author came up in Boucher's discussion of Borges's connection to detective fiction and again in Barth's texts, which in their later comments put Borges's work in opposition to that of more "human" authors such as Gabriel García Márquez.

Another difference in how Borges's work was received in the two countries is that processes of centralization or homogenization could be observed in France, whereas processes of heterogenization took place in the United States. In the French publishing trade there was a form of coherence among mediators, principally because Caillois (and the publishing house Gallimard) dominated the translation and publication process by combining various institutional roles. Caillois was responsible for many of the sometimes contradictory selections and classifications, and other mediators in France also reproduced some of his selections and classifications, especially with regard to the naturalization of Borges's work. Caillois aimed for a certain *goût français*, a reader's taste that neglected Borges's nationality and the references to his homeland in his work.

The reception of Borges's work in French criticism reveals other processes of centralization. Many critics articulated similar selections and classifications, either because they interacted directly with one another or because they shared a normative framework that preceded their texts on Borges. One "group" of critics that shared

² Bourdieu, *Rules of Art*, 157.

selections and classifications consisted of Michel Carrouges, René Marill Albérès, Maurice Nadeau, Guy Dumur, Marcel Brion, and Paul Bénichou; another featured Maurice Blanchot, Gérard Genette, Maurice-Jean Lefebve, Michel Foucault, and Alain Robbe-Grillet. This homogenization was obviously only a tendency and did not involve all mediators: similar selections and classifications can mainly be observed among these two groups. When comparing the reception of Borges's work in France and the United States, however, the overall movements of homogenization and heterogenization are clear.

The reasons for this homogenization in French publishing and criticism cannot be stated with certainty, but one explanation could be the small size of the Parisian institutions of publishing and criticism. Most magazines and books in which Borges was published or in which the key mediators published were centralized in Paris, and this small nucleus may have boosted interaction between mediators. Such interaction probably included processes of negotiation as well as of reproduction. The various groups of mediators in French publishing and criticism may have gradually moved closer together in their viewpoints either by interacting directly or by reading one another's texts. Another plausible reason is the centralizing role of genres such as fantastic literature, themes such as metaphysics, and literary movements such as surrealism and existentialism. The tendency of French critics to label Borges under the wings of existing and predominantly French genres, themes, and movements can likely be explained by their dominance in the literary field of the 1950s.

Lastly, the centralization was also related to certain hegemonic organizations and mediators. Almost all of Borges's books were published by Gallimard, which contributed to homogenizing the material presentation of these translations, particularly because Caillois worked as an editor on all the early book translations. As well as Caillois's dominant role in publishing and to a lesser extent in criticism, the centralizing role of Jean-Paul Sartre in French criticism cannot be underestimated. Borges critics Nadeau, Étiemble, Blanchot, Pauwels, Bergier, and perhaps Carrouges took up classifications and norms that were related to Sartre's discourse on committed literature. Sartre therefore contributed to one of the critical frameworks that Borges critics could use and react against. This illustrates another form of interaction that took place in the international reception process. The principle of distinction describes how mediators distinguish themselves consciously or unconsciously from others by means of selections and classifications. It is possible

that key mediators in the reception of Borges's work in France tried to distinguish themselves from Sartre's conception of literature by praising Borges.

In the publishing trade in the United States, discussion of Borges's work was heterogeneous. Knopf, a publishing house that decided not to issue the author's work, New Directions, Grove Press, and Dutton, the publishing house that issued Norman Thomas di Giovanni's translations, all discussed the problem of presenting Borges's "peculiarities" to a wide, non-informed audience. In these discussions, however, the different visions competed without any consensus being reached. Many mediators contributed to the translation and publication of Borges's books at various publishing houses, but their interpretations rarely came closer together through processes of negotiation. In US criticism there was a similar heterogeneity, and a notable lack of interaction between Borges critics. The interpretations of key critics in the United States all seemed to be individual projects without any relation to one another, with small, insignificant exceptions such as the genre classifications of the parable and detective fiction, and the discussion about humanlikeness, a norm that prescribed that literature needed to express human experiences. This heterogeneity would have been even clearer had I included US academic criticism in my corpus. (In contrast, there was no French academic criticism on Borges within my period of study.)

The reasons for this lack of homogenization in the United States cannot be easily pinpointed. For US criticism in particular, it is possible that this situation was caused by a crisis in the quantity and quality of book reviewing. Critics in the United States complained about the state of book reviewing in numerous articles in the early 1960s. For both US publishing and criticism, it also seems that there was a lack of dominant mediators, organizations, and literary movements that could function as a centrifugal point. In clear contrast to the situation in France, there was no publisher, editor, translator, critic or author, either involved in the Borges reception or not, who had any hegemony in the US field.

These differences between France and the United States show the continued need for research into the national and smaller-scale levels of reception of an author's work. International and comparative research, as promoted by scholars such as Pascale Casanova, is clearly important, but it is evident that conclusions should be based on specific reception materials, which usually provide insight into very small, individual reception processes. This asks for a bottom-up approach that passes through the individual, the institutional, the national, and the international levels at

which the reception took place. Even without sketching broad tendencies, my study of specific mediators has gone beyond the mere repetition of well-known movements in the reception of Borges's work, such as its "denationalization" and the focus on the "unreal." Moreover, the processes of reproduction and negotiation within the national literary fields and, as I will now show, between the national fields, demonstrate that mediators interacted in various ways. It is therefore clear that the emphasis placed on distinction by literary sociological models such as those of Bourdieu and Casanova should be complemented by a greater focus on processes of reproduction and negotiation.

