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Dissertation

**TRANSLATION AS CULTURAL CONTRABAND:
TRANSLATING AND WRITING RUSSIAN LITERATURE IN ARGENTINA
OR
HOW “BAD” TRANSLATIONS MADE “GOOD” LITERATURE**

by

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DEDICATION

To my parents, Nelya and Ramil, who, between Asia and Europe, once made and are still making it *all* possible.

And to the one step: “*De las pampas argentinas a las estepas rusas, tan solo un paso.*”

Solo uno”

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Many languages, voices, and chance acquaintances make up each page of this dissertation. Alicia Borinsky's voice, her words that planted the seeds of this research – "*Te interesará ver las tapas de Claridad con los escritores rusos*" – are also the ones that led me to discover the core of the dissertation: our shared way back to Russia, inevitably, from within Buenos Aires. Her enthusiasm and inspiring personality led me not only by way of the abundant red bibliographic flags in each, even informal, conversation, but also through the opportunity of being in Buenos Aires, that made all the previous readings and hypotheses fall into place. Rodrigo Lopes de Barros has always impelled me to revisit my own Russian background from the Latin American angle and has always enthusiastically supported and encouraged me to look beyond conventions and outside the canons. Ana María Reyes's seminar on Cold War in Latin America was also a turning point in my reevaluation of my Russian heritage as a source of valuable contribution to the Latin American Studies field. Margaret Litvin's enthusiasm, understanding, and inspiration along with Christopher Maurer's guidance, advice, and insight have been invaluable for the dissertation to take its final form.

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Ubertalli, the historian from Área de Investigaciones in the Biblioteca Nacional,

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I am thankful for the patience and flexibility of everyone at Archivos y Colecciones Particulares at the Biblioteca Nacional. The part of the dissertation dedicated to César Tiempo would not be possible without their meticulously organized and cataloged archives and without Natalia González Tomassini's willingness to help and share her knowledge about César Tiempo's life and work.

My research in Buenos Aires and Mendoza was carried out thanks also to a grant provided by the Latin American Studies Program. The Program has always been generous with their support, allowing my research to find its direction throughout my time at Boston University and take its definite shape in Argentina.

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**TRANSLATION AS CULTURAL CONTRABAND:
TRANSLATING AND WRITING RUSSIAN LITERATURE IN ARGENTINA
OR
HOW “BAD TRANSLATIONS” MADE “GOOD” LITERATURE**

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ABSTRACT

My dissertation examines the role Russian literature translations played in the shaping of Argentine literature during the first three decades of the twentieth century. By examining the processes of selection, translation, retranslation, and adaptation of Russian works, it analyzes the ways in which translation participated in the redefinition of Argentina’s cultural and literary relations with Europe. Through comparative analysis of the originals and their translations, it traces how translation made Russian literature somber and tragic, and transformed its realism into a detailed copying of reality. It argues that such realism, which was imitated by the Leftist avant-garde group Boedo, that aimed to democratize literature, exposed the incongruence of any representation of reality, which helped the Florida group—the followers of the European avant-garde—to call for a different kind of realism, one that would expose the fiction of literature and reality. By examining the work of Macedonio Fernández, César Tiempo and Roberto Arlt, I trace how Florida’s parody of Boedo’s copying of Russian literary translations were crucial in the development of parody in Argentine literature, helped reinstate the parody and humor that

had been overlooked by the translation, and paved the way for the Boom writers.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DEDICATION	iv
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	v
ABSTRACT	viii
TABLE OF CONTENTS	x
LIST OF FIGURES	xii
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	xiii
INTRODUCTION: TRANSLATING A FAKE RUSSIAN ALPHABET INTO A NEW LANGUAGE: A MODEL KIT	1
CHAPTER ONE: TRANSLATION, TRADITION, AND OTHER CREATIONS: CANNIBALS' WAR ON EPISTEMOLOGICAL COLONIALISM.....	10
I. Between Borges and Genette: Towards an Original through Translation	10
II. Translation and/against/of Tradition.....	30
III. Russian Literature Translations and their Battle against Epistemological Colonialism	34
IV. Translation as Anthropophagy	49
CHAPTER TWO: TRANSLATION AND OTHER "CRÍMENES SIN CASTIGO"	61
I. Argentina and Russia in a Dialogue.....	61
II. History of Translation of Russian Literature in Latin America	92
III. The Selection Process in <i>Los Pensadores</i> and <i>Claridad</i>	105
IV. The Translation Process	112
V. <i>A переводчики кто?</i> (And who are the translators?).....	116
ALEJO ABUTCOV	117
BENJAMIN ABRAMSON	123

VI. Other Direct Translators and Writers of the Russian Literature in Spanish	140
CHAPTER THREE: RUSSIAN LITERATURE TRANSLATION AND ARGENTINE AVANT-GARDE	145
I. Translation and the Perception of Russian Literature	145
II. Rethinking Realism	167
III. Russian Literature and Argentine Parody	198
CHAPTER FOUR: <i>WRITING</i> RUSSIAN LITERATURE IN ARGENTINA. CÉSAR TIEMPO AND ROBERTO ARLT	235
I. El rusito Israel, Clara Beter and Other Russian Writers “Written” by César Tiempo	235
II. <i>El crimen y el castigo</i> in <i>Los siete locos</i> : Russian Literature Translation and Roberto Arlt	263
CONCLUSION: ON COUNTERFEIT COINS AND BAD TRANSLATIONS: THE “FAKE” CREATORS OF “REAL” CHANGE	318
APPENDIX A: EXAMPLES OF TRANSLATIONS OF RUSSIAN WORKS PUBLISHED IN <i>CLARIDAD</i> AND <i>LOS PENSADORES</i>	337
APPENDIX B: CÉSAR TIEMPO’S CORRESPONDENCE	348
BIBLIOGRAPHY	350
CURRICULUM VITAE	375

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Still shots from Bondarchuk's The Steppe	88
Figure 2. Clara Beter's poem "Filosofia" published in the first issue of Claridad	248
Figure 3. One of the Claridad's covers with Lenin, no. 175, 26 Jan. 1929.....	310
Figure 4. Arcadio Averchenko, "Un drama sensacional," published in Los Pensadores, no. 107, 10 Mar. 1925.....	332
Figure 5. Roberto Mariani, "Los rateros," published in Los Pensadores, no. 108, 24 Mar. 1925.....	332

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<i>LP</i>	<i>Los Pensadores</i>
<i>MEN</i>	<i>The Museum of Eterna's Novel</i>
<i>MNE</i>	<i>Museo de la novela de la Eterna</i>
<i>RMF</i>	<i>Revista Martín Fierro</i>
<i>SCT</i>	<i>Subfondo César Tiempo</i>

INTRODUCTION: TRANSLATING A FAKE RUSSIAN ALPHABET INTO A NEW LANGUAGE: A MODEL KIT

At the beginning of Julio Cortázar's *62/ Modelo para armar*,¹ Juan, one of the protagonists, enters a random restaurant, Polidor. He sits at a table in the very back facing an enormous mirror that covers the back wall. Juan immediately discovers that he has a full view of the restaurant without being fully seen. He is an interpreter, a good interpreter "accustomed to the instant liquidation of all problems of translation in that struggle against time and silence which is an interpreter's booth"² (Cortázar, *62: Model Kit*). "*Je voudrais un château saignant,*" one of the diners that Juan sees in the mirror orders a bloody castle. The mirror instantly produces a breach between the seen and the heard: the voice that asked for a bloody castle has come from behind while the lips have articulated the five words right in front of him, in the mirror: "the hollow in the air took place, the angel's step, [...] the image and the voice were produced from opposite directions, centering in his suddenly awakened attention"³ (Cortázar, *62: Model Kit*).

This sudden incongruence and the simultaneous realization that the image of the mirror is as false as the very image it reflects – "But *beneath it all* I know that everything

¹ All titles appear in their original language. The Russian titles are followed by the English translation in brackets. I translated the quotes in Spanish, Portuguese and Russian into English whenever a published translation was not available and when a more literal translation was needed to support my argument. When the translation comes from a published source, the location of the quote is indicated after the quotation. The original texts in Spanish, Russian, and Portuguese can be found in their corresponding footnotes. I have included shorter translations – titles, short phrases and sentence fragments – in square brackets in the body text. If a quote in Portuguese, Russian or Spanish appeared only in a footnote, I placed its translation in square brackets next to the quote.

² "habituado a liquidar en el instante todo problema de traducción en esa lucha contra el tiempo y el silencio que es una cabina de conferencias" (Cortázar, *62/ Modelo para armar*, 8).

³ "y entonces se produjo el hueco en el aire, el paso del ángel, y la voz le llegó desde atrás, la imagen y la voz se dieron desde direcciones opuestas para centrarse en su atención bruscamente despierta" (Cortázar, *62/ Modelo para armar* 29).

is false”⁴ (Cortázar, 62: *Model Kit*) – cancels any possibility of converting the seen into words “because chain or coagulation were nothing but an attempt to give the level of language to something that presented itself like an instantaneous contradiction, took shape and fled simultaneously, and no longer entered language spoken by anyone, not even that of an experienced interpreter like Juan”⁵ (Cortázar, 62: *Model Kit*).

The same mirror turns the titles from the French newspaper *France-Soir*, that the fat diner was now reading, into a false Russian alphabet, which becomes the point of a possible origin of another language emerging at the margins of perception:

Perhaps now, half-closing his eyes, he would be able to replace the image of the mirror, territory that interceded between the semblance of the Polidor and the other semblance still vibrating in the echo of its dissolution; perhaps now he would be able to pass from the Russian alphabet in the mirror to the other language that had appeared at the limits of perception, a fallen bird, desperate to flee, flapping against the net and giving it its shape. (Cortázar, 62: *Model Kit*)⁶

The mirror becomes a point of revelation of not only its own simulacrum but of the simulacrum of the reality it reflected; a point in which French turns into a false Russian; a muting point in which an old language comes to its dead end and only a new language as

⁴ “Pero en el fondo sé que todo es falso” (Cortázar, 62/ *Modelo para armar* 10).

⁵ “porque cadena o coágulo no eran más que una tentativa de situar al nivel del lenguaje algo que se daba como una contradicción instantánea, que cuajaba y huía simultáneamente, y eso no entraba ya en el lenguaje articulado de nadie, ni siquiera de un intérprete avezado como Juan” (Cortázar, 62/ *Modelo para armar*, 9).

⁶ “Tal vez ahora, entrecerrando los ojos alcanzara a sustituir la imagen del espejo, territorio intercesor entre el simulacro del restaurant Polidor y el otro simulacro vibrando todavía en el eco de su disolución; quizá ahora pudiera pasar del alfabeto ruso en el espejo al otro lenguaje que se había asomado al límite de la percepción, pájaro caído y desesperado de fuga, aleteando contra la red y dándole su forma” (Cortázar, 62/ *Modelo para armar* 13-14).

subtle and sensible as silence can jump the wall with its dead-end sign directing one to turn around. The Russian alphabet is an insisting witness to each of these moments: of the mirror becoming an in-between zone of the two semblances of reality; of Juan's sensing of the possibility of a new language, the one capable of capturing the present, the very disorder of thoughts and the illogic of our perception of the outside world; and the moment of Juan's success at connecting the seemingly unrelated events together and understanding what happened to him. He calls it "a lesson of things, a display of how once more the before and the after had fallen apart in his hands, leaving him a light, useless rain of dead moths" (Cortázar, 62: *Model Kit*).⁷

The Spanish translations of Russian literature, retranslated from French, German, Italian, and English, are translations of translations, mirrors of mirrors. Cortázar's mirror turns the Russian alphabet into a gateway for a new language through the produced incongruity. Similarly, translations of translations of Russian literature produced a breach where there were echoes of Russian in the attempts of constructing a replica of a Russian image, but the voice was coming from a different place – neither Russia, nor Argentina, but Spain, Germany, Italy or the United States. Moreover, a false copy of the Russian reality placed next to the supposed real copy of the Argentine reality only augmented the incongruence of any representation of reality, including the very way reality is presented in our perception.

