

## Ferro's *El otro Joyce*: Originals and Copies

Kathleen Cunniffe Peña

**ABSTRACT:** This article explores Roberto Ferro's novel *El otro Joyce* (2011), a work of translational literature that straddles two languages and two literary traditions. Its protagonist, Jorge Cáceres, runs a small business researching patents, missing books, and missing persons. The novel's plot follows him as he works to solve two mysteries: one related to the search for a first edition of Joyce's *Finnegans Wake*, annotated by Jorge Luis Borges, and the second related to the suspicious death of Marcos Almeida, a prominent financier. Much like *Finnegans Wake*, *El otro Joyce* is a highly self-conscious narrative teeming with digressions and literary allusions. Cáceres's work is constantly hindered and confused by the appearance of doubles, a theme that relates to the act of translation and also to betrayal, present throughout the novel. Part detective narrative and part historical metafiction, Ferro's novel is a reflection on the continuing role of Joyce in the Argentine literary tradition—a tradition inseparable from the act of translation.

**KEYWORDS:** Roberto Ferro, *El otro Joyce*, Argentina, José Salas Subirat, Jorge Luis Borges, translation, translational literature, James Joyce

The title of Roberto Ferro's 2011 novel, *El otro Joyce*, hints immediately at impostors, or copies. A would-be reader might glance at the cover and ask, "Who is the other Joyce?"—a question that, throughout the book, yields multiple answers. As authors and texts lead and blend into one another, the novel's protagonist (and the reader, along with him) constantly confuses originals and copies. In this—his first—novel, Ferro, a professor at the National University of Buenos Aires whose own research explores Onetti, Borges, and Derrida, carefully constructs a story that blends detective narrative and historical metafiction. Ultimately, as this article will argue, *El otro Joyce* reflects on the role of Joyce in the Argentine literary tradition at the same time that it presents translation as the ultimate act of reading.

Joycean language and narrative techniques have reverberated through Latin American literature since the 1922 publication of *Ulysses*, and critics continue to explore the nature and depth of Joyce's effect on the region's authors. Most recently, César Salgado, Brian L. Price and John Pedro Schwartz published *TransLatin Joyce* (2014), a collection of essays about Joyce's role in shaping transatlantic modernism in Iberia and the Americas.<sup>1</sup> This connection is particularly strong in Argentina. "El *Ulises* es, con toda probabilidad, la novela extranjera que más ha influido en nuestra narrativa," writes Carlos Gamarro, "y por momentos se siente tan nuestra como si la hubiéramos escrito aquí" ("A cien años"). As Gamarro notes, many Argentines feel a deep affinity with Joyce's work—as if it had been written in Argentina itself. In a way, it was: two of the first valiant writers to attempt a Spanish translation of *Ulysses* were Argentine, and employed Argentine dialects in their translations. Jorge Luis Borges translated the last page of *Ulysses* for his 1925 review of the novel, and was later invited to participate in a commis-

sion of Anglo-literary scholars who planned to work on translating *Ulysses* in its entirety during the early 1940s. However, their work was interrupted in 1945 by the appearance of José Salas Subirat's version, published in Buenos Aires by Rueda under the direction of Max Dickmann (Conde-Parrilla 2). Salas Subirat (1890-1975), a compatriot of Borges and the author of two novels and various self-help books, may have seemed an unlikely choice to translate Joyce's literary masterpiece. As Conde-Parilla and Saer have pointed out, Salas Subirat's version was polemical but continues to be important—not only because it highlights the colossal challenge of translating a work like *Ulysses*, but also because it was the only Spanish version of the novel in existence until 1976 (Conde-Parilla 12). More recently, Salas Subirat and his famous translation captured the imagination of Argentine writer Lucas Petersen, who published a biography of the writer entitled *El traductor del Ulises* in 2016. In his introduction, Petersen acknowledges the controversy surrounding Salas Subirat's work but insists: "A esta altura no importa si la traducción de Salas Subirat es la mejor o no. Su trascendencia en nuestra cultura ya es otra" (11).

Ferro crosses detective narrative with historical metafiction, using doubles and translation to blur the lines between originals and copies, and between reality and fiction. *El otro Joyce* utilizes *Finnegans Wake* to epitomize the act of textual interpretation whereby the reader unlocks a secret. According to Francine Masiello, "High modernism works through the secret. The midpoint between intelligibility and blankness, it is part of the strategy of 'difficult' writing that elevates the value of the modernist puzzle and perpetuates its claim on institutional power" (55). Secrets imply a particular kind of drama—covering up, maintaining, or revealing hidden truths—and Masiello notes that this drama is enacted

through language: "The secret thus renders visible, for some, the obvious paths towards knowledge and leaves others as outsiders to meaning" (55). If secrets are linked to language, the translator plays a key role of looking for hidden meanings—but also in concealing the identity of the original text, still inaccessible to the reader of the translated work (55). Masiello points out that these notions of secrets, language and translation are ever present in Joyce's *Ulysses*, widely considered the central novel of modernism—and the same could easily be said of *Finnegans Wake*.

Part of Joyce's attraction lies in the enormous challenge (or, as Ferro proposes in *El otro Joyce*, near impossibility) of translating his work. As a novel that problematizes translation on various levels—plot, theme, and discourse—*El otro Joyce* could be considered what Wail Hassan has called "translational literature:"

In the space between translators and translated, there are texts that straddle two languages, at once foregrounding, performing, and problematizing the act of translation; they participate in the construction of cultural identities from that in-between space and raise many of the questions that preoccupy contemporary translation theory. ("Agency" 754)

Ferro explores different definitions of translation as well as some of its central questions—literal versus literary translation, originals and copies, and perhaps most importantly, translation as the ultimate act of interpretation. *El otro Joyce* is a highly self-conscious detective novel about someone who begins looking for a book and ends up involved in a crime. Above all, it is a reflection on the problematic of language and translation, and the confusion of identities implicit in all translations. The novel's protagonist, Jorge Cáceres, runs a small business researching patents, missing books, and missing persons. The novel's plot follows him as he works to solve two mysteries: one related to the search for a first edition of Joyce's *Finnegans Wake*, annotated by Jorge Luis Borges, and the second related to the suspicious death of Marcos Almeida, a prominent financier, just before the collapse of his business.