When comparing the selections and classifications by key mediators in different national literary fields, a number of similarities can be observed. These international similarities may sometimes have been coincidental: for instance, when mediators transmitted similar selections, classifications, and norms because they happened to share poetical preferences. But it is interesting to study whether mediators interacted about Borges on an international level. In this case, similarities would point to an international consensus on parts of the interpretation of Borges's work, achieved through interaction processes.

A first similarity stands out between mediators who were principally involved in criticism in Argentina and mediators involved in publishing in France. The relations between Argentina and France were relatively obvious from the start because Ibarra, Caillois, and other French mediators spent the war years in Argentina, and France was the first country to translate Borges's work. Ibarra's preface to *Fictions* and the comments of other mediators in France bore similarities to discussions about Borges's nationality in Argentine criticism, especially in their universalizing approach to Borges's work. The French mediators, who had all been involved in the circles of the Institut Français d'Études Supérieures and *Sur* in Argentina, thus took the reception of Borges's work in Argentina on board. At the same time, this reproduction also included a form of distinction: it seems that the French mediators tried to break clear of the polemical reception of Borges's work in Argentina. Ibarra's French texts, for instance, reversed the norm of the representativeness of Borges's work for Argentina and Argentine literature by stressing Borges's statelessness as a positive asset. Other changes made by these mediators in the French context were related to institutional and individual factors. Two clear examples of this are Caillois's attempts to mold Borges's book translations

for a certain *goût français* and his introduction of the labyrinth as a key theme in Borges's work.

This thematic focus on the labyrinth, achieved through Caillois's selection of stories, translator's forewords, choice of *Labyrinthes* as a book title, and essay on Borges's labyrinths, spread into French criticism. The labyrinth appeared as a theme among numerous French critics and had a considerable impact on Marcel Brion's selections and classifications. Moreover, the labyrinth also moved into the United States when editors Yates and Irby chose *Labyrinths: Selected Stories & Other Writings* as the title for the first anthology of Borges's work in English, issued by New Directions. From there, the labyrinth moved into criticism in the United States and started to be used in the early period as a thematic classification by key critics such as Boucher, Maloff, and Barth, and after 1968 as a genre classification by numerous other important critics. It can thus be stated that the figure of the labyrinth contributed a form of coherence to French and US publishing and criticism, but this coherence was far from overpowering. In the US book translation of *Labyrinths*, the labyrinth was present among many other selections and classifications, such as the classification of Borges as a stylist. And in US criticism, the labyrinth was not paramount among key or peripheral critics, whether in the early period or later. Moreover, for many publishers, editors, translators, and critics it became a loose, non-exclusive label that was no longer linked to poetical or other norms as it had been by Caillois.

Other similarities between France and the United States could also be attributed to Caillois's mediation and the French book translations he edited. Mediators involved in the book translations of Borges's work in the United States took up other selections and classifications from France, and from Caillois in particular. For *Labyrinths*, reproduction took place through Yates and Irby's selection of more "philosophical" texts by Borges, their references to Ibarra's preface, and their preference for prose over poetry. Other "French" elements, such as André Maurois's preface, were due to the contacts between Caillois and the publisher Laughlin from New Directions. The final version of *Ficciones*, which was published by Grove Press, did not bear many similarities to the French book translations. Initially, however, Grove Press considered the proposal by the British publisher Weidenfeld & Nicolson to use the French *Labyrinthes* as inspiration for the book. In general, the French influence was not overwhelming, and the US mediators chose a partly independent course in the translation and publication process.

France thus spread some of its selections and classifications to the United States, generating a limited form of consensus among mediators. Nothing moved in the opposite direction, from the United States to France, within my period of study. France was also central in spreading selections and classifications to other countries in Western Europe. Some of the first Italian and German translations, such as those of *Ficciones*, were inspired by their French counterparts. Interestingly, even though Italy published *El hacedor* and *Antología personal* before France, the United States, and Germany—and even though Germany published *El hacedor* before France and the United States—these book translations did not have a clear impact on France and the United States, at least not as evidenced in the correspondence of the mediators in these two countries.

In order to explain the leading role that France played in the reception of Borges's work, and the international similarities that appeared because of this, one can look at the hierarchical relations between national literary fields. The processes of transmission in the reception may have been dependent on the central-peripheral relations in the international literary field. It is logical to relate the diffusion from France to other countries to the prestige of the French literary field, which has been examined by scholars such as Pascale Casanova, Johan Heilbron, Gisèle Sapiro, and Susanne Janssen. However, it is fairly difficult to prove these causal relations between reception processes at the international level.

International similarities can also be explained by other, more specific relationships. First, the temporal lead that the French field took in most of the book translations explains part of its dominance. Caillois was responsible for the very first book translations and could therefore play a leading role in international publishing. This clarifies why most of the international consensus was in publishing rather than in criticism, and why these similarities were localized, as they were mainly found among certain mediators involved in publishing houses in the capital cities of Buenos Aires, Paris, and New York. Similarities can also be accounted for by the direct interaction between these mediators, such as Borges, Ibarra, Caillois, and Laughlin. It was much rarer for selections, classifications, and norms of Borges's work to be transmitted between critics in different countries, but one example was de Man's Borges publication in the United States, which reproduced and reacted against the opinions of various French critics and authors. Overall, the centrality of France in the international reception can be explained by hierarchical relationships between national fields, by France publishing Borges translations before other countries, and

by direct interaction between mediators in France (Caillois in particular) and mediators in other countries.