My dissertation looks at translation as a creative force in the process of shaping of

⁷ "lección de cosas, mostración de cómo una vez más el antes y el después se le destrozaban en las manos, dejándole una fina inútil lluvia de polillas muertas" (Cortázar, 62/ *Modelo para armar* 26).

a literary tradition. I analyze Spanish translations of Russian literature that were made or circulated in Argentina in the first three decades of the twentieth century. Based on the findings, I show the ways the changes introduced by translation shaped literary developments in Argentina. In the first chapter I look at translations and compare them to the original, not in order to diminish the value of the former, not to expose its so-called blemishes, but quite the opposite: translation, in certain contexts, proves to be more powerful than its original as it is translation that represents its original in the land of “others,” which puts translation at the forefront of effectuating literary and cultural exchanges between cultures. In the case of Argentina, the “bad” Spanish translations of Russian literature prove to be a rich base for polemics between two avant-garde groups that helped to propagate the idea of “good” novels and “good literature.”

By simply saying that Spanish translations of Russian literature were “bad”, and that all of them were retranslations from other languages, we close the door to a rich world where creativity and political engagement ploughed old soil with old instruments in order to grow new crops. Even though the translations went through Europe, even though they were translated into the Spanish of the colonizer, it is the act of selection that can turn into a weapon for the fight against epistemological colonialism, and it is the Argentine condition of the margin that led to the translation of contraband works that the center cannot afford to shelter or conceal.

In the so-called theoretical part of the first chapter, I bolster my argument of dismantling the original’s predominance over a translation. I then establish a link between the fields of Translation Studies and Postcolonial Studies and analyze how translation

participates in the fight against epistemological or academic colonialism, as well as how the Spanish translations of Russian literature very early on effectuated cultural contraband, bringing “illegal readings” to Latin America. I conclude the chapter with a brief discussion of translation as part of anthropophagy which, in turn, is part of the fight against coloniality. In the second chapter, I briefly go over the history of the Russian literature translation in Argentina and focus on two translators, Alejo Abutcov and Benjamin Abramson, who fought against epistemological colonialism both by translating directly from Russian in as early as the first decades of the previous century, and by correcting or manipulating the translations that had been made in Europe.

The translations I analyze come mainly from the journal called *Claridad* (originally called *Los Pensadores*). I turn to a journal, since, as Lafleur, Provenzano and Alonso call them, Argentine magazines and journals are the entities that “configure the face of each epoch,”⁸ with their content being “the pulp that feeds, though tangentially, the literary history.”⁹ Or as César Tiempo says, “A literary journal is a picometer made to measure the thickness of disintegrated dreams.”¹⁰ They possess an anthological meaning and can serve as anthologies of a group or literary movement. I choose *Claridad* for its key role in the construction of Argentine ideological and cultural thought in the first half of the twentieth century.

Even a brief analysis of some translations published in *Claridad* reveals how certain

⁸ “configuran el rostro de las épocas” (Lafleur, Provenzano & Alonso 7).

⁹ “la pulpa que alimenta, aunque sea tangencialmente, la historia literaria” (Lafleur, Provenzano & Alonso 7).

¹⁰ “Una revista literaria es un picómetro destinado a medir el espesor de los sueños desintegrados” (Tiempo qtd. in Lafleur, Provenzano & Alonso 59).

mechanisms affected the perception of Russian literature by Argentine writers and how this perception played out in the development of the Argentine literary avant-garde when Russian literature translations found themselves between the polemics of two avant-garde groups, Florida and Boedo. Arlt's words reveal its essence: "If you're walking along Florida Street, you're sending me a message with a terrifying opulence of details explaining the reasons why Dostoevsky was a degenerate and why Tolstoy was a softie; if you're democratizing through Boedo Street, you are telling me nasty things of that "bourgeois" Flaubert and of that "aristocrat" D'Annunzio."¹¹ In this chapter, I demonstrate how the XIX-century Russian realist writers could serve the two groups, one of which created "art for the art" while the other used "art for a social change." In other words, it shows how Russian literature became a tool in the definition of Argentine writers' literary and cultural agenda. To conclude this chapter, I examine the way a certain perception of Russian literature constructed through translation participated in the redefinition of realism and the development of parody in Argentine literature. It is with the help of the exaggerated Russian realism constructed in translation that turns into parody that the writers from both the Florida and the Boedo Groups start rethinking not only realism but the concept of truth and knowledge.

In the last chapter I turn to the two writers, César Tiempo and Roberto Arlt, that can be labeled as representatives of the *Floredo* group, the term coined by Arturo Cancela for those who belonged to both of the groups, possessing both "intellectual attitude, an

¹¹ "Si usted se pasea por Florida, me comunica con un aterrador lujo de detalles las razones por qué Dostoiewsky era un degenerado y Tolstoi un reblandecido; si usted democratiza por Boedo, me dice pestes de ese "burgués" de Flaubert, y de ese aristócrata de D'Annunzio" (qtd. in Odonopozova 186).

innovative impulse, cult of the form; and also social preoccupation, interest in political, economic and even in religious problems.”¹² The discussed processes of the redefinition of realism and development of parody present in the writings of Tiempo and Arlt take place within the limits of their work, and not as a response to the work of the opposite group, which offers a stark demonstration of my argument.

Throughout the four chapters the Argentine poet Osvaldo Lamborghini’s *Odiseo confinado* reemerges continuously as a present-day echo of the past events analyzed in my dissertation. The dissertation is, of course, also full of echoes and voices collected in the Buenos Aires streets, cafes, theaters, libraries, bookstores and other spatial manifestations of the omnipresent spirit of *la tertulia porteña*. This research was also part of a personal research interest in how my Russian identity is translated into Spanish and how my own marginal position within the Russian culture resonates on the other side of the Atlantic, making the marginal identification a wellspring of energy, freedom, and creativity. The research turned into a discovery of Russia in Buenos Aires and Tatars in Latin America; into a discovery of hidden corners of Russian literature and history, being hidden, as it turned out, only within the limits of Russia, but on open display in Argentina.

The dissertation was making its way by constructing seemingly fortuitous connections and startling coincidences. By chance I met Facundo Nahuel Leone, a librarian at the bookstore Guadalquivir in Buenos Aires who spoke about his interest in Russian literature and pointed me to a list of other libraries and book fairs where I found many of

¹² “la actitud intelectualista, el impulso renovador, el culto de la forma; y también la preocupación social, el interés por los problemas políticos, económicos y hasta religiosos” (Lafleur, Provenzano & Alonso 79).

the first Russian literature translations. He also gave me Abelardo Castillo's book *El que tiene sed* as a gift, which now has a double dedication: one from Facundo – a quote from Paul Valery's "El cementerio marino" – and another from Abelardo Castillo himself, who I met the very same week when I met with Sylvia Iparraguirre at her house to talk about Russian literature in Argentina and found out that Abelardo was her husband. Facundo also led me to a discovery of the Argentinian "Undeground man": the librarian Hernán Silva of the bookstore "Memorias del subsuelo"¹³ at the Galerías Pacífico. Fernán shared his extensive knowledge of Russian literature and helped me locate many of the rare books that lay the foundation of this research. He is also mentioned in the article "La broma literaria en nuestros días: Max Aub, Francisco de Ayala, Ricardo Gullón, Carlos Ripoll, César Tiempo" as a keeper and savior of the first edition of *Versos de una...*,¹⁴ the book

¹³ The name of the book store is homonymous with one of Dostoevsky's short novels "Записки из подполья" translated into English as *Notes from Underground*.

¹⁴ "resulta curioso y notable que el libro *Versos de una...* no se encuentre ya en los lugares donde uno espera hallarlo. No está ni en la Biblioteca Nacional en Buenos Aires, ni tampoco en las bibliotecas de Córdoba, «La Prensa», «La Nación», o del Consejo Nacional de Educación. No figura entre otros libros de César Tiempo en la formidable Biblioteca del Congreso en Washington, D. C., tan parecida a la de Babel que describe Borges en un conocido cuento. Debemos nuestro ejemplar del libro, en la edición publicada por Claridad, a los infatigables esfuerzos del Sr. Antonio Carbonell, primo de Celmina y Federico van der Wens [...]. Los Van der Wens generosamente ofrecieron su ayuda a través de su primo, quien recorrió las principales bibliotecas de Buenos Aires, tropezando con más dificultades al tratar de localizar el ilusivo libro [...]. El amable y asiduo emisario pudo, después de muchas aventuras, ponerse en contacto con César Tiempo, quien le confesó que no le quedaba ningún ejemplar, pero que sí tenía uno un ex-editor que vendía libros usados en una galería porteña, y fue así como el Sr. Carbonell logró conseguirmos el libro que durante dos años eludió nuestras pesquisas y las de la biblioteca universitaria, cuyos agentes de compra por lo general son infalibles [it's curious and striking that the book *Versos de una...* cannot be found anymore in those places where one would expect to find it. It is not in the National Library in Buenos Aires, nor in the libraries of Córdoba, of "La Prensa", "La Nación", or of the National Council on Education. It does not appear among other books by César Tiempo in the formidable Library of Congress in Washington, D.C., resembling so much the library of Babel that Borges describes in a well-known story. We owe our copy of the book, in the version published by Claridad, to the tireless efforts of Sr. Antonio Carbonell, the nephew of Celmina and Federico Van der Wens. The Van der Wens generously offered to help through their nephew who went around the main bookstores in Buenos Aires, running into more difficulties in trying to locate the elusive book [...]. The kind and devoted emissary managed, after many adventures, to get in touch with César Tiempo, that confessed that *he did not have any copies left*, but that one ex-publisher that sold used books in a *porteña* gallery did have one. This is how Sr. Carbonell managed to get us the book

central to the concluding part of this research.

This dissertation is also, in a sense, a meta-translation. Since the texts and translations relevant to my analysis were written in Russian and Spanish, and the language in which I chose to present the results of my analysis is English, I must translate all examples without existing English translations into English. This puts my reader into a situation of choice; they must either trust that the translations I supply are accurate and accept my argument as valid, or doubt the translation, and thus, the validity of my propositions. The election of either choice proves my argument, the ultimate goal of which is to make translation visible through the reader's mistrust and doubt of the words in front of her. Sharing my research findings on translation has necessitated translation of these very findings, intimately rendering this dissertation not only a meta-work but also a creative piece of literature in which I exercise, through translation, a wide range of styles, genres, languages and time periods.

that for two years evaded our quest and the quest of the University library, whose purchasing agents are generally infallible]" (Irizarry).

CHAPTER ONE: TRANSLATION, TRADITION, AND OTHER CREATIONS: CANNIBALS' WAR ON EPISTEMOLOGICAL COLONIALISM

I Between Borges and Genette: Towards an Original through Translation

In reexamining Russian literature's footprint on the work of Latin American writers, translation reveals itself not just as a bridge between continents, but as part of the very texture of Latin American literature and culture.¹⁵ "In the Argentine culture translations are fundamental," confirms the "Muestra libros" exhibition in the Museo del Libro y de la Lengua in Buenos Aires; "they put forward cosmopolitan thinking, let a reader get closer to diverse cultures and even produce, due to their deviations from the original text, certain literary and poetic effects."¹⁶

Borges notes¹⁷ that, in spite of reading it in translation, no one doubts that Russian

¹⁵ Translation also lies at the very origins of Russian literature. Roman Jakobson, in his "On Linguistic Aspects of Translation", says: "What was the initial question which arose in Slavic literature at its very beginning? Curiously enough, the translator's difficulty in preserving the symbolism of genders, and the cognitive irrelevance of this difficulty, appears to be the main topic of the earliest Slavic original work, the preface to the first translation of the *Evangelirarium*, made in the early 860s by the founder of Slavic letters and liturgy, Constantine the Philosopher, and recently restored and interpreted by A. Vaillant" (130). Even the spread of literacy in Russia, or *Rus'* at the time, started with the circulation of translated literature. The learned monks, called *chernetsy*, would read the translations of the selected Greek works on a historical or religious topic. Both monks and secular people would read the hagiographies whose translations, which were brought from the Byzantine Empire, had been "made in Moravia by St Cyril and St Methodius and perfected in Orthodox Bulgaria" (Meyendorff 5). Later, new translations made in Kiev appeared. Many texts of ecclesiastic and civil law were made in Bulgaria or Serbia (Meyendorff 18). Although later Russian monks started writing their own works, these still bore a stamp of the earlier translations. Meyendorff emphasizes the role translation played in the reception and interpretation of the Christian religion in Russia, underlining the fact that religion was received in translation – Russians did not have to learn Greek to read the scriptures, whereas in the West anyone aspiring to education had to learn Latin. On the influence of Byzantine culture on early Russian culture and literature, see John Meyendorff, *Byzantium and the Rise of Russia: A Study of Byzantino-Russian Relations in the Fourteenth Century*, especially "On the Greek translations": pp. 17-23.