It is important to note that all of this takes place within the historical setting of Carlos Menem's presidency (1989-99). In an interview with Teresa Gatto, Ferro describes this time period as "el carnaval menemista," which brings to mind a play of masks and disguises. Menem, who had campaigned as a traditional Peronist, soon transformed his policy into one which differed radically from the Peronist vision of Argentina. As historian David Sheinin notes, "By April 1990, Menem had decided to discard decades of Peronist anti-American rhetoric and to align his nation's economic, financial, and strategic policies with the United States" (196). In particular, he initiated massive privatizations and foreign investment, affording greater opportunities to foreign multinationals (197). In other words, Menem attempted to maintain the public appearance of a Peronist nationalist while his behavior behind the scenes was quite

the opposite. Although some associate his presidential terms with economic stability, Menem was forced to step down in 1999 amid allegations of rampant corruption. Several years later, the façade of economic prosperity would come crashing down with the political and economic collapses of 2001 and widespread national protests. In *El otro Joyce*, Cáceres is living these moments of economic uncertainty and political distrust as he attempts to solve a mystery which involves both financial scandal and public deception.

Cáceres takes notes as he works to unravel the two mysteries of Joyce and Almeida, and the notes become the novel itself. However, as the reader discovers at the end of the book, Cáceres is not the only author; in fact, he might not be the author at all. He ends up turning the manuscript over to his colleague Miguel Vieytes, who explains in his "epilogo provisional" that he has made some (unspecified) corrections, and has also submitted the text to a professional editor to reconcile some stylistic differences. This is only one of many confused identities throughout the book: Cáceres's work is constantly hindered and confused by the appearance of doubles. Rather than finding a first edition of Joyce, Cáceres first comes across a notebook written by *William Joyce*—an American born Irish-British fascist who worked with the Germans during World War II and was eventually convicted as a traitor.<sup>2</sup> Later, Cáceres and his associate find not one but two "original" editions of *Finnegans Wake* with identical annotations in Borges's handwriting. William Joyce is confused with James Joyce, James Joyce is confused with Borges, and Cáceres frequently refers to himself as a "double agent." The search for Almeida also results in the discovery of a double. In addition to this dizzying array of characters, both historic and fictional, the novel has multiple geographic reference points—Buenos Aires, Florence, Italy, Ireland, and Germany.

Critics of the novel have focused on a key detail of Cáceres's appearance—within the opening pages of the novel, the reader learns that he is cross-eyed: "Opté por el silencio y el refugio tras los lentes oscuros que ocultaban pudorosamente el estrabismo de mi ojo izquierdo, que perseveraba desde mi nacimiento en ocupar el ángulo superior del glóbulo ocular, produciendo en los demás [...] una mezcla indefinida de rechazo y placer" (*El otro Joyce* 8). In an interview with the author, Teresa Gatto asks whether *El otro Joyce* requires a cross-eyed reader, as well. Ferro is hesitant to dictate a process for his readers, but notes that when he began to write the novel, he felt it was necessary to give the character a different angle of vision (Gatto). Ana Abregu affirms, "El protagonista, Cáceres y su particular estrabismo son puestas en escena de una forma de presentación y también de búsquedas, hay una sugerencia de dos formas de ver esta historia, dos miradas, dos narradores" (Abregu). Julieta Montalbano relates Cáceres's *estrabismo* to the way in which the novel breaks the mold and diverges from the typical path of a detective narrative—there is more than one crime, and *El otro Joyce* is much more than a detective novel. "La construcción del policial está hecha con herramientas diferentes. La disertación sobre la misma literatura, sobre, incluso, el mismo género pone en abismo

a quien se atreva a entrar en la trama" (Montalbano). Abregu calls it a "novela inclasificable," noting that the book moves in two directions—the search for a book, and the search for meaning (Abregu).

Regardless of its specific classification, *El otro Joyce* is undeniably a "narcissistic narrative," as Linda Hutcheon has described the poetics of postmodernism. If there is a covert self-consciousness in Ferro's use of a detective narrative, it becomes overt in Cáceres's explicit comments, throughout the narrative, on both the power and inadequacy of language. In one sense, then, *El otro Joyce* functions as a detective story—unsurprisingly, also one of Borges's preferred narrative styles. Cáceres works as a private detective to uncover two mysteries, and in this sense the novel follows strong conventions of order and logic as the reader also attempts to solve the mystery. "It is this very store of infinitely reworkable conventions that is acknowledged and exploited, 're-contextualized,' by metafictionists such as Robbe-Grillet and Borges" (Hutcheon 72). Hutcheon notes that the active participation of the reader in a detective story—the act of interpretation, of following clues—is a process emblematic of reading any novel (72).

In an interview with Tania Temoche, Ferro sheds some light on his interest in detective narrative:

Yo hago crítica literaria porque me gusta lo policial. Hay ciertas simetrías entre la crítica literaria y el relato policial [...] Cuando el crítico busca objetos como inéditos, manuscritos, cartas, testimonios, allí la trama policial es muy pertinente para comprender las pujas que hay en ese campo. Donde son frecuentes las falsificaciones, las estafas, los plagios, las complicidades que tienen una notable correspondencia con lo policial. (Temoche)

Ferro first became familiar with this process during the military dictatorship (1974-1983), when he worked as a phantom writer, "una especie de escritor negro de guiones de historieta" (Temoche). He notes that he wrote about a half dozen of these a week which, when they were published, often appeared in totally different form than how he had submitted them. This experience taught him to follow the tracks of his own work: "me imponía la necesidad de componer historias y seguirlas hasta el final sin abandonarlas" (Temoche). Literary criticism is, for Ferro, a search for meaning.