These conclusions on the differences and similarities in the reception of Borges's work in France and the United States bring me to a number of limitations and recommendations for future research projects. At the international level I have concentrated on two national spaces in particular. My practical choice to study the reception materials of France and the United States in detail limited the range of this study, making it difficult to grasp the relations between France and the United States on the one hand, and Argentina, Italy, Germany, the United Kingdom, and many other countries on the other. I could see and understand the impact of other countries on France and the United States, but not fully appreciate the role of these two countries in the international reception of Borges's work. It would therefore be relevant to apply my methodology to other countries and language areas.

In addition, my focus on the various levels of reception has limited my study to certain forms of reception. In particular, the reception of Borges's work in US academic criticism and the impact of Borges's work on French and US writers (the creative reception) have received little attention. The study of these other forms of reception would be a logical and important extension of my research. A similar limitation can be found in the chosen time periods of up to 1964 in France and up to 1968 in the United States. These periods covered the key moments in the publishing history of Borges's book translations and individual translations, and in criticism of his work, but putting limits on the time periods reduced my ability to examine the behavior of mediators and their selections, classifications, and norms diachronically. The norm of humanlikeness in the United States, for instance, is likely to have retained its relevance in the reception of Borges's work after 1968. In order to explore the role of this norm in the reception of Borges's work, studies focused on the author's reception after 1968 or on the role of humanlikeness in the US field in general would be welcome additions.

Another recommendation for further research is related to the selection of, and focus on, a number of key mediators. The selection of criteria for key critics, and the key critics themselves, was difficult, and a process that was not exempt from a certain sense of arbitrariness. My four criteria for selecting key publishers, editors, and translators, and four criteria for key critics, could be used in any other reception study, but were chosen and molded for the study of my corpora in particular. Many

other qualitative and quantitative criteria, or a combination of mine and other criteria, could have been applied to the reception material. The problem of subjectivity is mainly due to my bottom-up approach: previous knowledge of the material makes it difficult to hold a “pure” selection process for mediators. This applies even more to peripheral mediators: all mediators that did not comply with my selection criteria were peripheral, which naturally meant a large number of peripheral mediators. My selection therefore responded to (thematic) relations that I observed between key and peripheral mediators rather than to a more objective selection procedure for peripheral mediators.

But my limitation on the number of key and peripheral critics was also a strength, as it enabled me to study and compare reception processes on a sufficiently detailed level. By focusing on a number of new criteria for selecting key critics, my approach counterbalanced and complemented studies that focus exclusively on those mediators who had or have an established institutional position, and especially those studies that use hindsight to determine this position. The key critics of the 1950s and 1960s were not only those who are nowadays and retrospectively seen as key critics, such as Étiemble, Blanchot, Genette, de Man, Updike, and Barth, but also critics such as Bénichou, Pauwels, Bergier, Maloff, and Boucher.

My comparison between key and peripheral mediators, and between organizations, institutions, and national literary fields has uncovered differences and similarities that I have tried to relate to norms, hierarchies, processes of interaction, and other factors in the reception process. This comparison and the explanations that follow from it, however, carry the risk of observing causes, purposes, or intentions that may have been indirect, coincidental, or even non-existent. For instance, as the hierarchies between key and peripheral mediators or between one literary field and another are difficult to determine, explaining reception processes with reference to these hierarchical relationships is difficult. A conclusion that follows from this problem is that not all differences and similarities in the reception process can be accounted for: a comparison between mediators, organizations, institutions, or fields without looking for causal relations can be worthwhile in itself, as it helps to illuminate how reception processes and national literary fields function.

As well as the selection of key mediators, the use of selections and classifications as tools for studying how mediators made Borges’s work has been important. My focus on selections and classifications has offered a bridge between the study of the actions and comments of the mediators and their norms. As a full

study of the norms that mediators used to evaluate Borges's work is impossible, my research has focused on those that can be found in selections and classifications of Borges's work. This more specific and concrete approach has enabled me to deduce larger tendencies from small pieces of reception material. The focus on key mediators and their selections and classifications is therefore recommended for future reception studies about other countries, language areas, reception forms, and time periods.

Whereas an explicitly normative approach makes an understanding of the relations between mediators, organizations, institutions, and fields more difficult, my inductive approach has helped me to grasp and contextualize the norms themselves. In this way, the a priori assumptions of a top-down approach have been avoided. The specific ways in which key mediators transmitted norms by selecting and classifying Borges's work reveal the various levels at which the reception of Borges's work took place simultaneously: at these individual, institutional, linguistic, national, regional, and international levels, norms were at work that become apparent when you take individual mediators as a starting point.

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Chronological bibliographies

1. Notes on the chronological bibliographies

The chronological bibliographies include sections on individual translations of Borges's work in France, on book publications of Borges's work in France, and on criticism in France, and corresponding sections for the United States. The sections on individual translations cover all separately published anthology and magazine translations of Borges's work, and the book publications include all book-length translations of Borges's work. The sections on criticism contain articles and interviews in magazines and books, PhD theses, books, and some radio and television items. They also include all prologues, epilogues, and other texts inserted in Borges's book translations, while excluding the very short anonymous notes that are sometimes featured before or after individual translations. The references to Borges's work that I have called mentions in this thesis are omitted, because they would extend and complicate the bibliographies needlessly.

All six bibliographies are ordered chronologically by year, month, and date; if only the year or month is given, references are entered at the start of the year or month. For the discussion of the mediators in the reception of Borges's work, the chapters and sections in the present study sometimes include references to sources from other time periods and countries, which have been included in the works cited lists. These bibliographies, however, only feature references published within the chosen time period for France (until 1964) and the United States (until 1968), and in those countries. In the rare cases in which references were published in the original Spanish but issued in one of the two countries, these references are also included.