¹⁶ "En la cultura argentina son fundamentales las traducciones: proponen un conocimiento cosmopolita, acercan al lector a culturas diversas y producen, incluso por sus desvíos del texto original, efectos literarios y poéticos" ("Muestra libros", 2011).

¹⁷ "La traducción es una variación que es lícito ensayar. ¿Por qué no suponer que cada traducción es un

literature is remarkable. Yet, many also point to the low quality of its first Spanish translations and the problems originating in their long journey from Russia to Latin America with an inevitable, in most cases,¹⁸ stop in Europe: Spain, France, Italy, or Germany. Alejandro Ariel González,¹⁹ specialist in Russian language and literature, highlights the contradiction in his article “Dostoevsky in Argentina, or About a Dialogue, Mishaps, and Future Perspectives” («Достоевский в Аргентине, или о Диалоге, недоразумениях и перспективах»). “Russian literature,” he says, “has been so popular in Spanish-speaking countries not *thanks* to numerous translations, but *in spite* of them: mediocre translations are so widespread, that it is impossible not to affect the “quality” of

borrador nuevo de la obra anterior? No sé por qué siempre se piensa mal de los traductores y sin embargo todos estamos de acuerdo en que la literatura rusa es admirable. Yo la conozco poco, pero estoy de acuerdo. Y sin embargo, la conocemos a través de traducciones, muy pocos de nosotros conocen ruso. Estoy convencido de que una novela como *El sueño del aposento rojo*, una vasta novela china, no menos modificada que la de los rusos, es admirable y la conozco a través de dos traducciones. La traducción alemana y la traducción inglesa, y en cuanto a la poesía, nadie duda de que en el *Antiguo Testamento* y en los *Evangelios* hay admirable poesía y no todos nosotros conocemos el hebreo o el griego, es decir, creemos en las traducciones. La traducción es un género lícito, desde luego. Es un absurdo negarlo” [Translation is a variation that is in its full right to be practiced. Why shouldn’t one presume that each translation is a new draft of the preceding work? I don’t know why we always think badly about translators and yet we all agree that Russian literature is remarkable. I know little of it, and yet I agree. We, however, know it through translations; very few of us know Russian. I’m sure that such a novel as *Dream of the Red Chamber*, a long Chinese novel, not less modified than the Russian ones, is remarkable and I know it through two translations. The German translation and the English one, and as concerns poetry, no one doubts that remarkable poetry can be found in the Old Testament and in the Gospels and not all of us know Hebrew or Greek, in other words, we believe in translations. Translation is, certainly, a legitimate genre. It’s absurd to deny it] (Borges qtd. in Barcia 22).

¹⁸ As was mentioned in the Introduction, later on I will talk about two translators, Alejo Abutcov and Benjamin Abramson, who emigrated from Russia to Argentina at the beginning of the XX century and translated works of literature and articles directly from Russian into Spanish.

¹⁹ Alejandro Ariel González is a prominent Argentine Slavist and a prolific literary and scientific translator. His translations comprise more than thirty titles, including works of Bulgakov, Turgenev, Chekhov, Dostoevsky, Gogol, Lenin, Tolstoy, Trotsky, Vigotsky, among others. Alejandro González is also the author of numerous articles on Social Theory, Translation Theory and Russian Studies. He is the Grand Prize winner of the 2015 *Teatros del Mundo* competition for his translation of Turgenev’s *Complete Theaters* and the First Prize winner of the 2014 second International Translation Award “Read Russia” for his translation of Dostoevsky’s *El doble*.

the perception of Russian writers' work."²⁰ Stasys Goštautas describes those translations as "the oftentimes bad translations of the revolutionary literature."²¹ George Schanzer calls them "a pale image of the original" or "Russian literature [...] in an adulterated form" (XVIII). For Obolenskaia, they were simplified versions of original works that contributed to the formation of a superficial perception of Russian literature (*Диалог культур* (The Dialogue of Cultures) 33-34). Schanzer and Gaidasz, in their article "Rubén Darío, traductor de Gorki," discuss the French and Spanish translations of Gorky's *Foma Gordeiev*. According to them, "in both cases, the novel is translated with little care; the translators are absolutely arbitrary and careless in what they do: they eliminate many pages of text and often don't transmit correctly the effect that the Russian novelist was trying to achieve."²² Argentine poet Nicolás Olivari²³ describes the series *Los Pensadores*, one of the main disseminators of Russian literature in Argentina, as "a collection of defective translations of Russian writers and other leftist authors."²⁴ In turn, Boris Schnaiderman, the most prominent translator of Russian literature in Brazil, once quoted Romain Rolland, who in the preface to the second edition of his study of Tolstoy's work wrote: "Tolstoy had

²⁰ «русская литература так популярна в испаноязычных странах не благодаря многочисленным переводам, а вопреки им: посредственные переводы настолько распространены, что это не может не сказаться на «качестве» восприятия произведений русских писателей» (121).

²¹ "las muchas veces malas traducciones de la literatura revolucionaria" (46).

²² "en ambos casos, la novela está traducida con poco esmero; los dos traductores son muy arbitrarios y descuidados en su labor: suprimen muchas páginas de texto y en muchos casos no transmiten correctamente el efecto deseado por el novelista ruso" (330-331).

²³ Nicolás Olivari was an Argentine poet, writer and journalist (1900-1966). Among his works are *La amada infiel* (1924), *La musa de la mala pata* (1926), and *El gato escaldado* (1929). He also translated many works of European theater and wrote several tangos. Jorge Luis Borges described Olivari as "el más indudable poeta de los que oigo. No creo en su talento: creo en su genialidad, que es cosa distinta" [the most indubitable poet of all who I hear today. I don't believe in his talent: I believe in his genius, which is different] ("Nicolás Olivari").

²⁴ "una colección de defectuosas traducciones de escritores rusos y otros autores de izquierda" (*Mito y realidad* 14-15).

to really be great to still appear as such, after all those atrocities”²⁵ – with “atrocities” referring to the so-called bad translations.

Such commentaries have already become a cliché. As early as 1932, George Portnoff²⁶ in *La literatura rusa en España*, had already pointed out:

All of these translations are very bad. The translator or translators turned words into English, but the spirit²⁷ of the work was left in the original. Neither in France, nor in Spain, even the mere integrity of the original text was respected. Halperine-Kaminsky, the principal translator of Dostoevsky in France, did whatever he liked with the writer’s work.²⁸

What makes Portnoff’s comment stand out from the rest is the fact that he does not simply criticize the process those translations underwent, but sees the result as the consequence of the untranslatability of the cultural specificity of language:

We have not seen a single good translation of these works. The flair of the language that depicts the characters of *Poor Folk*, etc., is untranslatable. To hope to produce

²⁵ “é preciso que Tolstoi seja bem grande para ainda parecê-lo, depois de todos esses ultrajes” (qtd. in Gomide, “Boris Schnaiderman” 42).

²⁶ George Portnoff is the author of *La literatura rusa en España* (1932). He was born in Kiev in 1892 and fled to Paris at the beginning of World War I. As part of the Tsar’s Army Reserve, he felt the obligation to return to Russia. This brought him to Barcelona, since Spain was the only way of getting to Russia. The ship he boarded towards Odessa was captured and the passengers kidnapped. Portnoff was sent back to Spain where later on he visited the Russian ambassador in Madrid, baron Mayendorff. The latter helped him get a position as a Russian-Spanish translator. After that, he became a Russian professor at *el Ateneo*. In 1924 Portnoff left for New York as a correspondent for Madrid’s *Sol* (Rodrigo 203-204).

²⁷ These words are very similar to the ideas that Walter Benjamin presents in “The Task of the Translator.” For him, translation is a form to which a translator must be true. Bad translators turn to transferring content into another language, leaving behind the poetry of the original, “the unfathomable, the mysterious, the ‘poetic’” (70). This poetry might be what Portnoff defines as the spirit.

²⁸ “Todas estas traducciones son muy malas. El traductor o los traductores han vertido al español las palabras; pero el espíritu de la obra se ha quedado en el original. Ni en Francia, ni en España respetaron siquiera la totalidad del texto original. Halperine-Kaminsky, principal traductor de Dostoyevsky en Francia, hacía de sus obras lo que le parecía” (40).

a faithful translation of these works is like seeking to translate the flair of Sancho Panza's language. It doesn't matter how much one feels the language into which he or she translates, there are things that cannot be transferred into a different language without losing their original beauty.²⁹

For Peter Kropotkin,³⁰ the notion of untranslatability is especially important when it comes to the translation of Russian literature, because of the unparalleled richness of the Russian language and, as a consequence, its unique capacity to express the slightest shades of meaning. He declares in his introduction to *Los ideales y la realidad en la literatura rusa*:

The richness of the Russian lexicon is astounding: when in the Western European languages there is no more than one word to express a certain concept, in Russian there are three or four equivalents rendering various shades of the same idea. It is especially rich for expressing various shades of human feelings – tenderness and

²⁹ “No hemos visto una sola traducción buena de estas obras. La gracia del idioma que retrata a los personajes de *Pobre gente*, etc., es intraducible. Querer hacer una fiel traducción de estas obras es como si se pretendiese traducir la gracia del lenguaje de Sancho Panza. Por mucho que se sienta el idioma al cual se traduce, hay cosas que no pueden verse sin que pierdan la belleza original” (Portnoff 42).

³⁰ Peter Kropotkin (1842–1921) was a Russian revolutionary and anarchist theorist. For him, an anarchic society is an association of equals which eliminates the need for any power and violence. It is built on voluntary cooperation based on help and solidarity. He did not believe in superficial revolutions that only passed power from one tyrant to another. He believed that a profound, ethical change in people's consciousness and a liquidation of the State was needed in order to create a healthy, well-functioning society with no violence and hatred. He denounced any dominion of one person over another. He is the author of *The Great French Revolution 1789-1793* (Великая французская революция 1789–1793), *Mutual Help Among Animals and People as a Motor of Progress* (Взаимная помощь среди животных и людей как двигатель прогресса), *Notes of a Revolutionary* (Записки революционера), *Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution* (Взаимопомощь как фактор эволюции), *The Conquest of Bread* (Хлеб и Воля). According to Cappelletti and Rama, Kropotkin's denouncement in his correspondence with Lenin played an important role in the formation of a critical re-evaluation of the Russian revolution in Argentina: “Hacia 1920 la mayoría de los anarquistas argentinos había tomado distancia frente al leninismo y comenzaba a comprender el rumbo autoritario de la revolución bolchevique, de acuerdo con las denuncias hechas por el propio Kropotkin en su correspondencia con Lenin” [Towards 1920 the majority of the anarchists in Argentina had distanced themselves from Leninism and started to discern the authoritarian leanings of the Bolshevik Revolution, in accordance with the denouncements made by Kropotkin himself in his correspondence with Lenin] (XXXV). Hence, the translation was able to smuggle into Latin America an ephemeral thought that was shortly to be persecuted and censored by Lenin: “Ya en 1921 había mandado Lenin secuestrar ciertas obras de Bakunin y Kropotkin, a las que con razón consideraba responsables de la oposición de izquierda dentro del propio partido bolchevique [Already in 1921 Lenin had ordered the seizure of some of Bakunin's and Kropotkin's works, which he rightly considered responsible for the Leftist opposition inside of the Bolshevik party itself” (XXXV).

love, sadness and happiness – as well as various degrees of the same action. Its pliability for translation is such that in no other language do we find an equal number of such beautiful, correct and truly poetical renderings of foreign authors. Poets of the most diverse character, such as Heine and Béranger, Longfellow and Schiller, Shelley and Goethe – to say nothing of that favorite with Russian translators, Shakespeare – are equally well translated into Russian.³¹

However, such pride in the language is subdued by Borges' essay, "Palabrería para versos," which begins with the sarcastic quotation of a phrase from the Real Academia Española that is very similar to Kropotkin's in tone: "The three (grammar, meter, and rhetoric) unite their efforts for our richest language to conserve its coveted treasure of colorful, joyful, and expressive voices; its palette of multiple colors, the most captivating, bright, and lively; and its melodic and harmonious rhythm, that brought the world to call it the beautiful language of Cervantes."³² In the continuation of his essay, Borges repudiates the idea of measuring the richness of a language by the number of words in its dictionary, and he goes on to discuss the Chinese conception of prefixes, which when added to a word impart to it a precision not attainable in other languages.³³ Borges' tone is simultaneously scientific and sarcastic.