It is no accident that Cáceres also happens to be a fan of mystery stories, and references crime and detective fiction throughout his narrative: Raymond Chandler (*El otro Joyce* 132), a British-American author of detective stories in the 1930s; Piglia (143), Argentine author of crime and new historical fiction; Borges's detective stories such as "La muerte y la brújula" (263) and, most tellingly, Cortázar's short story "Instrucciones para John Howell" (142). In Cortázar's story, a man named Rice attends a play, becomes involved in it against his will, and ultimately becomes caught in a confusion of realities and identities. At its core, *El otro Joyce* tells a similar story: that of a man named Cáceres who accepts a job to take pictures,

gets drawn in as a participant in the act he had been hired to witness, and ultimately finds himself in a web of political fiction and historical realities. At a very dramatic moment in the novel, Cáceres sees one of the images he has photographed, which has been plagiarized and presented in a different context, on the front page of the newspaper. As he realizes that he is part of a larger financial and human drama, he writes, "Recuerdo a John Howell" (142). Multiple references to Onetti throughout Cáceres's narrative also suggests the crossing of fiction and reality.

Given the backdrop of Menem's presidency and rampant financial corruption in Argentina, *El otro Joyce* also functions as a type of historical metafiction. Again, the novel participates in a self-referential process by alluding to classic works of historical fiction. At one point, Cáceres tells of a former case where a missing person's library revealed her location. He notes that the subject was a reader of the new historical novel, all of which he recognized—from canonical works such as García Márquez's *El otoño del patriarca*, Roa Bastos's *Yo el supremo* to lesser-known works by Alfonso del Paso, Homero Aridjis, Tomás de Mattos and Julio Escoto. The key novel—that which helps him discover her current whereabouts—is a first edition of *Operación Masacre* (1957), a nonfiction work of investigative journalism written by well-known Argentine author Rodolfo Walsh (*El otro Joyce* 157). Walsh used crime narrative to denounce state violence and criminal activity during the Dirty War, and this otherwise tangential chapter in the novel points to the way in which *El otro Joyce* functions as a crime narrative: one which un-masks state crimes which have continued into the next generation, this time in the private sector.

As Cáceres's journalist friend observes, "Vos sabés que la historia es una cuestión de géneros, cada época impone un tipo de relato y se niega sistemáticamente a dejarse narrar por otras modalidades" (52). Hutcheon describes historiographic metafiction as a relatively new mode in her most recent edition of *Narcissistic Narrative*, noting that what is most significant about this form "is that the hard-won textual autonomy of fiction is challenged, paradoxically, by self-referentiality itself" (xiv). She adds, "If language, as these texts suggest, constitutes reality (rather than merely reflecting it), readers become the actualizing link between history and fiction" (xiv). And if the reader can be lured into participating in the creation of the novelistic universe, Hutcheon suggests that the power of metafiction lies in its potential to also seduce the reader into political action. *El otro Joyce* works to situate itself firmly in the history of political and financial corruption of Menem's Argentina, compelling the reader to make sense of the nation's financial and political chaos just as Cáceres attempts to do in his work as detective.

The fiction Hutcheon describes is self-referring and auto-representational; it provides a commentary on its own status of fiction and as language, and on its own processes of production and reception. *El otro Joyce* certainly achieves this commentary in its reflections on language and translation, its explicit search for a book, and the questions it presents on the authorship of Cáceres's

manuscript. Throughout the novel, double identities are linked to the acts of writing and translation. Cáceres's officemate (and, as the reader ultimately learns, co-author of the manuscript), Miguel Vieytes, makes his living by writing papers for university students. Cáceres describes his writing as a paradox: Vieytes is able to imitate others in his writing, "pegándose cuidadosamente a sus giros, aludiendo con breves modificaciones a su significación, componiendo pastiches casi inigualables," but he has never been able to publish his own ideas (49). Here, again, an intertextual reference provides a clue: a mention, in the final pages of the manuscript, to *Budapeste* by Chico Buarque: a novel about a ghost writer.

Cáceres often muses over the hidden connections between individuals, between texts, and between texts and individuals. For example, William Joyce's manuscript includes a letter from James Joyce, which leads Cáceres to conjecture about the relation between the two Joyces: "[...] ahora estaba frente a la posibilidad de descubrir una intriga secreta e ignorada que vinculaba al escritor del *Finnegans* con otro Joyce" (62). One theory that arises is the different use of language in James Joyce's literary writings as opposed to the writing in his notes and letters—something which Cáceres's professor describes as "un contravalor joyceano," a point of contact between two different notions of language (93).<sup>3</sup> Cáceres then begins to translate William Joyce's manuscript, but finds himself unable to go on: "Relé mi transcripción, me preocupa la extensión de las frases, la sintaxis que había elegido era algo diferente a la de Joyce, alargaba innecesariamente la mayoría de ellas, estableciendo conexiones donde había puntos que cortaban la ilación de su discurso" (124). In the act of translation, Cáceres realizes that he is unable to produce a satisfactory imitation of William Joyce's syntax. Similarly, when he discovers Borges's annotated versions of *Finnegans*, he theorizes that Borges found himself unable to produce a satisfactory imitation of James Joyce's syntax. In spite of their failure to produce exact copies, however, translation plays a role in both Borges's and Cáceres's creative processes.