Reprints of individual translations and book publications in France and the United States are listed when they were issued within my periods of study. These reprints cover new editions of the same book, for instance at the same publishing house, as well as reprints in different media, for instance when a magazine translation was taken up in a later anthology. For the US bibliographies, translations that were reprinted in the United Kingdom within the chosen time period are also included. Criticism that was reprinted in different media is entered as separate references and with cross references. Where possible, these reprints aim to cover the period after the early phase also, as this information, which shows the topicality or prestige of certain texts, was used as one of the criteria for selecting key critics.

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Summary

The Argentine writer Jorge Luis Borges (1899-1986) has become well known throughout the Western world, especially through the translations of his story volumes *Ficciones* (1944) and *El Aleph* (1949). In the book translations and reviews that appeared outside the Spanish-speaking world from the 1950s onwards, first in France and then in the whole of Western Europe and the United States, Borges's work took on new and different forms. These variations in form came about, for instance, because individual mediators such as translators, publishers, and critics translated different texts in each country or labeled Borges's work differently. Moreover, the reception in some countries was centralized because of the dominance of one mediator, whereas in other countries it was more heterogeneous. In this thesis, I have focused on the role of a number of individual mediators in two non-Spanish-speaking literary spaces: France and the United States. For these countries, I have analyzed the early phase of the reception of Borges's work, from 1923 to 1964 in France and from 1934 to 1968 in the United States.

Borges's international reputation was "made" in processes of evaluation ruled by the literary norms of early mediators in France and the United States. These underlying beliefs about literature governed their perceptions and appreciations of Borges's work, and their actions related to it. By studying these norms without being normative, I have set my analysis apart from other reception studies that explicitly evaluate the interpretations of mediators, sometimes in order to offer new interpretations of classical Borges texts. In the reception process of Borges's work, mediators reduced his work to their own aesthetic and geographic categories of perception. These categories have been analyzed in my thesis in order to portray underlying patterns of behavior among the mediators. I have analyzed norms in a wide range of reception processes and sources by studying internal correspondence and other archive material, individual magazine and anthology translations, book translations (including peritexts), and criticism. The corpus of literary criticism I have used does not only include journalistic criticism, essayistic criticism, academic criticism, literary theory, and literary histories, but also references to Borges in texts on other authors (the so-called "mentions").

The mediators who played a role in the reception process employed and combined institutional roles such as those of publisher, editor, translator, reviewer, and author. Mediators also took a particular institutional position in the literary field,

a concept elaborated by literary sociologist Pierre Bourdieu. In my study, I have used this to mean the prestige of the publishing houses or review media at which the mediator usually translated or published, his or her artistic seniority (beginner vs. experienced), and the prestige the mediator gained through his or her professional activities. My research has been focused on a number of mediators who took key positions, not necessarily in the literary field in general but always in the reception process for Borges's work. In some cases, I have also discussed more peripheral mediators in order to show differences and similarities between mediators. For the selection of these key mediators of Borges's work, I used various criteria for mediators involved in the translations and publications of Borges's work and for mediators in literary criticism, in both France and the United States.

For the selection of the key publishers, editors, and translators in the translation and publication process, the first and foremost criterion was the extent to which the mediators determined the material presentation of the book translations. Three other selection criteria were the frequency with which they wrote (peri)texts on Borges or translated his work, their institutional positions, and their combined fulfillment of various institutional roles (publisher, editor, translator, critic, author) in mediating Borges's work. In France in the period up to 1964, *Fictions* (1951), *Labyrinthes* (1953), *Enquêtes* (1957), and several further editions of these book translations were published by the then avant-garde and modernist publisher Gallimard, except for *Histoire de l'infamie. Histoire de l'éternité* (1958), which was issued by Éditions du Rocher in Monaco. Roger Caillois took a very central role because he was involved in all four book publications and combined his roles as an editor at Gallimard, director of the book series *La Croix du Sud*, translator, critic, and member of the jury for the 1961 Prix International des Éditeurs, which was awarded to Borges. Néstor Ibarra and, to a lesser extent, Paul Bénichou and Borges himself, also played important roles.

For the selection of key figures in French literary criticism, I used four equivalent criteria in a relative way to compare various critics. First, I looked at those critics who had published at least three articles, books, interviews, or "mentions" on Borges's work. Then, I studied the institutional positions of the mediators, the institutional roles they combined in order to mediate the author's work, and their impact on other mediators through the repeated publication of their texts. Key critics complied with at least two of these four criteria, even though this compliance could not be strict precisely because the criteria were relative. With the help of these

criteria, I selected Paul Bénichou, Maurice Nadeau, René Étiemble, Maurice Blanchot, Louis Pauwels, Jacques Bergier, and Gérard Genette as key critics, and have referred also to other, more peripheral critics in the reception process.

In the United States, New Directions published *Labyrinths* (1962) and Grove Press issued *Ficciones* (1962) and *A Personal Anthology* (1967). Both publishing houses were avant-garde and focused on foreign literature. *Dreamtigers* (1964) and *Other Inquisitions* (1964), meanwhile, were published by the University of Texas Press. The key mediators involved in the publication of these book translations were selected on the basis of the same four criteria as for France. The external translators-editors of *Labyrinths*, Donald Yates and James Irby, were most central in the reception process, but publisher James Laughlin and editor Robert MacGregor of New Directions, editor Richard Seaver and translator Anthony Kerrigan of Grove Press, and Borges himself were key mediators as well. Lastly, the key critics in the United States were also selected using the same four criteria as for critics in France. From the corpus of criticism up to 1968, however, I excluded the large amount of academic criticism of Borges's work, among other reasons because it is probable that journalistic critics had a larger impact than their academic counterparts. I have dealt with Anthony Boucher, Saul Maloff, Paul de Man, John Updike, and John Barth as key journalistic critics, and have paid attention to several other, more peripheral critics.