The level of absurdity and arbitrariness that translation can reach is laid bare in Borges' words about his experience reading translations of Chinese literature:

³¹ "La riqueza de términos del idioma ruso es sorprendente: mientras que en las lenguas de la Europa Occidental no hay a menudo más que una sola palabra para expresar un concepto determinado, existen en la lengua rusa tres o cuatro equivalentes que ofrecen distintos matices del mismo concepto. El ruso es particularmente rico en expresiones que determinan diversos tonos de los sentimientos humanos – cariño y amor, tristeza y alegría – así como distintos grados de una misma acción. Su flexibilidad se evidencia espacialmente en las traducciones: en ningún idioma como en el ruso encontramos versiones de autores extranjeros tan hermosas, correctas y verdaderamente poéticas" (6).

³² "Unan todas tres (la gramática, la métrica y la retórica) sus generosos esfuerzos para que nuestra riquísima lengua conserve su envidiado tesoro de voces pintorescas, felices y expresivas, su paleta de múltiples colores, los más hechiceros, brillantes y vivos, y su melodioso y armónico ritmo, que le ha valido en el mundo el nombre de hermosa lengua de Cervantes" (*El tamaño de mi esperanza* 45).

³³ This is also applicable to the Russian language.

Somewhere around 1916, I decided to devote myself to the study of the Oriental languages. While looking, enthusiastically and naively, over an English version of a certain Chinese philosopher, I stumbled upon this remarkable passage: “A condemned to death person doesn’t care if he is standing on the edge of a cliff, for he has already renounced his life.” Here the translator put an asterisk, informing me that his interpretation was preferable to the one made by a rival Sinologist that had translated it in this way: “The servants destroy works of art, so that they don’t have to make judgements about their beauty and their defects.” Thus, like Paolo and Francesca, I stopped reading. A mysterious skepticism had sneaked into my soul.³⁴

The question of untranslatability built on similar skepticism has been discussed in such classic books on translation as George Steiner’s *After Babel*, John Catford’s *Linguistic Theory of Translation*, Gérard Genette’s *Palimpsests*, and Susan Bassnett’s *Translation Studies*, among many others. For Steiner, the notion “is rooted in religious and psychological doubts” (251). In the first case, it is due to the sacredness of the language, or its revelatory nature. The second is based on the idea of loss: “The vital energies, the luminosity and pressure of the original text have not only been diminished by translation; they have been made tawdry” (252). Maurice Blanchot, similarly to Walter Benjamin, argues that it is poetry, because of the indissoluble union of its form and content, which becomes unrenderable in a different language: “The work of poetry has a meaning whose structure is original and irreducible... The primary character of poetic meaning is that it is linked, without any possible change, to the language that makes it manifest” (qtd. in Genette 215). Unlike Blanchot, Genette sees any text (poetry or prose) as untranslatable:

³⁴ “Hacia 1916 decidí entregarme al estudio de las literaturas orientales. Al recorrer con entusiasmo y credulidad la versión inglesa de cierto filósofo chino, doy con este memorable pasaje: “A un condenado a muerte no le importa bordear un precipicio, porque ha renunciado a la vida”. En ese punto el traductor colocó un asterisco y me advirtió que su interpretación era preferible a la de otro sinólogo rival que traducía de esta manera: “Los sirvientes destruyen las obras de arte, para no tener que juzgar sus bellezas y sus defectos”. Entonces, como Paolo y Francesca, dejé de leer. Un misterioso escepticismo se había deslizado en mi alma” (*Textos cautivos* 279).

“It would be better, undoubtedly, to distinguish not between translatable texts (there are none) and untranslatable texts, but between those texts that are adversely affected by the inevitable flaws of translation (literary texts) and those that are unharmed by them: i.e. all the other texts” (215-216). Catford, in his turn, distinguishes between two types of untranslatability: linguistic (due to the lack of a lexical or syntactical substitute) and cultural (due to the absence of “a relevant situational feature”) (qtd. in *Translation Studies*, 32).

Bassnett calls “pessimists” all those philosophers, linguists, literary critics, writers, and translators for whom translation is intrinsically doomed to fail. Of course, Robert Frost also comes to mind: “I like to say, guardedly, that I could define poetry this way: It is that which is lost out of both prose and verse in translation” (7). Umberto Eco’s notorious definition of translation as “the art of failure” would confine him to the category of pessimists, where he would find himself next to Vladimir Nabokov, who, in “On Translating *Eugene Onegin*,” asks in the form of a poem what a translation is and answers: On a platter / A poet’s pale and glaring head, / A parrot’s screech, a monkey’s chatter / And profanation of the dead (“On Translating Eugene Onegin” 34). José Ortega y Gasset would take an intermediary place between translation pessimists and optimists. Although in his essay “The Misery and the Splendor of Translation,” he defines translation as a utopian enterprise (though only as utopian as anything else done by a human being), he also notes that translation can “force the reader from his linguistic habits and oblige him to move within those of the author” (60). For Walter Benjamin, on the contrary, translation is not only possible, but necessary, for it guarantees the original’s survival: “For a translation

comes later than the original, and since the important works of world literature never find their chosen translators at the time of their origin, their translation marks their stage of continuous life” (1).

However, the whole question of (un)translatability gets dissolved together with the dissolution of the original-versus-translation and the author-versus-translator dichotomies. As Michael Hanne describes it, with “[t]he conceptual somersaults of post-structuralist theory”³⁵ and a “thorough-going skepticism over the concepts of *the author*, *originality*, *creativity*, and *singleness* and *presence of meaning*, comes a breakdown in the traditional dichotomy of ‘author’ versus ‘translator.’ The translator is as much (or as little) an original, creative writer as the author” (219). The dissolution of the dichotomies comes with the realization that the original is always a translation and that translation is always original. The original cannot but itself be a translation because any text, as Gérard Genette points out, is a hypertext (9) and any writing is always a rewriting. Yet, since any translation is always an act of creation, it must be an original. This question of original versus translation is part of a more general rethinking of the question of originality today, in an age when

³⁵ One of the post-structuralists, Michel Foucault, for example, says about originality: “It is not legitimate, then, to demand, point-blank, of the texts that one is studying their title to originality, and whether they really possess those degrees of nobility that are measured here by the absence of ancestors. [...] to seek in the great accumulation of the already-said the text that resembles ‘in advance’ a later text, to ransack history in order to rediscover the play of anticipations or echoes, to go right back to the first seeds or to go forward to the last traces, to reveal in a work its fidelity to tradition or its irreducible uniqueness, to raise or lower its stock of originality, to say that Port-Royal grammarians invented nothing, or to discover that Cuvier had more predecessors that one thought, these are harmless enough amusements for historians who refuse to grow up” (*The Archaeology of Knowledge* 144). For more on the question of originality, antecedents, and chronological hierarchies, see Chapter 2, titled “The Original and the Regular,” of *The Archaeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language*: 141-148, in which Foucault, for example, says, as if alluding to Borges’ “Pierre Menard, el autor del Quijote”: “What is identity, partial or total, in the order of discourse? The fact that two enunciations are exactly identical, that they are made up of the same words used with the same meaning, does not, as we know, mean that they are absolutely identical” (143).

“everything is a remix,” as Kirby Ferguson shows us in his documentary by the same name.³⁶ Hence, in Leónidas Lamborghini’s³⁷ *Odiseo confinado*³⁸ a poet can be made to

³⁶ More on the question of originality (or its nonexistence) and plagiarism as a basic element of the development of our culture and society in NPR’s Ted Radio Hour “What Is Original?”

³⁷ Leónidas Lamborghini (1927-2009) was a prolific Argentine poet, writer and journalist. He published 25 books of poems, three novels, and numerous essays about parody and the literature of the *gauchos*. Among his works are *Saboteador arrepentido*, *Episodios*, *Circus*, *Verme y 11 reescrituras de Discépolo*, *Odiseo confinado*, *Tragedias y parodias I*, *Las reescrituras*, *La risa canalla*, *Encontrados en la basura*, and *El jugador, el juego*. In his writings, we hear echoes of the world classics, the tangos of Discépolo, Lewis Carroll, and voices from *gaucho* literature and from the streets. Daniel Ares calls him “[m]ezcla rara de gaucho matrero y tanguero immaculado” [a strange mix of a sly *gaucho* with an immaculate tango dancer] (“El hombre que ríe”). In that, Ricardo Piglia sees the legacy of Roberto Arlt: “Todos admiramos a Leónidas Lamborghini y todos lo hemos copiado. Leónidas definió una exigencia en relación con la lengua que es única en nuestra literatura: construyó un laboratorio arltiano para trabajar con la sintaxis, el fraseo y la música verbal de estas provincias” [We all admire Leonidas Lamborghini and we all copied from him. Leonidas defined a standard in terms of language which is unique in our literature: he built an Arltian laboratory to work with the syntax, the phrasing and the verbal music of these regions] (qtd. in Ares). “Take in the distortion and return it multiplied” (qtd. in Cella) was one of the principles of Lamborghini’s work. It is precisely “rewriting” as an axis of his writing that brings him into the dialogue of literatures that I give space to in my dissertation. Moreover, his approach to parody as both a creative process and a creation helps to support and develop my argument, as it points to the enormous fruits produced from the small seeds planted by translations of Russian literature. To work with parody, he turns to the literature of the *gauchos*: “Yo intenté, entonces, una ruptura desde la tradición de la gauchesca, considerando como elemento esencial de ésta esa “risa paisana” que le da su sello y que, tal como uno la leía en esas obras, no era simplemente humor, sino que, como la risa de la que estamos hablando, era responder a la distorsión con una distorsión multiplicada: “tanto dolor que hace reír”, dice Discépolo” (qtd. in Zapata) [I tried then to turn to the *gauchesca* literature in order to initiate a break, taking as its essential element that signature “peasant laugh,” which, as one reads it in this type of works, was not just humor, but, as that laugh that we are talking about, was a response to the distortion with a multiplied distortion: “so painful that it hurts,” says Discépolo]. This response to a distortion with a multiplied distortion is also essential for understanding parody as a reaction to the translations of Russian literature. In one of the interviews made by Silvina Frieria, Lamborghini quotes Martínez Estrada, who said that Argentines are tragic through parody (“los argentinos somos trágicos a través de la parodia”). He then juxtaposes two famous quotes: “podría decirse con Nietzsche que “cuando empieza la parodia empieza la tragedia”. Y con Marx, que “la historia se da primero como tragedia y luego se repite como parodia” [we could say with Nietzsche that “when the parody starts, there starts the tragedy. And with Marx that “history first comes into being as tragedy and then it repeats as parody] (Ares, “Entre la reescritura y la parodia”). He also points out that parody reveals the imperfections of the model. The model is trying to come off as perfect, but the parody shows its imperfections. That is why his poetry, with parody at its base, helps me develop my argument throughout my dissertation. Translation gives space for parody, the same way parody gives way to more parody. All this lies foundation for the main argument of my dissertation.