The novel's title refers to this "other [William] Joyce" at the same time that it presents Borges as another Joyce. Abregu notes that the title is undoubtedly an homage to Borges, and serves as a leit motiv of a novel which takes duplications to the extreme (Abregu). We see this as Cáceres and his associate, Sarquis, continue to search for the first edition of *Finnegans Wake* with Borges's annotations. Cáceres suspects the value of the text lies in what it could reveal about Borges's readings and re-readings of Joyce over many years, and the ways in which his perspective had changed with each new reading:

La idea me sedujo, revelaba una secreta construcción simétrica, Joyce había escrito el *Finnegans* durante casi diecisiete años, me fascinó pensar en un lector como Borges que durante mucho tiempo, llegaba a calcular un lapso que abarcaba casi quince años, haya buscado penetrar en los defladeros del sentido, insistiendo, variando y

recomponiendo una y otra vez el texto y sus márgenes... [C]omencé a pensar en el ejemplar de *Finnegans* como un nuevo Aleph. (*El otro Joyce* 22-23)

From the beginning, Cáceres seeks a symmetrical connection between the two writers. He also describes reading in much the same way that one might describe translation—trying to penetrate meaning, persisting and recomposing again and again the text and its margins. However, when he and his associate discover the annotated text, they are surprised by the nature and the abundance of the annotations—every available blank space in the margins is occupied with Borges's handwriting in pencil and in various colors of ink, and they are not notes on *Finnegans* as they had expected, but transcriptions of Borges's own texts. Among this marginalia, Cáceres finds fragments of "Las versiones homéricas," a quote from "El tiempo circular," complete transcriptions of "El inverosímil impostor Tom Castro" and "Vindicación de Bovard y Pécutet," the first part of "Los traductores de las 1001 Noches," "El capitán Burton," and the last of "El escritor argentino y la tradición."

Given that Ferro himself is a literary critic well versed in Borges's work and biography, readers cannot ignore this strategic chain of references—all of which relate to concepts of translation, variation and multiple versions. "Las versiones homéricas" (1932) was among the first essays where Borges would philosophize about translation and, as Levine notes, "resituate the translator's activity at the center of literary discussion" (1134). In this early essay, Borges denies the assumption that a translation is necessarily inferior to its original, praising the "riqueza heterogénea y hasta contradictoria de múltiples traducciones" (*Discusión* 107). In "Las versiones homéricas" he reaches the conclusion that the most literal translation is not necessarily the one which is truest to the original (112).

In "El tiempo circular," first published in *Historia de la eternidad* (1936), Borges contemplates the infinity of variations as imagined by Nietzsche. Although Cáceres only mentions an unspecified quote from "El tiempo circular" in the novel, an earlier story by Roberto Ferro includes greater detail. The story, written in 2009 and entitled "Heterónimos III: Borges y Joyce en la biblioteca de un autodidacta" appears to be an earlier manifestation of Cáceres's story, at least the part about his search for the rare copy of *Finnegans*. Although this story does not include anything related to Almeida or the financial collapse, "Heterónimos III" does mention that, on the lower part of the interior cover, the found version of *Finnegans Wake* includes this quote from "El tiempo circular:" "...en la historia decimal que ideó Condorcet, en Francis Bacon y en Uspensky; en Gerald Herat, en Spengler y en Vico..." with the final word circled in red ink. Vico, in turn, evokes a theory of fluidity: "Nothing endures for Vico in a definitive shape, and he will chart the internal fluidity of each social structure through which all nations in history run their courses" (Mazzota 163).

Borges's annotated copy of *Finnegans* also includes, accord-

ing to Cáceres's findings, a transcription of "El inverosímil impostor Tom Castro," a story of imitation and confused identities. Here, a questionable character named Bogle invents a plot to fake the identity of a sailor lost at sea, by sending Arthur Orton (alias Tom Castro) to present himself as a prodigal son to a desperately grieving mother. "Bogle sabía que un facsímil perfecto del anhelado Roger Charles Tichborne era de imposible obtención. Sabía también que todas las similitudes logradas no harían otra cosa que destacar ciertas diferencias inevitables. Renunció, pues, a todo parecido" ("Tom Castro")." In other words, the genius of Bogle and Orton's plan is not that they produced an exact copy, but that they produced a convincing copy. Also along the lines of copies, "Vindicación de Bouvard y Pécuchet" tells the story of two copyists and ultimately reflects upon the death of the novel.

In "El Capitán Burton," the first section of his essay "Los traductores de las 1001 noches," Borges evaluates the multiple versions and elaborations of *The Thousand and One Nights*. Burton is presented as one more in a long line of translators; however, according to Borges, each translator leaves his mark on the narrative and becomes a part of its history: "Lane tradujo contra Galland, Burton contra Lane; para entender a Burton hay que entender esa dinastía enemiga" ("Los traductores"). To this, Borges adds another very important point: some of the most famous tributes and acclaims of *The Thousand and One Nights*—Coleridge, Tomás de Quincey, Stendhal, Tennyson and Edgar Allen Poe—came from readers of Galland's controversial translation. In this sense "El Capitán Burton" resembles somewhat the story of José Salas Subirat's *Ulysses*: a translation which, in spite of its polemics, left its mark on a generation or more of Argentine writers.

The final annotation, as described by Cáceres, is the final section of "El escritor argentino y la tradición" in which Borges urges Argentine writers to consider the universe, not just Argentina, as their patrimony: "ensayar todos los temas, y no podemos concretarnos a lo argentino para ser argentinos: porque o ser argentino es una fatalidad y en ese caso lo seremos de cualquier modo, o ser argentino es una mera afectación, una máscara" (*Discusión* 162). In this same essay, Borges points to an affinity between the Argentines and the Irish, as he considered Joyce a prime example of a creator of universal literature.