In order to grasp the norms articulated by key mediators in the reception of Borges's work, I have focused on how they express norms in specific selections and classifications. The selections by key mediators can be reconstructed by focusing on their decision to publish Borges's work in the importing country or to review his work, on their selection of source texts, and on their practice and poetics of translation. For these selections, mediators sometimes chose contradictory normative tendencies in their different institutional roles: the orthodox or heterodox choices that guided the translation practices for Borges's texts, for instance, may have contrasted with the selection of texts by Borges to be anthologized or with the choice of the book title. The classifications by key mediators are specific terms that are used to label an author, and these classifications have implicit meanings based on norms. I have paid attention to five types of classification, which refer to the author himself, to the themes, genre, and style of his work, and to the literary movement to which it belongs.

In all chapters on France and the United States, I have analyzed how the key mediators selected and classified Borges's work and how these selections and

classifications were governed by norms. Some individual actions of key mediators could be explained by their poetical preferences, and some by their commercial and symbolic motives. I have compared the selections and classifications of Borges's work by key mediators, and the norms underpinning them, to similar selections and classifications in other work by the same mediators, in order to uncover the mediators' poetical norms. At the same time, the selections and classifications articulated by key mediators were also governed by more collective patterns of behavior. By comparing the selections and classifications of key mediators with those of other mediators, the collective transmission of selections, classifications, or norms has been revealed. Several processes of interaction took place, which varied between mediators who tried to distinguish themselves from others (distinction), mediators who reproduced selections or classifications articulated by others (reproduction), and mediators who gradually reached consensus on selections, classifications, or norms (negotiation).

By taking key individual mediators as a starting point and comparing them with other mediators, the different levels of reception have appeared inductively from the reception material. As well as on the individual level, the norms of mediators were regulated on the level of what Bourdieu calls not fully institutionalized organizations, such as publishing houses, literary prizes, literary magazines, and newspapers, or on the larger level of institutions, such as the publishing trade and literary criticism. Differences and similarities appeared, for instance, between mediators within the same publishing house, between various publishing houses, and between publishing and criticism. This last level could be called national.

The differences and similarities that appeared at the national level were also found internationally. In a similar way to how the institutional position of a mediator does not necessarily coincide with his or her position in the reception of Borges's work, the position of a national field within the international literary space does not exclusively determine its importance in the international reception processes for Borges's work. On a quantitative level, for instance, it is clear that certain national spaces became dominant by translating Borges's work at an early stage. France and the United States were dominant in the reception because they were early in translating Borges's work, were prominent in translating Borges's books within their own language areas, and were also central in world literary space. On a qualitative

level, the analysis of actual reception materials uncovered more and other lines in the international reception.

Several structural differences between the national fields of France and the United States can be perceived in the reception of Borges's work. In the French publishing trade, Roger Caillois dominated the translation and publication process, and many of the selections and classifications were therefore due to his sometimes contradictory actions. This led to a form of coherence or centralization that differed from the situation in the United States, where a large number of mediators all contributed to Borges's books. Mediators at publishing houses in the United States spent some time discussing how Borges's "peculiarities" should be presented to a wide, non-informed audience, but did not reach a consensus. This was the case for many mediators at Knopf, a publishing house that decided not to issue the author's work, New Directions, Grove Press, and Dutton, a publishing house that issued later translations by Norman Thomas di Giovanni. In France, the Gallicization of the peritexts and translations of Borges's books by Caillois and some other mediators could also be seen as an attempt to reach a wider audience, but these more symbolic and commercial motives went hand in hand with Caillois's poetical preferences.

The reception of Borges's work in criticism also revealed processes of centralization in France and more heterogeneous movements in the United States. In France, many critics articulated similar selections and classifications, either because they interacted directly with each other or because they shared a normative framework that preceded their texts on Borges. This homogenization in French criticism was possibly due to the small size of the Parisian critical institution or to the centralizing role that Jean-Paul Sartre and literary movements such as surrealism and existentialism played in the field in general. In the United States, conversely, there was a lack of interaction between Borges critics. This lack of interaction could have been caused by a crisis in the quantity and quality of book reviewing in the United States in the early 1960s, as many critics proclaimed, but also because of other institutional reasons such as the lack of a dominant mediator, organization, or literary movement that functioned as a centrifugal point in criticism.

In my research, I have observed some international similarities between Argentina and France and also between France and the United States. This was mainly due to processes of interaction between mediators involved in the publishing houses of the respective countries. To give an example, mediators on the French publishing scene had extensive knowledge of the publication and critical reception of

Borges's books in Argentina, and therefore reproduced several classifications. However, they also consciously tried to provoke a break from that reception when publishing Borges's work in France. Mediators in the United States took up some selections and classifications from France, in particular from Caillois, but also chose a partly independent course in the translation and publication process. There was thus at least a small consensus in the international reception of Borges's work, achieved through interaction processes.

Samenvatting (summary in Dutch)

De Argentijnse schrijver Jorge Luis Borges (1899-1986) heeft in de gehele westerse wereld naam gemaakt, vooral door de vertalingen van zijn verhalenbundels *Ficciones* (1944) en *El Aleph* (1949). In de boekvertalingen en recensies die vanaf de jaren vijftig buiten de Spaanstalige wereld verschenen, eerst in Frankrijk en daarna in de rest van West-Europa en de Verenigde Staten, nam Borges' werk nieuwe en verschillende vormen aan. Deze verschillen in vorm ontstonden bijvoorbeeld doordat individuele bemiddelaars zoals vertalers, uitgevers en critici in elk land andere teksten vertaalden of andere etiketten op Borges' werk plakten. Ook was er in sommige landen sprake van centralisering door de dominantie van één bemiddelaar, terwijl de receptie in andere landen heterogener was. In dit proefschrift heb ik me gericht op de rol van een aantal individuele bemiddelaars in twee niet-Spaanstalige literaire velden: Frankrijk en de Verenigde Staten. Voor deze landen heb ik de vroege fase van de receptie van Borges' werk geanalyseerd, van 1923 tot 1964 in Frankrijk en van 1934 tot 1968 in de VS.