³⁸ The title of the book reflects both the condition of a Latin American writer confined to an endless space made of fragments of other cultures and literatures, for example, Julio Cortázar’s *La vuelta al día en ochenta mundos*, or Roberto González Echevarría’s *Alejo Carpentier, the Pilgrim at Home*, and the condition of an immigrant, as described by the narrator of Ricardo Piglia’s *Respiración artificial*: “Fijese en mí, le digo ahora. Vine a este pueblo hace más de treinta años y desde entonces estoy de paso. Estoy siempre de paso, soy lo que se dice un ave de paso, sólo que permanezco siempre en el mismo lugar. Permanezco siempre en el mismo lugar *pero* estoy de paso, le digo. Así somos, él y yo, tal vez le sirva, le digo a Renzi, tipos sin arraigo, gente anacrónica, los últimos sobrevivientes de una estirpe en disolución”

believe that he wrote a poem which in fact he did not write, and which he is reading and not reading at the same time, for it is at the same time another poem:

And yet,
how cruelly punished
is the poet when they make him believe
that he wrote a poem that, maybe
(be there no maybe?),
he didn't write;
or he did, but to his eyes
and to his reason, he did not write;
or cannot,
being convinced,
just read it and
be sure that he's reading,
nor that he, in fact,
is reading.³⁹

(*Respiración artificial* 112) [Look at me, I say to him now. I came to this town more than thirty years ago and ever since I have been passing through. I am always passing through, I am what they call a migratory bird, only I always stay in the same place. I always stay in the same place *but* I am passing through, I say to him. That's how the two of us are, [...] rootless fellows, anachronistic people, the last survivors of a dying race (*Artificial Respiration* 112)]. Bruno Gomide, in his book «Давыд Выгодский: Литературный критик» (“David Vigodsky: A Literary Critic”), puts Vigodsky together with Machado de Assis in a similar way, in a category of writers and literary critics who without leaving their country or sometimes even their native town, “travel around their own room, imbibing elements of foreign cultures” («Выгодский, как и Машаду де Ассис – один из тех литераторов, которые, никогда не выезжая из своей страны, а иногда даже из родного города, "путешествуют вокруг своей комнаты", с жадностью впитывая в себя элементы чужих культур»). In his article “David Vygódski e o ‘Tartarin de Lisboa’”, Bruno Gomide calls him “um grande viajante que nunca viajou” (120) [a great traveler who never traveled] and says that his “viagens literárias substituíram as físicas: suas resenhas, sobretudo as primeiras, conferem atenção especial a narrativas marcadas por aventuras, fugas e deslocamentos inesperados” (120) [literary travels substituted the physical ones: his reviews, especially the early ones, give special attention to narratives marked by unexpected adventures and displacements].

³⁹ Y, sin embargo,
cruel castigo cuando creer
le hacen al poeta
que un poema escribió que, tal vez,
o, sin tal vez, no escribió;
o que escribió, pero a sus ojos,
a su intelecto, como si no lo hubiera
escrito; o que no pueda,
convencido,
leerlo seguro de que lo está leyendo
o que lo está, en verdad,
leyendo. (220)

For Borges, it is translation that reveals the “recycled” or “palimpsestic” nature of writing: the supposedly raw material of any writing is written texts, pronounced speeches, used words.⁴⁰ This idea transpires in his *Poema de los dones*:

Which of us two is writing now these lines
About a plural I and a single gloom?
What does it matter what word is my name
If the curse is indivisibly the same?

Groussac or Borges, I gaze at this beloved
World that grows more shapeless, and its light
Dies down into a pale, uncertain ash
Resembling sleep and the oblivion of night.⁴¹
(*Dreamtigers* 56)

The two poems, Borges’ and Lamborghini’s, doubt the originality of the act of writing. But Lamborghini’s poem also puts into question the very act of reading, and not in vain, since, as George Steiner tells us, reading or seeing a work of art is also an act of translation:

Where the most thorough possible interpretation occurs, where our sensibility

⁴⁰ See “Las versiones homéricas” in Jorge Luis Borges, *Discusión* and Bernal Herrera, *Arlt, Borges y Cia.: Narrativa rioplatense de vanguardia*.

⁴¹ “¿Cuál de los dos escribe este poema / de un yo plural y de una sola sombra? / ¿Qué importa la palabra que me nombra / si es indiviso y uno el anatema? // Groussac o Borges, miro este querido / mundo que se deforma y que se apaga / en una pálida ceniza vaga / que se parece al sueño y al olvido” (*Poesía completa* 112). This poem in turn preserves clear traces of Macedonio’s ideas: “I think I resemble Poe very strongly, although recently I have begun to imitate him a little; I believe that I am another Poe.... It is not a resemblance, it is – who knows? – a reappearance. As I wrote the poem “Elena Bellamuerte” I felt I was Poe in sentiment and nevertheless the text does not show any literary similarity” (qtd. in Engelbert 166). Actually, through Macedonio’s games in writing, “[s]e crea un espacio donde la posibilidad de un autor individual es negada y sustituida por una escritura sin autores, un continuo que se realiza en forma colectiva. Ese continuo literario no está sujeto al tiempo y al espacio del resto de los fenómenos. Se da de una manera distinta. Desaparece el autor único. El escribir se torna una ocupación sin identidades, realizada en una dimensión diferente, en un gigantesco espacio formado por los libros que el escritor lee al ofrecer su propia obra. Es el sueño de la ausencia de autores que reaparece tantas veces en la obra de Borges” (Borinsky, *Macedonio Fernández y la teoría crítica* 118) [a space is created where the possibility of an individual writer is denied and substituted with an author-less writing, a continuum that is carried out collectively. This literary continuum is not subject to the time or the space of the rest of the phenomena. It occurs in a different way. The singular writer disappears. The act of writing becomes an activity with no identities, carried out in a different dimension, in a gigantic space formed by the books that the writer reads when he offers his own work. It is this dream of the absence of authors that keeps reappearing time and again in Borges’ work]. I point to this connection between Borges, Macedonio, writing as rewriting, and translation since it will become central to my argument in the chapters that follow.

appropriates its object while, in this appropriation, guarding, quickening that object's autonomous life, the process is one of 'original repetition.' We re-enact, in the bounds of our own secondary but momentarily heightened, educated consciousness, the creation by the artist. We retrace, both in the image of a man drawing and of one following an uncertain path, the coming into form of the poem. (*After Babel* 27)

The originality of the original is called into question not only because a text cannot be but made of other texts, but also because a language in itself cannot be but a translation. That is why Octavio Paz sees a literary text simultaneously as a unique text and as a translation: "no text is entirely original because language itself, in its essence, is already a translation: firstly, of the non-verbal world and secondly, since every sign and every phrase is the translation of another sign and another phrase"⁴² (qtd. in *Translation Studies*, 38). Merrill, in her cleverly titled essay "The Death of the Authors a.k.a. Twilight of the Translators," complements this idea: "once a word has been uttered, written, or otherwise made manifest, it has already become a translation, has already been incorporated into the world's Babel" (140). Learning to speak a language is learning to translate.⁴³

Thus, coming back to the question of un/translatibility, we either have to agree that translation is possible or accept the defeat inherent in any undertaking involving words. Alternatively, knowing translation's impossibility, we can turn to celebrating every act of

⁴² The translation is taken from Susan Bassnett's *Translation Studies*. The original article says: "En un extremo el mundo se nos presenta como una colección de heterogeneidades; en el otro, como una superposición de textos, cada uno ligeramente distinto al anterior: traducciones de traducciones de traducciones. Cada texto es único y, simultáneamente, es la traducción de otro texto. Ningún texto es enteramente original, porque el lenguaje mismo, en su esencia, es ya una traducción: primero, del mundo no verbal y, después, porque cada signo y cada frase es la traducción de otro signo y de otra frase. Pero ese razonamiento puede invertirse sin perder validez: todos los textos son originales porque cada traducción es distinta. Cada traducción es, hasta cierto punto, una invención y así constituye un texto único" (Paz, *Traducción: literatura y literalidad*).

⁴³ Octavio Paz, "Aprender a hablar es aprender a traducir" in *Traducción: literatura y literalidad*.

creation that it produces. José Ortega y Gasset has already underlined that “to emphasize its impossibility is very far from depriving the occupation of translating of meaning, for no one would even think of considering it absurd to speak to each other in our mother tongue yet, nevertheless, that is also a utopian exercise” (“The Misery and the Splendor” 54).

If there is a concern of something always being lost in literary translation, the same concern should then arise when it comes to translating our internal world into the external one, and this act should also be condemned as impossible or doomed to betray its original.

Edith Grossman notes in her book, *Why Translation Matters*:

If writing literature is a transfer or transportation of internal experience and imaginative states into the external world, then even when authors and readers speak the same language, writers are obliged to translate, to engage in the immense, utopian effort to transform the images and ideas flowing through their most intimate spaces into material, legible terms to which readers have access. And if this is so, the doubts and paradoxical questions that pursue translators must also arise for authors: Is their text an inevitable betrayal of the imagination and the creative impulse? Is what they do even possible? (77)

Following this logic, there should be a concern about untranslatability and loss not only in an artistic manifestation, but any time we try to materialize our internal world or to understand and interpret anything that is communicated to us. In this vein, Alastair Reid underlines in his poem “Lo Que Se Pierde / What Gets Lost” that what we fear to lose in translation also runs a risk of being lost in any writing or in any activity that implies using language:

poco a poco me ocurre
que el problema the problem no es cuestión
de lo que se pierde en traducción
sino but rather lo que se pierde
what gets lost
entre la ocurrencia – sea de amor o de desesperación
between love or desperation –

el hecho de que llega
a existir en palabras
and its coming into words.
Para nosotros todos, amantes, habladores
as lovers or users of words
el problema es éste this is the difficulty.
Lo que se pierde what gets lost
no es lo que se pierde en traducción sino
is not what gets lost in translation, but rather
what gets lost in language itself lo que se pierde
en el hecho, en la lengua,
en la palabra misma.
(qtd. in *Why Language Matters*, 118)

With each act of translation being a creation, the same way the originality of the original is questioned, the secondary nature of a translation can be doubted too. For Borges, any translation is a new draft of the preceding work (qtd. in Barcia 22), which only by a trivial and fortuitous chance ends up being a translation, and not the original. On one occasion he says that the original ended up being unfaithful⁴⁴ to the translation.⁴⁵ In *Fervor de Buenos Aires*, Borges announces to his reader that it is similarly “trivial and fortuitous circumstance that you are the reader of these exercises, and I their writer.”⁴⁶ In the same way, Octavio Paz says that the argument, that any text is a translation of a translation of a translation, can be turned on its head: “all texts are original because every translation is distinctive. Every translation, up to a certain point, is an invention and as such it constitutes

⁴⁴ Theo Hermans negates any possibility of faithful translation due to the very nature of discourse: “Translation operates first of all under the constraint of the original, itself the product of constraints belonging to a certain time. Second, the language changes, quite dramatically. Third, the universe of discourse very often poses insuperable problems for any kind of so-called ‘faithful’ translation. Universe of discourse features particular to a given culture, and they are, almost by definition, untranslatable or a least very hard to translate” (235).

⁴⁵ *Obras completas II*. Barcelona: Emecé, 1989.