Cáceres and Sarquis develop different theories regarding the transcriptions. Cáceres begins his explanation with the Tower of Babel, the confusion of multiple languages, and the necessary but impossible task of translation.<sup>5</sup> Since all of the texts transcribed in *Finnegans* allude either directly or indirectly to translation, he suggests a Borgesian theory on translation. According to Cáceres, Borges conceived of translation as a reciprocal debt between the original and the translated text—in other words, translation as supplement (*El otro Joyce* 135). As Borges develops in his critical essays on translation and in his own work as translator, "La traducción [...] se transforma a su vez en el acontecimiento de un nuevo texto" (135). In this process of transformation, the translator works as both

a reader and a writer to highlight and restore, as Cáceres explains it, the original text's idiomatic resistance (135).

By emphasizing the supplement in his speculations, Cáceres circles back to another foundational theorist: Jacques Derrida. Ferro has already demonstrated a strong interest on this topic in his critical work *Escritura y desconstrucción: Lectura (h)errada con Jacques Derrida* (1995), a didactic text on the history and development of Derridean thought. As he points out in this study, the key points of self, repetition and death in Derrida's *Voice and Phenomenon* (1967) intersect with another major Derridean theme—the indiscernible borders between reading and writing (*Escritura* 33):

La paradoja de la expresividad pura, a la que se privilegia en el análisis de Husserl, es que es inexpressiva. La contradicción aparece cuando se señala el punto de máxima claridad que se trastorna en el más confuso: si 'la voz es la consciencia, una voz sin escritura es absolutamente viva y absolutamente muerta.' (*Escritura* 38)

According to the theory of writing as supplement, its addition responds to an absence; it is "added" to speech in order to carry out the ideal object (*Escritura* 40). At the same time that it is an addition, the supplement also compensates for a lack in the original speech. As Jonathan Culler explains, "Writing can be compensatory, a supplement to speech, only because speech is already marked by the qualities generally predicated of writing: absence and misunderstanding" (103). The endless chain of supplements which Derrida identifies in Rousseau translate, in Borgesian theory, to "Los traductores de *Las Mil y una noches*," where, over time, it becomes impossible to identify the original text. Translation and marginalia in *El otro Joyce* serve as prime examples of this supplementarity. Rather than helping the reader to discover the *real* meaning of *Finnegans Wake*, the transcriptions take us one step farther away from it.

*Finnegans Wake* (much like *Ulysses*) presents a complex problem of language: "cómo traducir un texto escrito en varias lenguas a la vez, cómo restituir el efecto de esa pluralidad" (136). Faced with the impossibility of translating the plurality of Joyce's novel, Cáceres proposes that Borges opted for the extreme gesture which points to a possible reconciliation between original and copy:

Lo que hace Borges aquí en secreto es confesar que no hay traducciones fieles o infieles, pues ambos casos son estrictamente imposibles. Entonces asume, yo creo que asume, frente al *Finnegans* un riesgo planteando la tarea de traductor como necesaria e imposible, es decir, alude diagonalmente al inacabamiento de la interpretación. (*El otro Joyce* 136)

His own texts, added excessively as supplement to Joyce's, work directly against the idea of the translator as invisible, and affirm that translation is the most genuine test of the act of interpretation,

in which every reader participates to some degree (136). Thus, the edition of *Finnegans* that they've discovered, according to Cáceres, represents a double paradox: "Por una parte, la traducción suprime las diferencias entre dos lenguas; por otra, las exhibe desafortunadamente. [...] En un extremo el mundo se nos presenta como una superposición de textos, cada uno ligeramente distinto del anterior, es decir, traducciones de traducciones de traducciones" (137). According to Cáceres's interpretation, Borges's transcriptions point to the paradox of language and translation—highlighting the multiplicity of language and proposing a vision of every text as both unique and a copy of a previous text. Outside of the novel, other literary critics have proposed similar relationships between Borges and Joyce. Cáceres's theory is reminiscent of Levine's observation regarding the ambivalent relationship between the two writers:

Newness or perhaps *originality* is the key to this ambivalence and to the particular confrontation between Joyce and Borges. Borges would ultimately translate Joyce's efforts to write the simultaneity of perceived reality into his own terms by going beyond verbal language's limitations as a successive medium and transcending the temporal linearity of texts through the inscription of circular readings. (Levine 345)

Of course, a key work on translation is missing from those transcriptions—"Pierre Menard"—but Cáceres suggests that its exclusion is an allusion to Ts'ui Pen of "El jardín de senderos que se bifurcan," who never uses the word time in his novel about time (138). In short, Cáceres proposes that Borges was experimenting with a possible translation of *Finnegans*, one which would conserve the poetics of both writer and translator by "adding" his own writing as a supplement to Joyce.

The search for missing books becomes more dramatic when a second copy of the novel turns up—like the other which they had already discovered, a first edition by Viking Press of *Finnegans Wake* with identical annotations. Even the different colors of ink are the same; however, in this version, the dedication appears in English instead of Spanish. Sarquis wonders whether there might be a Scharlach behind this mystery—a logic which suggests that a *third* version may eventually appear. Cáceres considers the possibility that Borges "forged" a second version because he had lost the first to an old girlfriend—a love affair which Cáceres unearths during his investigation. He notes, "la supuesta copia facsimilar podría formar parte de una venganza por despecho pergeñada por Borges, con lo que la idea de la falsificación se derrumba, no hay impostor porque no hay máscara que lo encubra, pero liquida a su vez toda pretensión de distinguir un original entre las dos versiones" (*El otro Joyce* 263). Both ideas seem to reinforce their prior theories regarding the annotations: texts as multiple copies (translations of translations of translations, as Cáceres had mused earlier on),<sup>6</sup> and the impossibility of distinguishing between originals and copies.