Borges' internationale reputatie werd "gevormd" in evaluatieprocessen die werden beïnvloed door de literaire normen van vroege bemiddelaars in Frankrijk en de VS. Deze onderliggende waarden over literatuur bepaalden hun percepties, beoordelingen en activiteiten ten opzichte van Borges' werk. Door deze normen te bestuderen zonder zelf normatief te zijn, onderscheidt mijn studie zich van andere receptiestudies die de interpretaties van bemiddelaars expliciet beoordelen, soms met als doel om klassieke teksten van Borges te herinterpreteren. In het receptieproces van Borges' werk reduceerden bemiddelaars zijn werk tot hun eigen esthetische en geografische waarnemingsprincipes. Deze principes werden in mijn proefschrift geanalyseerd om onderliggende gedragspatronen van bemiddelaars te laten zien. Ik analyseerde normen in een breed scala aan receptieprocessen en bronnen door interne correspondentie en ander archiefmateriaal, individuele vertalingen in tijdschriften en bloemlezingen, boekvertalingen (inclusief periteksten) en literatuurkritiek te bestuderen. Het corpus van literatuurkritiek besloeg niet alleen journalistieke kritiek, essayistische kritiek, academische kritiek, literatuurtheorie en literatuurgeschiedenissen, maar ook verwijzingen naar Borges in teksten over andere auteurs (de zogenaamde "mentions").

De bemiddelaars die een rol speelden in het receptieproces gebruikten en combineerden institutionele rollen, zoals die van de uitgever, redacteur, vertaler, recensent en auteur. Bemiddelaars namen ook een bepaalde institutionele positie in het literaire veld in, een concept dat door literatuursocioloog Pierre Bourdieu ontwikkeld is. Hieronder verstaat deze studie het prestige van de uitgeverijen of recensiekanalen waarin de bemiddelaar regelmatig vertaalde of publiceerde, zijn of haar artistieke leeftijd (beginnend vs. ervaren) en het prestige dat de bemiddelaar verwierf door zijn of haar professionele activiteiten. Mijn onderzoek richtte zich op een aantal bemiddelaars die niet per se een sleutelpositie in het literaire veld in het algemeen innamen, maar juist in het receptieproces van Borges' werk zelf. In sommige gevallen besprak ik ook meer perifere bemiddelaars om verschillen en overeenkomsten tussen bemiddelaars te laten zien. Voor de selectie van deze sleutelbemiddelaars van Borges' werk gebruikte ik verschillende criteria voor bemiddelaars die betrokken waren bij de vertalingen en publicaties van Borges' werk en voor bemiddelaars in de literatuurkritiek, zowel in Frankrijk als in de Verenigde Staten.

Het eerste en meest belangrijke criterium voor de keuze van de centrale uitgevers, redacteurs en vertalers in het vertaal- en publicatieproces was de mate waarin de bemiddelaars de materiële presentatie van de boekvertalingen bepaalden. Drie andere selectiecriteria waren de frequentie waarmee ze (peri)teksten over Borges schreven of zijn werk vertaalden, hun institutionele positie en hun gecombineerde gebruik van diverse institutionele rollen (uitgever, redacteur, vertaler, criticus, auteur) om Borges' werk te bemiddelen. In Frankrijk werden in de periode tot 1964 *Fictions* (1951), *Labyrinthes* (1953), *Enquêtes* (1957) en verschillende heruitgaven van deze boekvertalingen gepubliceerd door de toenmalige avant-garde en modernistische uitgever Gallimard, en alleen *Histoire de l'infamie. Histoire de l'éternité* (1958) verscheen bij Éditions du Rocher in Monaco. Roger Caillois nam een sleutelrol in omdat hij betrokken was bij alle vier boekvertalingen en zijn rol als uitgever bij Gallimard, samensteller van de boekenserie La Croix du Sud, vertaler, criticus en jurylid van de Prix International des Éditeurs, die in 1961 naar Borges ging, combineerde. Néstor Ibarra en in mindere mate Paul Bénichou en Borges zelf speelden ook een belangrijke rol.

Voor de keuze voor sleutelfiguren in de Franse literatuurkritiek heb ik vier gelijkwaardige criteria op een relatieve manier gebruikt om verschillende critici met elkaar te vergelijken. In de eerste plaats heb ik gekeken naar de critici die drie of

meer artikelen, boeken, interviews of “mentions” over Borges’ werk publiceerden. Vervolgens bestudeerde ik de institutionele positie van de bemiddelaars, de institutionele rollen die zij combineerden om het werk van de auteur te bemiddelen en hun impact op andere bemiddelaars via de herhaalde publicatie van hun teksten. Sleutelcritici voldeden aan tenminste twee van deze vier criteria, hoewel dit niet strikt kon zijn doordat de criteria relatief waren. Aan de hand van deze criteria heb ik Paul Bénichou, Maurice Nadeau, René Étiemble, Maurice Blanchot, Louis Pauwels, Jacques Bergier en Gérard Genette geselecteerd als sleutelcritici en ook naar andere, meer perifere critici in het receptieproces verwezen.