⁴⁶ “es trivial y fortuita la circunstancia de que seas tú el lector de estos ejercicios, y yo su redactor” (*Poesía completa* 17).

a unique text” (qtd. in *Translation Studies* 38). For Bassnett herself, the author-translator dichotomy vanishes with the “death of the author”: “The notion of the death of the author must inevitably lead to the death of the original, and once the original ceases to be, the translation can no longer be perceived as subsidiary to it and the translator is released from thrall to the all-powerful source” (“The Meek or the Mighty” 13). And Roland Barthes himself confirms⁴⁷ that with the death of the author writing becomes “the destruction of every voice, every origin. Writing is that neuter, that composite, that obliquity into which our subject flees, the black-and-white where all identity is lost, beginning with the very identity of the body that writes” (qtd. in Merrill 139-140). Not satisfied with the repetition of the “empty affirmation that the author has disappeared” (“What is an Author” 209) that does not bring a real change in the reduction of the “great peril, the great danger with which fiction threatens our world” (221), Michel Foucault insists on locating “the space left empty by the author’s disappearance, follow[ing] the distribution of gaps and breaches, and watch[ing] for the openings this disappearance uncovers” (“What is an Author” 209). Seeing an author as an impediment for a free circulation of knowledge, we must seize the moment of his disappearance to reappropriate the discourse that his name captured and took out of circulation and bring it back to the space of “the free manipulation, the free composition, decomposition, and recomposition of fiction” (“What is an Author” 221). As the next chapters will demonstrate, translations and especially mediated translations, stripping, in a sense, fictions and discourses of their author, made Foucault’s proposition possible in Latin America almost half a century before his essay was written. The very idea

⁴⁷Using the verb “confirm,” I follow Borges’ idea that posterior works can influence their predecessors.

of a translated or retranslated text, desacralizes even works by the great Russian geniuses, permitting the manipulation, decomposition and recomposition of fiction (of a work and of the whole idea of the author).

If most of the aforementioned writers and scholars separate the original and the translation as two autonomous entities, Benjamin's view in "The Task of the Translator" stands out from the rest, as Benjamin does not deny a translation's derivation from the original. However, this does not give the original a predominant role; rather the relationship between the two is one of interdependence, since the original work completes itself through translation, or as Derrida describes it:

a translation weds the original when the two adjoined fragments, as different as they can be, complete each other so as to form a larger tongue in the course of a survival that changes them both. [...] Benjamin says as much: in the translation the original becomes larger, it grows rather than reproduces itself – and I will add: like a child, its own, no doubt, but with the power to speak on its own, which makes of a child something other than a product subject to the law of reproduction. (213)

The blurred dichotomies of translations, originals, writers and translators, in their turn blur the very possibility of defining translation, a problem that, according to Susan Bassnett, has always existed. In her aptly titled essay, "When is Translation Not a Translation," she turns her attention to such genres as pseudo-translation, self-translation, and fictitious translations, thus highlighting our inability to say what translation is (*Constructing Cultures* 39).

It is from this undefinable, autonomous space, this intermediary zone between

Genette's notion of a text, inevitably rooted in other texts, and Borges' understanding of translation as a genre in its own right,⁴⁸ that we watch the traditional, clearly delimited notions of *the original* and *the translation* overflow their borders, making the comparison of translations with their originals – for the mere sake of comparison – a futile task.

Although a close analysis of early translations from Russian into Spanish does constitute a substantial part of this research, it is not an objective in itself, but rather a first step in tracing the path that Russian literature took in Latin America. This research participates in a collective attempt to grant visibility to translation, but it does not do so in order to punish the first translators for their “crímenes⁴⁹ sin castigo.” Why punish for the violence which, as Lawrence Venuti skillfully argues in his book *The Translator's Invisibility*,⁵⁰ is inherent to the very notion of translation?:

a translator is forced not only to eliminate aspects of the signifying chain that constitutes the foreign text, starting with its graphematic and acoustic features, but also to dismantle and disarrange that chain in accordance with the structural

⁴⁸ For José Ortega y Gasset, translation is also “a literary genre apart, different from the rest, with its own norms and own ends” (61). Edith Grossman, in her book *Why Translation Matters*, suggests that seeing translation as its own genre might help critics to find the proper vocabulary to evaluate it: “It has been suggested to me [...] that translation may well be an entirely separate genre, independent of poetry, fiction, or drama, and that the next great push in literary studies should probably be to conceptualize and formulate the missing critical vocabulary. That is to say, it is certainly possible that translations may tend to be overlooked or even disparaged by reviewers, critics, and editors because they simply do not know what to make of them, in theory or in actuality” (47).

⁴⁹ The word “crimes” here echoes both Boris Schnaideirman’s way of referring to the work of many early translators as an “atividade criminosa” (“criminal activity”) (qtd. in Gomide, “Boris Schnaiderman” 42), and the title of this dissertation’s first chapter, “Translation and Other “crímenes sin castigo”: Russian Literature in the Hands of the Argentine Avant-Garde.”

⁵⁰ Along with Lawrence Venuti, Anuradna Dingwaney also talks about the violence implied in the process of translation: “Before translation can be defined as an enabling means (and methodology) for discussing cross-cultural “Third-World” texts, one must examine its potential pitfalls—the “violence,” for instance, with which most self-conscious and thoughtful theorists and practitioners of translation associate it” (Dingwaney & Maier 3-4).

differences between languages, so that both the foreign text and its relations to other texts in the foreign culture never remain intact after the translation process. (14)

The violence that a translation process implies also permeates Boris Slutsky's poetic description of translation:

While translating verse
You crash through a wall
And with a bloody face
You are suddenly on the stage
Lit up by thousands of watts
Facing thousands of eyes
After having made your way
Through the brick, like a stream.
(qtd. in *The Translator as Writer* 216)

Derrida reiterates this idea in his famous essay on translation, "Des tours de Babel":

Difference is never pure, no more so is translation, and for the notion of translation we would have to substitute a notion of *transformation*: a regulated transformation of one language by another, of one text by another. We will never have, and in fact have never had, to do with some 'transport' of pure signifiers from one language to another, or within one and the same language, that the signifying instrument would leave virgin and untouched. (qtd. in "The Meek or the Mighty" 11-12)

Antoine Berman, in his turn, remembers that for Hölderlin, "translating first and foremost means liberating the violence repressed in the work through a series of intensifications in the translating language – in other words, accentuating its strangeness. Paradoxically, this accentuation is only a way of giving us access to it" (284-285). Berman himself thinks that "[t]here is a tinge of the violence of cross-breeding in translation. Herder was well aware of this when he compared a language that has not yet been translated to a young virgin"

(qtd. in Faull 17). The term “cross-breeding” applied to the interaction of two languages calls forth the concept of transculturation coined by Fernando Ortiz, who, in fact, viewed any interaction between two cultures as a violent act.

Instead of punishing those supposedly bad translators of Russian literature into Spanish or merely criticizing their work, this research aspires for translation to be recognized “as an art to be celebrated, not concealed” (2), as Susan Bassnett and Peter Bush say in their Introduction to *The Translator as Writer*. In his contribution to this book, Bush explicitly states that he prefers “the mess of reality” to invisibility and silence (*The Translator as Writer* 23). For him, making translation visible is a way of protecting both the art itself and its practitioners: “As the translator uses the most common currency of words, like any writer, he or she is fair game to be shot down by any user of language. Breaking the silence that mystifies the art is perhaps the best form of self-defense for a profession that has for too long worn the hair shirt of modesty wished upon it by those who exploit the fruits of its alchemy” (*The Translator as Writer* 32).

Schleiermacher is considered to be one of the first translation theorists to propose keeping traces of the original in its translation, a concept that has been coined as “foreignizing”. Along with giving translation visibility, the foreignness of a text “makes the reader of the translated text [...] constantly aware of the foreign and encourages the reader to take [...] pleasure in its otherness” (Faull 16).

Interestingly enough, although for Walter Benjamin a real translation must be transparent (3), his statement at the same time points to the need for translation’s visibility. For Benjamin, translation should not obstruct the original but rather must shine a light upon

it, thereby reinforcing its power: “A real translation is transparent; it does not cover the original, does not black its light, but allows the pure language, as though reinforced by its own medium to shine upon the original all the more fully” (3). Recognizing that “translation enlists the foreign text in the maintenance or revision of literary canons in the receiving culture” (Venuti 14), and that “the study of translation, especially in its diachronic aspect, is a vital part of literary and cultural history” (*Translation Studies* 40), we must make translation visible and accept those “bad translations” of Russian literature as part of Argentine literature, tracing their imprint on its culture in order to draw a fuller picture of their development.

II Translation and/against/of Tradition

Translation has always been seen as a way of renewing a language. Katherine Faulk confirms this idea in her introduction to a collection of essays entitled *Translation and Culture*: “From Cicero to Diderot translation was seen as the way to enrich one’s own language and culture with little or no regard for fidelity to the original.” According to Walter Benjamin, “[w]hile a poet’s words endure in his own language, even the greatest translation is destined to become part of the growth of its own language and eventually to be absorbed by its renewal” (2). He insists that a translator should let the language into which he translates be expanded and deepened by means of the foreign tongue. Edith Grossman agrees, stating that “[t]he impact of the kind of artistic discovery that translation enables is profoundly important to the health and vitality of any language and any literature” (17). When George Steiner talks about the translation of poetry in *The Penguin*

Book of Modern Verse Translation, he underlines its unique role in developing the language of the translator: “poetic translation plays a unique role inside the translator’s own speech. [...] It compels us to realize that there are raw materials we lack, stocks of feeling, instruments of expression. [...] Poetic translation enriches by what it reveals of our poverties” (27-28).

According to Bassnett, already in the first century AD, Quintilian in his *Institutio Oratoria* (The Institute of Oratory) employed the translation of Greek texts as a tool for Latin orators to improve their style and develop their language. Quintilian advocated paraphrasing as well as translation from Greek into Latin, “in order to extend and develop the student’s imaginative powers” (*Translation Studies* 51-52). In general, in Classical antiquity it was common for writers to imitate, paraphrase, copy, and translate their distinguished predecessors. Unlike today, this was not considered plagiarism but rather a way for writers to enrich their texts.

Later, from the tenth century onwards, translation also participated in the creation of vernacular languages:

As emerging literatures with little or no written tradition of their own to draw upon developed across Europe, works produced in other cultural contexts were translated, adapted and absorbed on a vast scale. Translation acquired an additional dimension, as writers used their abilities to translate as a means of increasing the status of enrichment through translation developed in a new form. (Bassnett, *Translation Studies* 52)

Etienne Dolet confirms this in *La manière de bien traduire d’une langue en aultre*.

In his five rules for good translation, published in 1540, he insisted that modern languages should enjoy the same rights as the ancient ones, despite authorities' belief in the absolute supremacy of the Latin or Greek 'originals.' In his five rules of translation Dolet clearly and effectively proposes "a notion of translation as a vital element in the creation of a national culture" ("The Meek or the Mighty" 14-15).

Thus, translation plays a fundamental role in the enrichment of a literary system and culture. As Ezra Pound notes, English literature "lives on translation, it is fed by translation; every new exuberance, every new heave is stimulated by translation, every allegedly great age is an age of translations" (qtd. in *Novas* 316). A discussion of the poet's own writing also centers translation: "[t]he whole of Pound's writing may be seen as an act of translation, as the appropriation to an idiom radically his own of a fantastic ragbag of languages, cultural legacies, historical echoes, stylistic models" (*The Penguin Book* 32). Argentine writer, journalist, and film-maker Edgardo Cozarinsky describes writing his *Vudú urbano* first in the English of a foreigner and then translating it into Spanish. As he explains, he did so in order to erase the notion of the original and incorporate into the translated language those new word combinations and ways of expressing an idea that a translation process creates, to the point of the original itself turning into translation (139). One of the first scholars to defend the idea of translation as a tool for literary renewal was Evan-Zohar in "The Position of Translated Literature within the Literary Polysystem," presented at the 1976 Leuven seminar. According to the article, translation may become "one of the means of elaborating the new repertoire" (47) by helping to introduce new features such as new poetic language, compositional patterns, and

techniques.