Throughout the entire process of tracking down *Finnegans Wake* and translating William Joyce, Cáceres becomes entangled in a second assignment. A Buenos Aires law firm pays him an extraordinary sum of money to photograph Marcos Almeida, an Argentine financier, with his lover in Florence. At first glance, this second mystery seems completely unrelated to the first. Readers of the detective genre may wonder whether it is simply a distraction from the search for *Finnegans*, although this leads to a second possibility: perhaps *this* is the real enigma, and the search for *Finnegans* is a red herring. *El otro Joyce* is a text which moves both its detective and its readers in circles, and it soon becomes clear that *both* searches are key to the novel. When, on his first day on the Almeida job, Cáceres decides to purchase a second camera, which he keeps in a separate pocket and without the knowledge of his employer, a keen reader connects Cáceres's double vision and his preoccupation with translations and copies with his need to view the Almeida job through different lenses.

The operation turns dark when Almeida and his lover are killed in a supposed car crash, and Cáceres is sent to identify the remains so they can be repatriated to Argentina. All of this happens just before Almeida's businesses collapse, and the Italian authorities suspect that Cáceres has unknowingly participated in a conspiracy. They approach him for answers, hoping he might be willing to serve as a double agent—that is, continuing to cooperate with the law firm that hired him and guarding his silence, while also investigating the people and events surrounding Almeida's death.

The narrator wonders at the coincidence that both Sarquis's theory on Borges's *Finnegans* and the Italian detective's theory on the Almeida conspiracy involve double agents (178), and searches for the secret link between the two cases he is working to resolve. His desire to discover this secret is the motivation for his writing: "[L]o único que parece sostener el deseo de la escritura es una cierta tensión en torno de la idea de secreto, en la que se entrecruzan dos urdimbres, la del *Finnegans* de Borges y la de la muerte de Almeida" (*El otro Joyce* 188). Though the two cases seem unrelated at first glance, they do share some elements in common. Although it is never explicitly mentioned in the novel, it is worth noting that another word for the transfer of an object (such as human remains) from one place to another is "translation." Throughout the novel, Ferro plays with language and with different notions of translation, problematizing the relation between originals and copies. The translation of Almeida's remains, much like the translation of *Finnegans Wake*, leads to a vertiginous confusion of identities. Cáceres eventually discovers that Almeida was not the man who died in the crash. A former actor and small-scale politician from Buenos Aires named "Pippo," who just happened to look exactly like Almeida, had been secretly hired to go to Florence in his place. The conspirators were able to "translate" the remains to Argentina precisely because Cáceres was unable to distinguish the original from the copy.

Almeida and Pippo, William Joyce and James Joyce, James Joyce and Borges, Cáceres and Vieytes are the most obvious ex-

amples of the doubles which abound and multiply in *El otro Joyce*. In the end, Cáceres describes his manuscript as “una especie de estremecimiento progresivo que se fue construyendo en un proceso complejo que conduce simultáneamente a una red de desdoblamientos y traducciones incesantes” (240-41). On the other hand, he notes that it is a process of discovering a conspiracy, “una adhesión entrampada en avances y retrocesos defensivos e ilusionistas para descubrir una conspiración y poder producir un interrogante, al menos una vez” (241). Throughout the novel, the process of translation is represented as the persistent attempt to interpret and uncover a secret—which may also symbolize the act of reading itself. This self-consciousness is present covertly in the detective story, and overtly at the thematic level. Perhaps its ultimate manifestation is that the reader is left uncertain that this is Cáceres's manuscript at all; in the end, we are left wondering whether it has been written by Cáceres, Vieytes, or the unnamed editor. As Ferro explains in an article about one of his more recent publications, *Textos y mundos* (2015):

[C]ada texto es un entramado con múltiples cabezas de lecturas para otros textos, una deriva de convergencia de operaciones de desplazamiento y proliferación en las que no sólo desaparece el origen, el origen ni siquiera ha desaparecido: nunca ha quedado constituido. En el injerto textual, condición de posibilidad del texto, la lectura y la escritura tejen mutuamente un doble suplementario, vacilante e inestable. (“La pasión crítica”)

*El otro Joyce*, published four years earlier, certainly demonstrates these ideas at work. Cáceres's search for *Finnegans Wake* takes him (and the reader) in circles from William Joyce to James Joyce to Borges to Derrida—a circle which Ferro himself joins, as a literary critic of Borges and Derrida. The absence of authorship in what is supposedly Cáceres's manuscript remains ambiguous in the end as one final reminder that it is impossible to identify the true origin of any text.

There may be a larger political message at play in *El otro Joyce*, as well. There is a certain betrayal implicit in the act of translation, as expressed in the Italian phrase *traduttore traditore*. Cáceres often uses the word “traición” in reference to the language of William Joyce as he works to translate his manuscript. Eventually, he gives up on the translation as he accepts that William Joyce will not lead him to James Joyce:

El artificio radica en haber intentado montar un teatro de la fascinación construido sobre la convergencia de falsos espejos, como ventríloquo aficionado he elegido dos personajes para armar una farsa y he creído que podría mover mi escritura tratando de revelar el secreto de un diálogo imposible. La palabra traición es un núcleo resistente que impide todo traslado, es el exceso que impide toda forma de contacto entre los dos Joyce [...] (*El otro Joyce* 163)

In fact, William Joyce was tried and convicted as a traitor, having shared secrets with Germany during World War II. Almeida is also a traitor of sorts, having falsified his own death in order to avoid responsibility for the financial crisis he has provoked in Argentina. In addition to its exploration of translation, *El otro Joyce* points to the danger of secrets, and to the opaqueness of both literature and politics in the modern age. Almeida's motivation is obviously capitalistic in nature, although so is Cáceres's—the only reason he accepted the job in the first place was to supplement a dwindling income and pay off his debts. In *El otro Joyce*, there is a tension between the material and the abstract. Due to the nature of their work, both Cáceres and Sarquis are preoccupied with the material value of books; however, in their search for *Finnegans Wake*, they also consider and appreciate the intellectual value of that first edition.