In de Verenigde Staten gaf New Directions *Labyrinths* (1962) uit en publiceerde Grove Press *Ficciones* (1962) en *A Personal Anthology* (1967), hetgeen beide avant-garde uitgeverijen waren die zich op buitenlandse literatuur richtten, terwijl de University of Texas Press *Dreamtigers* (1964) en *Other Inquisitions* (1964) publiceerde. De sleutelbemiddelaars die betrokken waren bij de publicatie van deze boekvertalingen werden geselecteerd aan de hand van dezelfde vier criteria als voor Frankrijk. De externe vertalers-samenstellers van *Labyrinths*, Donald Yates en James Irby, waren het belangrijkste in het receptieproces, maar uitgever James Laughlin en redacteur Robert MacGregor van New Directions, redacteur Richard Seaver en vertaler Anthony Kerrigan van Grove Press en Borges zelf speelden ook een sleutelrol. Tot slot werden de centrale critici in de VS gekozen door middel van dezelfde vier criteria als voor Frankrijk. Van het corpus van Amerikaanse kritiek tot 1968 heb ik echter de grote hoeveelheid academische kritiek over Borges uitgesloten, onder andere omdat het waarschijnlijk is dat journalistieke critici een grotere impact hadden dan hun academische collega’s. Ik heb Anthony Boucher, Saul Maloff, Paul de Man, John Updike en John Barth als centrale journalistieke critici behandeld en aandacht besteed aan andere, meer perifere critici.

Om de normen van sleutelbemiddelaars in de receptie van Borges’ werk te begrijpen, heb ik me gericht op de manier waarop zij normen uiten in specifieke keuzes en classificaties. De keuzes van sleutelbemiddelaars kunnen worden gereconstrueerd door te kijken naar hun beslissing om Borges’ werk in het importerende land te publiceren of om zijn werk te recenseren, naar hun selectie van bronteksten en naar hun vertaalpraktijk en -poëtica. Voor deze keuzes selecteerden bemiddelaars soms tegenstrijdige normatieve tendensen in hun verschillende institutionele rollen: de orthodoxe of heterodoxe keuzes die aan de vertaalpraktijk van Borges’ teksten ten grondslag lagen, kunnen bijvoorbeeld een contrast hebben

gevormd met de selectie van Borges' teksten voor een bloemlezing of met de keuze voor de boektitel. De classificaties van sleutelbemiddelaars zijn specifieke termen die worden gebruikt om een auteur te labelen, en deze hebben impliciete betekenissen die op normen gebaseerd zijn. Ik heb aandacht besteed aan vijf typen classificaties die verwijzen naar de auteur zelf, naar de thema's, het genre en de stijl van zijn werk en naar de literaire stroming waar deze toebehoort.

In alle hoofdstukken over Frankrijk en de VS heb ik geanalyseerd hoe de sleutelbemiddelaars Borges' werk kozen en classificeerden en de manier waarop deze keuzes en classificaties werden bepaald door normen. Sommige individuele handelingen van deze sleutelbemiddelaars konden worden verklaard door hun poëtische voorkeuren en sommige andere handelingen ook door hun commerciële en symbolische motieven. Ik heb de keuzes en classificaties van Borges' werk door sleutelbemiddelaars en de normen die daaraan ten grondslag lagen vergeleken met soortgelijke keuzes en classificaties in ander werk van dezelfde bemiddelaars om hun poëtische normen te ontdekken. Tegelijkertijd werden de keuzes en classificaties door sleutelbemiddelaars ook bepaald door meer collectieve gedragspatronen. Door de keuzes en classificaties van sleutelbemiddelaars te vergelijken met die van andere bemiddelaars kon de collectieve overdracht van keuzes, classificaties of normen naar voren worden gebracht. Er vond interactie plaats, die varieerde van bemiddelaars die zichzelf probeerden te onderscheiden van anderen (distinctie), bemiddelaars die keuzes of classificaties van anderen reproduceerden (reproductie) tot bemiddelaars die langzaam consensus bereikten over keuzes, classificaties of normen (onderhandeling).

Door individuele sleutelbemiddelaars als mijn vertrekpunt te nemen en hen te vergelijken met andere bemiddelaars, kwamen de verschillende receptieniveaus op een inductieve manier tevoorschijn uit het receptiemateriaal. Naast het individuele niveau werden de normen van bemiddelaars gereguleerd op het niveau van wat Bourdieu niet volledig geïnstitutionaliseerde organisaties noemt, zoals uitgeverijen, literaire prijzen, literaire tijdschriften en kranten, of op het grotere niveau van instituties zoals het uitgeverswezen en de literatuurkritiek. Verschillen en overeenkomsten kwamen bijvoorbeeld voor tussen bemiddelaars binnen dezelfde uitgeverij, tussen verschillende uitgeverijen onderling en ook tussen het uitgeverswezen en de literatuurkritiek. Dit laatste niveau kan als nationaal worden aangeduid.

De verschillen en overeenkomsten die op het nationale niveau optraden, kwamen ook internationaal voor. Net zoals de institutionele positie van een bemiddelaar niet noodzakelijk hoeft samen te vallen met zijn of haar positie in de receptie van Borges' werk zelf, bepaalt de positie van een nationaal veld in de internationale literaire ruimte ook niet uitsluitend het belang van dit veld in internationale receptieprocessen van Borges' werk. Op een kwantitatief niveau is het bijvoorbeeld duidelijk dat bepaalde nationale velden dominant werden door Borges in een vroege fase te vertalen. Frankrijk en de Verenigde Staten waren dominant in de receptie omdat zij op een vroeg moment Borges' werk vertaalden, omdat ze een centrale rol speelden in het vertaalproces van Borges' boeken binnen hun eigen taalgebieden en omdat ze ook een voorname rol speelden in de internationale literaire ruimte in het algemeen. Op een kwalitatief niveau onthulde de analyse van het receptiemateriaal zelf meer en andere lijnen in de internationale receptie.