Keeping in mind the power that translation can exercise in renewing language and building culture, I now turn to the translation of Russian literature in Latin America, and specifically, in Argentina, where we see “translators, as much as creative writers and politicians, participat[ing] in the powerful acts that create knowledge and shape culture” (Tymoczko and Gentzler qtd. in Bassnett “Introduction”). I focus on the first three decades of the 20th century, a time period when translation, as Lawrence Venuti describes it in his *Translation Studies Reader*, was treated

as a creative force in which specific translation strategies might serve a variety of cultural and social functions, building languages, literatures, and nations. At the start of the twentieth century, these ideas are rethought from the vantage point of modernist movements which prize experiments with literary form as a way of revitalizing culture. Translation is a focus of theoretical speculation and formal innovation. (11)

It is also important to keep in mind that at the beginning of the twentieth century two major tendencies were shaping translation theory and practice: formalist inclinations would lead translation to innovative strategies reflecting new ways of interpreting foreign literature; at the same time, a strict functionalism of translation served certain cultural and political agendas.⁵¹

This is clearly the case with the translation of Russian literature in Argentina that found itself at the center of the Boedo-Florida polemics. To use Evan-Zohar’s terms, the

⁵¹ Lawrence Venuti, *Translation Studies Reader*: 11.

case of Russian literature translation in Argentina presents a “highly interesting paradox” (49), since “translation, by which new ideas, items, characteristics can be introduced into a literature, becomes a means to preserve traditional taste” (49). And the paradox is even more curious in that the literature that was translated was indeed innovative in the place of its origin. The next chapter examines how Russian literature, in a passive and conservative way, still managed to play an active role in the construction of Argentine literature.

III. Russian Literature Translations and their Battle against Epistemological Colonialism⁵²

⁵² I originally borrowed the term “epistemological colonialism” from Alejandro Ariel González, who in Fontán’s article, “Ponerse la camiseta para traducir ruso,” calls the phenomenon “colonialismo académico y epistemológico” [academic and epistemological colonialism]. Although the term is not universal across disciplines and geographic areas, the idea of epistemological or epistemic colonialism and of the fight against it has been part of Postcolonial studies. It has been called “intellectual colonialism” (Spivak), “mental colonialism” (Else Ribeiro Pires Vieira), “cultural hegemony” (Gramsci), “colonial situations” and “geopolitics of knowledge” (Grosfoguel), “coloniality of power” (Quijano), “colonialidad del saber [coloniality of knowledge]” (Lander), “the geo- and body-politics of knowing” (Mignolo), etc. The fight against such colonialism has been termed “decolonization,” “Tricontinentalism” (Young 2001), the “decolonial turn” (Maldonad-Torres), “epistemic delinking,” “border thinking” or “border gnosis” (Mignolo), “decolonization of the mind” (Thiongo), etc. It can be argued that all of these terms share a common root – Franz Fanon’s *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961), the “Bible of decolonization” (Hall qtd. in Homi Bhabha XVI), in which Fanon summons the so-called Third World to recognize Europe’s heinous crimes and to turn away from it in order to construct their own models and build their own history for a new man. Fanon’s work in its turn has been in part shaped by Albert Mammi’s *The Colonizer and the Colonized* (1957), in which the author, as the title suggests, focuses on each of the two major participants in colonization and their interrelations. He argues that the image that the colonizer constructs of the colonized helps to legitimize the former’s privileged position, and that education is a tool that helps to perpetuate this image and power, as well as “to educate” a more productive servant. Jean-Paul Sartre wrote prefaces to both of the seminal works, and in 1963 he published his own work, titled *Colonialism and Neocolonialism*, in which he analyzes and criticizes French colonialism and links postcolonial studies and anti-colonial movements. Edward Said also played an important role in the development of Post-colonial studies, questioning the way the West constructed its image of the East in *Orientalism* (1978), then expanding his study to the West’s relationships with other parts of the world in *Culture and Imperialism* (1993). Mignolo insists on separating the question of coloniality in Latin America from the Post-colonial field. For him, the idea of colonized knowledge emerged in the mid-seventies, and it was Aníbal Quijano’s formulation that built the foundation for subsequent research by introducing the term ‘coloniality’ and linking economic and political coloniality to the coloniality of knowledge in his 1989 article, “Colonialidad y modernidad-racionalidad.” This term led to the development of the idea of “de-coloniality.” For Mignoli, de-coloniality markedly diverged from post-colonial studies, in that the former is “a project of de-linking while post-colonial criticism and theory is a project of scholarly transformation within the academy” (452). The

In the 1920s and 30s, more than a century after Argentina proclaimed its independence from Spain, language remained a persistent umbilical cord confirming the country's visible and audible dependence. At the end of the thirties and the beginning of the forties of the nineteenth century, the first attempts to cut that cord were made, when in 1841, while in Chile, Sarmiento started to write about the dream and necessity of creating Latin American grammar and norms independent from the Castilian.⁵³ At the beginning of the twentieth century, the idea of cultural and linguistic independence⁵⁴ still constituted one of the axes of cultural and literary production in Argentina. The journal *Martín Fierro*, founded in 1919 by a group of anarchists and continued in 1924 by a group of writers, artists, and intellectuals, chose the following lines from José Hernández's *Martín Fierro*

former deals with the realm of culture, while the latter stems from development and underdevelopment theories and the theory of world-systems (Bhambra). See Bhambra for a detailed analysis of the points of convergence and divergence between postcolonial studies and de-coloniality. Ashcroft, Griffith, and Tiffin, the authors of *The Empire Writes Back*, do not draw this distinction; for them the term "post-colonial" can be applied to "all the culture affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonialization to the present day. This is because there is a continuity of preoccupations throughout the historical process initiated by European imperial aggression" (2). See Ashcroft, Griffith and Tiffin for an at-length discussion of the term "post-colonial" and an exhaustive examination of the development of the field of post-colonial studies. Major works on the questions of colonialism, neocolonialism, postcolonialism, and decolonization that inform my research include Robert Young's *Empire, Colony, Postcolony* and *Postcolonialism: an historical introduction*; Edward Said's *Culture and Imperialism*; Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin's *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures*; Aníbal Quijano's *Imperialismo y "marginalidad" en América Latina*; Walter Mignolo's *Local Histories/Global Designs: Coloniality, Subaltern Knowledges, and Border Thinking*; Tlostanova and Mignolo's *Learning to Unlearn: Decolonial Reflections from Eurasia and the Americas*.

⁵³ "Una vez dejaremos de consultar a los gramáticos españoles para formular la gramática hispanoamericana y este paso de la emancipación del espíritu y del idioma requiere la concurrencia, asimilación y contacto de todos los interesados en él" (qtd. in Alfón 62) [One day we won't consult Spanish grammarians anymore to formulate the Hispano-American grammar and this step of the emancipation of the spirit and the language requires concurrence, assimilation, and the convergence of everyone interested in doing it]. See Fernando Alfón, "Los orígenes de las querellas sobre la lengua en Argentina" in *Beligerancia de los idiomas: un siglo y medio de discusión sobre la lengua latinoamericana*, pp. 61-76.

⁵⁴ Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin in their Introduction to *The Empire Writes Back* in the section discussing the development of post-colonial literatures note: "The development of independent literatures depended upon the abrogation of this constraining power and the appropriation of language and writing for new and distinctive usages. Such an appropriation is clearly the most significant feature in the emergence of modern post-colonial literatures" (6).

for their motto which was the heading of every issue: “I follow no one’s example, / no one’s showing me the way. I say what needs to be said”⁵⁵ (Hernández, *The Gaucho Martín Fierro* 189). In connecting linguistic freedom with the freedom of actions, this posture is crucial in the discussion of the role of translation in the fight against epistemological colonialism, or what Dina Odnopozova calls in her *Russian-Argentine Literary Exchanges* a circumvention or bypassing of the “hegemony of the consecrated western canon” (3).

The question of the self-definition of an autonomous nation looked at from within the frame of literature comes together with the idea of artistic independence, as we can see in Maître Hyppolite’s “Una tarea,” published in *Martín Fierro*:

[E]nough of the old masters.

Twenty years ago “we needed” French parnasianism, symbolism, impressionism; Wagner’s music, Ibsen’s theater, Marx’s social gospel. All that did get to us and impregnated all that’s around. [...]

What is it that interests us at this moment? This question can be well answered by the new collaborators of *Martín Fierro*, many of whom, being young, having been born with a remarkable gift of intuition, given only to poets, and having the talent, are the ones to discover *us*, by discovering themselves.⁵⁶

This is the time when Argentine writers also started to recognize and express the need for a different language, one capable of expressing the surrounding Argentine reality. In his 1927 essay, “El idioma de los argentinos,” whose title echoes Luciano Abeille’s *Idioma*

⁵⁵ “De naides sigo el ejemplo / Naides a enseñarme viene; / Yo digo lo que conviene” (*La vuelta de Martín Fierro* 61).

⁵⁶ “ya nos bastan los maestros de ayer.

Hace veinte años, “nos hacían falta” el parnasianismo, el simbolismo, el impresionismo francés; la música de Wagner, el teatro de Ibsen, el evangelio social de Marx. Todo eso llegó a nosotros y fecundó el ambiente. [...]

Las curiosidades del momento, en cambio, ¿cuáles son? Esta pregunta podrían muy bien contestarla los nuevos colaboradores de “Martín Fierro”, muchos de los cuales, por jóvenes, por nacidos con el don maravilloso de la intuición, reservado a los poetas y, además, por tener talento, son los indicados para descubrirnos, descubriéndose” (RMF; my emphasis)

nacional de los argentinos (1900), Borges says: “Pero nosotros quisiéramos un español dócil y venturoso, que se llevara bien con la apasionada condición de nuestros ponientes y con la infinitud de dulzura de nuestros barrios y con el poderío de nuestros veranos y nuestras lluvias y con nuestra pública fe” (61).

The creation of the Museo del Libro y de la Lengua in 2011 in Buenos Aires clearly demonstrates the persisting pertinence of this question. At the opening ceremony of the Museum, there was a video installation in which Albertina Carri, the director, names the need for the autonomy of the language of el Río del Plata from Spain’s Spanish among the objectives of the Museum. Not surprisingly, one of the first and largest exhibition boards in the museum is dedicated to the question of the national language,⁵⁷ which, according to Argentine writers and intellectuals, is different from the Spanish one, freed from its academism and pomposity. It says:

Decades after the May Revolution, some intellectuals thought that political independence should go hand in hand with cultural and linguistic autonomy. Sarmiento suggested an orthographic reform and Juan María Gutiérrez refused to be part of the Real Academia de la Lengua. The publication of Lucien Abeille’s *Idioma nacional de los argentinos* highlighted the existing polemics. Several writers were against this claim, insistently affirming the links with the linguistic community of Spain. The controversy spilled out into books, newspapers and pamphlets; awoke enthusiasm, and more than a few mad voices. This stand shows the traces of a very serious endeavor: to create a national language.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ See also Horácio González and Fernando Alfón. *Beligerancia de los idiomas: Un siglo y medio de discusión sobre la lengua latinoamericana*. Ediciones Colihue, 2008.

⁵⁸ “Décadas después de la revolución de mayo, algunos intelectuales pensaron que la independencia política debía ser acompañada de la autonomía cultural y lingüística. Sarmiento planteó una reforma ortográfica y Juan María Gutiérrez se negó a ser parte de la Real Academia de la Lengua. La polémica se acentuaría con la publicación de *Idioma nacional de los argentinos* de Lucien Abeille. Varios escritores objetaron esas tesis, insistiendo en afirmar los lazos con la comunidad lingüística de España. La controversia se expandió en libros, periódicos y folletos; despertó entusiasmos no pocos tonos airados. En esta vitrina están algunas de las huellas de un intento profundo: el de considerar la lengua nacional” (“Muestra libros”).