*El otro Joyce* showcases Argentina's intimate, though unusual, relationship with Joyce—one which is tied to the challenges of modernism and the desire to unlock secrets. Ferro's protagonist contemplates the issues of translation as he searches for secret connections between Joyce and Borges, and between James and William Joyce. Along with the play of identities between originals and copies, reader and writer merge in the form of the translator. Salas Subirat states, in the prologue to his *Ulises*, “Traducir es el modo más atento de leer, y en realidad el deseo de leer atentamente es el responsable de la presente versión” (Salas Subirat ix). He notes that part of the book's charm is that each new reading offers new discoveries (xiv); *El otro Joyce* emphasizes the process of reading and re-reading as a muddled, circular activity which yields different results each time. Of course, it also pokes fun at the popular obsession with Joyce as it compares to the actual number of people who manage to read his works; Cáceres is unsurprised when he finds an untouched version of *Finnegans*, “al igual que muchos otros textos de culto el *Finnegans* era más citado que leído” (*El otro Joyce* 24). In fact, Borges himself admitted that he had never read *Ulysses* in its entirety, remembering his first encounter with the novel: “I did my best to leaf through it. I failed, of course” (Kearney 338). Gamero asserts that Borges's repeated admission of not having read *Ulysses* in its entirety was a methodological statement: “*Ulysses* should be read as one might walk through a city, making up an itinerary, sometimes retracing one's steps on the same streets and completely ignoring others” (“Joyce's *Ulysses*”). This theory would shed light on Borges's multiple readings of *Finnegans Wake*, as well.

Like Joyce, Roberto Ferro also experiments both covertly and overtly with self-conscious forms. Ferro's novel blends elements of historical metafiction, detective fiction, and intertextuality to create a textually self-conscious work which requires the reader to be mindful of her active role as reader, and perhaps even as citizen. *El otro Joyce* subverts detective narrative, breaking many classic rules of the genre at the same time that its characters pay homage to the tradition. Moreover, it overtly explores the underlying issues of Joyce's translation and influence while it employs classically Joycean narrative strategies, such as digression and variation in narrative

voices. Indeed, Ferro makes it clear that Joyce's work has deep roots in the creative tradition of Argentina.

For his difficult texts, his experimentation with language and form, Joyce's literary presence was and continues to be strong throughout the world. Argentines found special affinities with the Irish writer for his use of language, his condition as an exile, and his universality, because they were guided to him by their compatriots—Jorge Luis Borges, the self-proclaimed first explorer of *Ulysses*

from the Hispanic world, and José Salas Subirat, first official Spanish translator of the novel. While their translations of Joyce may not have been exact copies, they contributed to the formation of generations of Argentine readers and writers, sometimes in very surprising ways. This is the heart of Ferro's *El otro Joyce*, where characters search for the secret of these texts and, in the process, reveal that the Joyce-Argentine connection is not only rooted in literature, but also in translation.

---

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup>The introduction to *TransLatin Joyce* includes an extensive list of Iberian and Latin American authors who use Joyce as a key reference point in their writings.

<sup>2</sup>William Joyce (1906-1946), also known by his nickname Lord Haw Haw, was an actual historical character. In this sense, Ferro employs a classic Borgesian strategy of combining historical characters with invented ones.

<sup>3</sup>The possibility of a counterpoint to Joyce also points back to Borges.

<sup>4</sup>Here Cáceres is referring to the first U.S. edition printed by Viking Press (New York) in 1939. Faber & Faber (under T.S. Eliot) also published

an edition that year in the United Kingdom, some of which were sold in the U.S. (Peter Harrington).

<sup>5</sup>The reference to the Tower of Babel also points to one of Ferro's critical essays, "Un chino perdido en la biblioteca de Babel," in which Ferro reflects on the experience of tutoring a Chinese professor on the life and work of Borges. The professor, Lin Yiang, later translated Borges's stories and essays to Chinese.

<sup>6</sup>"[...]En un extremo el mundo [la traducción] se nos presenta como una superposición de textos, cada uno ligeramente distinto del anterior, es decir, traducciones de traducciones de traducciones" (*El otro Joyce* 137).