In de receptie van Borges' werk kwamen een aantal structurele verschillen tussen de nationale velden van Frankrijk en de VS aan het licht. In het Franse uitgeverswezen domineerde Roger Caillois het vertaal- en publicatieproces en veel keuzes en classificaties zijn daarom toe te schrijven aan zijn soms tegenstrijdige handelingen. Dit leidde tot een vorm van coherentie of centralisatie die afweek van de situatie in de VS, waar een groot aantal bemiddelaars allemaal afzonderlijk bijdroegen aan Borges' boeken. Bemiddelaars bij de Amerikaanse uitgeverijen besteedden veel aandacht aan de manier waarop Borges' "eigenaardigheden" aan een breed, niet-geïnformeerd publiek konden worden voorgesteld, maar bereikten daarin geen consensus. Dit was het geval voor diverse bemiddelaars bij Knopf, een uitgeverij die besloot om het werk van de auteur niet uit te geven, New Directions, Grove Press en Dutton, een uitgeverij die de latere vertalingen door Norman Thomas di Giovanni uitgaf. In Frankrijk kan de verfransing van de periteksten en vertalingen van Borges' boeken door Caillois en sommige andere bemiddelaars ook worden gezien als een poging om een breder publiek te bereiken, maar deze meer symbolische en commerciële motieven gingen hand in hand met Caillois' poëtische voorkeuren.

De receptie van Borges' werk in de literatuurkritiek liet opnieuw centraliseringsprocessen in Frankrijk zien en meer heterogene bewegingen in de Verenigde Staten. In Frankrijk uitten veel critici vergelijkbare keuzes en classificaties, ofwel omdat ze direct op elkaar reageerden, ofwel omdat ze een normatief kader deelden dat ten grondslag lag aan hun teksten over Borges. Deze homogenisering in

de Franse kritiek is mogelijk toe te schrijven aan de kleine omvang van de institutie van de literatuurkritiek in Parijs of aan de centraliserende rol die Jean-Paul Sartre en literaire stromingen zoals het surrealisme en existentialisme in het gehele literaire veld speelden. In de VS was er daarentegen een gebrek aan interactie tussen critici van Borges. Dit kan zijn veroorzaakt door een crisis in de kwantiteit en kwaliteit van de Amerikaanse boekjournalistiek in de vroege jaren 60, zoals vele Amerikaanse critici verkondigden, maar ook door andere institutionele redenen zoals het gebrek aan een dominante bemiddelaar, organisatie of literaire stroming die als een middelpuntvliedend punt in de kritiek fungeerde.

In mijn onderzoek werden enkele internationale overeenkomsten waargenomen tussen Argentinië en Frankrijk en ook tussen Frankrijk en de Verenigde Staten. Dit kwam voornamelijk door interactieprocessen tussen bemiddelaars bij uitgeverijen in de respectieve landen. Om een voorbeeld te geven: bemiddelaars in het Franse uitgeverswezen hadden uitgebreide kennis van de publicatie en kritische receptie van Borges' boeken in Argentinië, waardoor ze sommige classificaties overnamen. Toch probeerden ze ook bewust een ommekeer in die receptie teweeg te brengen toen ze Borges' werk publiceerden in Frankrijk. Bemiddelaars in de VS namen sommige keuzes en classificaties over vanuit Frankrijk, met name die van Caillois, maar kozen ook een deels onafhankelijk pad in het vertaal- en publicatieproces. Er was dus op zijn minst een kleine consensus in de internationale receptie van Borges' werk vanwege interactieprocessen.

Curriculum vitae

Lies Wijnterp was born in Enter, the Netherlands, in 1982. After studying English Language and Culture for a year (propedeutic exam, *cum laude*), she went on to study Romance Languages and Cultures at Radboud University Nijmegen (BA and MA degrees, *cum laude*). Between 2009 and 2014, she worked on a PhD thesis as part of the research project “A Deep Need in Contemporary Fiction. A Polysystemic Approach to the International Reception of Jorge Luis Borges,” funded by the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO). During this period, she was a visiting scholar at the Bibliothèque nationale de France in Paris and at the University of Pittsburgh in the United States, the latter stay funded by a Fulbright grant. She also taught several BA and MA courses in the department of Romance Languages and Cultures, edited the magazine *TS. Tijdschrift voor Tijdschriftstudies*, and coordinated Radboud University’s research program Studying Criticism And Reception Across Borders (SCARAB). Currently, she works in Colombia as project leader of the Dutch participation as guest of honor at the International Book Fair of Bogotá 2016.



Abstract

This thesis analyzes the role of individual mediators in the early reception of the works of the Argentine writer Jorge Luis Borges (1899-1986). It focuses on a number of key mediators such as publishers, editors, translators, and critics in the translation and publication process and in criticism of Borges's work in France and the United States. These mediators evaluated Borges's work according to their own norms, which become clear in specific selections and classifications in reception material such as correspondence, peritexts of book translations, and criticism. When comparing how different key mediators selected and classified Borges's work, the functioning of the individual, institutional, national, and international levels in the reception and the processes of transmission that took place on and between these levels become clear. The reception of Borges's work in France reveals a centralization of selections and classifications, on the one hand because Roger Caillois dominated the translation and publication process, and on the other hand because there was extensive interaction between Borges mediators in criticism. In the United States, conversely, the plurality of mediators at publishing houses and the lack of interaction in criticism caused a more heterogeneous reception.