---

## WORKS CITED

- Abregu, Ana. "El otro Joyce, el otro Ferro." *Sintagmas*. 20 Nov. 2011. Web. 13 August 2015.
- Balderston, Daniel. "The Rag-and-Bone Shop: On Borges, Yeats and Ireland." *Variaciones Borges* 32 (2011): 41-58. *D-Scholarship@Pitt*. Web. 9 Jan. 2014.
- Battistón, Dora, Carmen Trouvé y Aldo Reda. "Borges y la traducción de las últimas páginas del *Ulysses* de Joyce." *Anclajes* 5 (Dec. 2001): 55-70. Web. 13 August 2015.
- Borges, Jorge Luis. *Discusión*. Buenos Aires: Emecé, 1957. Print.
- . "El impostor inverosímil Tom Castro." Universitat de Barcelona. N.d. www.eb.edu. Web. 20 March 2016.
- . *Ficciones*. New York: Rayo Planeta, 2008. Print.
- . *Selected Poems*. New York: Penguin, 2000. Print.
- . *Textos cautivos*. Ed. Enrique Sacerio-Garí and Emir Rodríguez Monegal. Buenos Aires: Tusquets, 1986.
- Borges, Jorge Luis and Suzanne Jill Levine. "Some Versions of Homer." *PMLA* 107.5 (Oct. 1992): 1134-38. Web. JSTOR. 21 March 2016.
- Conde-Parilla, M. Ángeles. "Ulises de James Joyce, en la traducción de José Salas Subirat." Alicante: Biblioteca Virtual Miguel de Cervantes, 2012. Web. 2 August 2015.
- Eco, Umberto. "Between La Mancha and Babel." *On Literature*. Orlando: Harcourt, 2002. Print.
- Ferro, Roberto. *El otro Joyce*. Lanús: Liber Editores, 2011. Print.
- . *Escritura y desconstrucción: Lectura (h)errada con Jacques Derrida*. Buenos Aires: Editorial Biblos, 1995. Web. *Academia*. 9 Sept. 2015.
- . "Heterónimos III: Borges y Joyce and la biblioteca de un autodidacta." Buenos Aires: Coghlan, 2009. *Metaliteratura.ar*. Web. 18 March 2016.
- . "La Pasión Crítica." *Metaliteratura*: 21 Nov. 2015. *Metaliteratura.ar*. Web. 20 March 2016.
- Fiddian, Robin. "Borges on Location: Duplicitous Narration and Historical Truths in 'Tema del traidor y del héroe.'" *The Modern Language Review* 105.3 (July 2010): 743-60. *JSTOR*. Web. 10 June 2016.
- . "James Joyce and the Spanish American Novel: A Preliminary Study." *The Crane Bag* 6.2 (1982): 84-88. *JSTOR*. Web. 7 April 2015.
- Gamero, Carlos. "A cien años del día en que transcurre el Ulises, de James Joyce." 12 June 2004. *Clarín*. Web. 27 July 2015.
- . "Joyce's *Ulysses* in Argentine Literature." Trans. David Barnwell. *Irish Migration Studies in Latin America* 7.2 (July 2009): 177-84. Web. *Irlandeses.org*. 27 Jan 2015.
- García Ramos, Arturo. "Cabrera Infante y James Joyce: Leopold Bloom y Stephen Dedalus en la vela de Bustrófedon." *Revista Cálamo FASPE* 60 (2012): 82-90. *Dialnet*. Web. 16 Feb. 2017.
- Gatto, Teresa. "Entrevista a Roberto Ferro." *El Porta(l) Voz* 5 Jan. 2012. *NCL*. TV. Web. 13 August 2015.
- Hassan, Wail. "Agency and Translational Literature: Ahdaf Soueif's *The Map of Love*." *PMLA* 121.3 (May 2006): 753-68. *JSTOR*. Web. 21 July 2015.
- . "Translational Literature and the Pleasures of Exile." *PMLA* 131.5 (October 2016): 1435-43. Print.
- Hutcheon, Linda. *Narcissistic Narrative: The Metafictional Paradox*. New York: Methuen, 1985. Print.
- Joyce, James. *Finnegans Wake*. London: Penguin, 2000. Print.

- . *Ulysses*. Florida: Simon and Brown, 2011. Print.
- Kearney, Richard, Ed. *Navigations: Collected Irish Essays, 1976-2006*. New York: Syracuse University Press, 2006. Print.
- Kearney, Richard. "Dialogue with Borges and Heaney: Fictional Worlds (1982)." *Kearney* 337-347.
- . "Joyce I: Questioning Narratives." *Kearney* 105-118.
- Kristal, Efraim. *Invisible Work: Borges and Translation*. Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2002. Print.
- Lago, Eduardo. "El incubo de lo imposible." *Enriquevilasmatos.com*. Web. 20 July 2015.
- Levine, Suzanne Jill. "Notes to Borges's Notes to Joyce: Infinite Affinities." *Comparative Literature* 49.4 (Autumn 1997): 344-59. *JSTOR*. Web. 26 Jan 2015.
- Levitt, Morton P. "Beyond Dublin: Joyce and Modernism." *Joyce and Joyceans*, Spec. issue of *Journal of Modern Literature* 22.2 (Winter 1998-99): 385-94. *JSTOR*. Web. 26 Jan. 2015.
- Martin, Gerald. *Journeys Through the Labyrinth*. New York: Verso, 1989. Print.
- Masiello, Francine. "Joyce in Buenos Aires (Talking Sexuality through Translation)." *Literary into Cultural Translation*. Spec. issue of *Diacritics* 34.3-4 (Autumn-Winter, 2004): 54-72. *JSTOR*. Web. 10 Jan. 2015.
- Montalbano, Julieta. "El otro Joyce de Roberto Ferro." *Metaliteratura*. N.D. Web. 13 August 2015.
- Petersen, Lucas Martin. *El traductor del Ulises*. Kindle ed., Sudamericana, 2016.
- Rodriguez Monegal, Emir. "The New Latin American Novelists." *Partisan Review* 44.1 (1977): 40-51. *BU.edu*. Web. 15 August 2016.
- Saer, Juan José. El destino en español del Ulises. *El País*: 12 June 2004. Web. 27 July 2015.
- Salas Subirat, José. Prólogo. *Ulises*. By James Joyce. Trans. J. Salas Subirat. Buenos Aires: Santiago Rueda, 1945. IX-XV. Print.
- Salgado, César. "El periplo de la paideia: Joyce, Lezama, Reyes y el neohelenismo hispanoamericano." *Hispanic Review* 69.1 (Winter 2001): 72-83. *JSTOR*. Web. 31 March 2017.
- . *From Modernismo to Neo-Baroque: Joyce and Lezama Lima*. Lewisberg: Bucknell University Press, 2001. Print.
- Salgado, César, Brian Price, and John Pedro Schwartz, Eds. *TransLatin Joyce: Global Transmissions in Ibero American Literature*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2014. Print.
- Sheinin, David K. *Argentina and the United States: An Alliance Contained*. Ed. David K. Sheinin. U of Georgia P: Athens, 2006. *JSTOR*. Web. 8 March 2016.
- Temoche, Tania. "Entrevista a Roberto Ferro." *Lamula*: 1 July 2013. *Lamula*. pe. Web. 15 March 2016.
- Vela, David. "Irish Mexican, Latino Irlandés: Fountains of Literary Invention." *Irish Migration Studies in Latin America*. Web. 4 June 2015.
- . "The Voice of James Joyce in Latin American Literature." *Somos en escrito*. Web. 4 June 2015.