On the same board we also see Roberto Arlt's words (1930), in which he explicitly affirms the preeminence of the Argentine way of expression over the supposedly correct, academic way: "When a thug is going to stab his partner in crime in the chest, he says: 'I'll stab you in the blinds,' it is much more eloquent than if he said: 'I shall place my dagger in your sternum.' The peoples, like ours, that are in a continuous evolution, take words from all possible angles, words that infuriate academics."⁵⁹ There is, of course, also Sarmiento's statement, written in 1842, which affirms that a people's sovereignty and its linguistic autonomy are mutually dependent. For Sarmiento, those who control the rules of language want to make sure that routines and traditions stay intact. He then compares corruption to innovation, thus criticizing the very institution of la Real Academia Española in a very subtle way.

It is immigrants who, inadvertently, helped to free the language. "[O]ur independence from Spain was not obtained on the battlefield," affirms Alberto Hidalgo. "The real independence is being made, or has already been made, by the immigrant from Russia, Italy, Germany, etc."⁶⁰ Borges and Hidalgo discerned that Argentine Spanish needed immigrants to advance, just like many other previous historic or social developments that lead to the "impurity" of language:

It is not in the nature of mountain rivers to hide their impurities, but rather to accept them and make them their very impulse. That is the way the seventeenth-century men understood it: that is the way Saavedra understood it – he laughed at those who

⁵⁹ "Cuando un malandrín que le va a dar una puñalada en el pecho a un consocio, le dice: "te voy a dar un puntazo en la persiana", es mucho más elocuente que si dijera: "voy a ubicar mi daga en su esternón". Los pueblos que, como el nuestro, están en una continua evolución, sacan palabras de todos los ángulos, palabras que indignan a los profesores" (Museo del Libro y de la Lengua).

⁶⁰ "[L]a independencia de España no se obtuvo en los campos de batalla. La verdadera independencia la está haciendo, o la ha hecho ya, el inmigrante de Rusia, Italia, Alemania, etc." (*Índice de la nueva poesía americana* 6)

weakened our language trying to keep it pure, like don Luis de Góngora who (talking about his first prolog writer) fled the simplicity of the way we speak, like the gringo-like Cervantes who bragged about the current of sweetness that he opened up in our language, like that unruly Quevedo who extracted voices from Latin, Greek and even German, like the forefather of all of them, Fray Luis de León, who hebraized so obstinately in his Biblical copies... We shouldn't fall short.⁶¹

It is impossible not to mention Alberto Gerchunoff's *Gauchos judíos* here, since it presents a case of a writer with Russian roots (born in the town of Proskuroff,⁶²) who participated in the construction of a national language and the renewal of the Hispanic American literary language. He searched for a national poetics, not in bronze monuments but rather in local voices, voices "cercanas y hasta risibles de la lengua en que se sueña, que es 'la única en la que se puede hablarle a la gente'" (Sneh 22). For Gerchunoff, the Argentine 'boyerito eslavo' or 'rusito telúrico' (Sneh 30), the question of language is absolutely essential for a nation like Argentina, which depends on immigrants for progress and thus runs the risk of turning into a patchwork quilt without the fabric of a common language.⁶³

All this is a manifestation of a need felt by Latin Americans to invent their own traditions and even history – for, according to Homi Bhabha, they gradually were turned into "the peoples without a history" (*The Location of Culture* 197) – in order to gain cultural

⁶¹ "No es de altos ríos soslayar la impureza, sino aceptarla y convertirla en su enviñón. Así lo entendieron los hombres del siglo diez y siete: así lo comprendió Saavedra que se burló de quiénes endeblecen nuestra lengua por mantenerla pura, así don Luis de Góngora que (al decir de su primer prologuista) huyó de la sencillez de nuestra habla, así el agringado Cervantes que se jactó del cauce de dulzura que abrió en nuestro lenguaje, así ese díscolo Quevedo que sacó voces del latín y del griego y aun de la germanía, así el precursor de ellos, Fray Luis de León, que hebraizó tan pertinazmente en sus traslados bíblicos... No hemos de ser menos" (Borges, *Índice de la nueva poesía americana* 17).

⁶² More on Alberto Gerchunoff's life and Russian origin in César Tiempo, "Alberto Gerchunoff: Vida y manos." *Hispania*, vol. 35, no. 1, 1952, pp. 37-41.

⁶³ Alberto Gerchunoff, "El problema de la nacionalidad y la política del idioma" in Gerchunoff, Alberto, and Ricardo Feierstein. *Alberto Gerchunoff, judío y argentino: Viaje temático desde los "Gauchos judíos" (1910) hasta sus últimos textos (1950) y visión crítica*. Milá, 2000.

autonomy from Spain and Europe. As Octavio Paz once said, “Hispanic literature, uprooted and cosmopolitan, is a return and a search for a tradition. Looking for it, it invents it.”⁶⁴

Literature in translation is one of the starting points for this search and one of the weapons that Latin American writers employ in their fight against academic and epistemological colonialism. Bassnett, in her introduction to *Translation*, talks about the significant role translation plays in “asserting Roman cultural independence from the Greek models,” and thus assuming “a broader political significance beyond the immediate textual dimension” (“Introduction”). It is noteworthy, yet not surprising, that translation was also a weapon in the fabrication, propagation, preservation, and constant re-affirmation of the cultural hegemony of the colonizer, as Walter Mignoli emphasizes in his *Culture/Power. History: Local Histories/Global Designs: Coloniality, Subaltern Knowledges and Border Thinking*:

In the sixteenth century, Spanish missionaries judged and ranked human intelligence and civilization by whether the people were in possession of alphabetic writing. This was an initial moment in the configuration of the colonial difference and the building of the Atlantic imaginary, which will become the imaginary of the modern/colonial world. *Translation* was the special tool to absorb the colonial difference previously established. *Border thinking*, as we shall see, works toward the restitution of the colonial difference that colonial translation (unidirectional, as today’s globalization) attempted to erase. (3; author’s emphasis)

If translation served as one of the colonizer’s tools, it was only logical to reverse its function and employ it for the process of de-coloniality.

Attesting to the interconnection between translation and coloniality, Bassnett also notes that the way we define translation at different points in history reflects times of

⁶⁴ “Desarraigada y cosmopolita, la literatura hispanoamericana es regreso y búsqueda de una tradición. Al buscarla, la inventa” (qtd. in *Novas* 173).

growth or decline in colonial imperialism:

These two positions, the one establishing a hierarchical relationship in which the SL [source language] author acts as a feudal overlord exacting reality from the translator, the other establishing a hierarchical relationship in which the translator is absolved from all responsibility to the inferior culture of the SL text, are both quite consistent with the growth of colonial imperialism in the nineteenth century. (*Translation Studies* 4)

Moreover, the perception of translation and original changes in parallel with the perception of the colony. The invention of the very idea of the original as superior to translation coincides with the period of colonial expansion: “The gradual development of an idea of an original as something inherently superior to any versions of it, whether textual or colonial, established the starting point as the dominant partner, and meant also that any variation to the source text by the translator could be classified as a betrayal” (“The Meek or the Mighty” 16). As a matter of fact, Bassnett and Trivedi see translation as a metaphor for the colony⁶⁵ – “a copy of an original located elsewhere on the map” (5). And if for Umberto Eco a translation is “an almost the same thing,” for Borges, Argentines themselves are “almost Americans or almost Europeans, a persistent being of almost other.”⁶⁶ Putting all these metaphors together, we get an allegory of the country of Argentina and the Argentines as a kind of a translation of Europe, a copy located on the

⁶⁵ Lori Chamberlain, in her “Translation and the Trials of the Foreign” also sees in translation “the literary equivalent of colonization” (258).

⁶⁶ “someteros a ser casi norteamericanos o casi europeos, un tesonero ser casi otros” (*Tamaño de mi esperanza* 14). See the Introduction to this book that evinces the intertwining of the concepts of cannibalism, transculturation, national identity, and translation.

other side of the Atlantic. With the post-colonial change of the metropole-colony relationship, there is also a general rethinking of what a translation is in relation to the original. Or, as Bassnett and Triverdi say, “[t]oday, increasingly, assumptions about the powerful original are being questioned, and a major source of that challenge comes from the domains of the fearsome cannibals,⁶⁷ from outside the safety of the hedges and neat brick walls of Europe” (2).

Turning away from that “colonial mother” who Franz Fanon describes as trying to protect the colonized child “from itself, from its ego, its physiology, its biology, and its ontological misfortune” (149), some Latin American writers turn to their “uncle” – Russian literature. This notion turns on Viktor Shklovsky’s metaphor of the “father” and the “uncle”⁶⁸ in the family tree of literary influences:⁶⁹

⁶⁷ The idea of translation as cultural and literary cannibalism is one of the leitmotifs of my dissertation.

⁶⁸ Ricardo Piglia also turns to this metaphor in his *Respiración artificial*, but he ascribes it to the Russian critic Iuri Tynianov: “Someone, a Russian critic, the Russian critic Yuri Tynianov, declares that literature evolves from uncle to nephew (and not from fathers to sons), an enigmatic expression that should be useful to us at this point, as it is the best summary of your letter that I can think of” (*Artificial Respiration* 17).

⁶⁹ In his essay «Литература вне «сюжета» (“Literature Outside ‘the Plot’”) (1921) he says: “дело в том, что наследование при смене литературных школ идет не от отца к сыну, а от дяди к племяннику.

Сперва развернем формулу. В каждую литературную эпоху существует не одна, а несколько литературных школ. Они существуют в литературе одновременно, при чем одна из них представляет ее канонизованный гребень. Другие существуют не канонизовано, глухо, как существовала, например, при Пушкине державинская традиция в стихах Кюхельбекера и Грибоедова одновременно с традицией русского водевильного стиха и с рядом других традиций, как, например, чистая традиция авантюрного романа у Булгарина.

Пушкинская традиция не продолжалась за ним, т.-е. произошло явление того же типа, как отсутствие гениальных и остро даровитых детей у гениев. Но в это время в нижнем слое создаются новые формы взамен форм старого искусства, ощутимых уже не больше чем грамматические формы в речи, ставшие из элементов художественной установки явлением служебным, внеощутимым.

Младшая линия врывается на место старшей и водевилист Белопяткин становится Некрасовым (Борис Эйхенбаум), Блок канонизирует темы и темпы „цыганского романа“, а Чехов вводит „Будильник“ в русскую литературу. Достоевский возводит в литературную норму приемы бульварного романа. Каждая новая литературная школа — это революция, нечто вроде появления нового класса.

Но конечно, это только аналогия. Победенная „линия“ не уничтожается, не перестает существовать. Она только сбивается с гребня, уходит вниз гулять под паром и снова может воскреснуть, являясь вечным претендентом на престол. Кроме того в действительности дело

Shklovsky's formula for literary inheritance aptly captures the relationship that Russia and Argentina assumed vis-à-vis each other: given the different "ages" of their cultures, Russian literature, being much older, became a sort of overbearing "uncle" of its "teenage nephew," Argentine letters. In other words, in the 1920s, when Argentine literature sought to break ties with its "natural father" – Spain (e.g. to find an alternative to Spanish modernism), some authors sought literary loans from their "uncle" – Russian literature. (Odnopozova 5)

This is when the so-called "defective" translations of Russian literature become one of the tools for many young Latin American writers in their attempt to establish theoretical and

осложняется тем, что новый гегемон обычно является не чистым восстановителем прежней формы, а осложнен присутствием черт других младших школ, да и чертами унаследованными от своей предшественницы по престолу, но уже в служебной роли. (Shklovsky) [the fact is that inheritance during a change of literary movements is passed not from the father to the son, but rather from the uncle to the nephew. First, let's unfold the formula. During each literary period, there exist not one, but several literary movements. They exist in literature simultaneously, and besides one of them represents its canonized crest. Others exist outside of the canon, remotely, like there existed, for example, during Pushkin's time, the tradition started by Derzhavin in the poetry of Kiukhel'beker and Griboedov simultaneously with the tradition of Russian poetry, of musical comedy, and of course with a score of other traditions, like, for instance, the pure tradition of the adventure novel in Bulgarin's work. Pushkin's tradition did not continue after him, in other words, a phenomenon occurred of the same kind as the absence of genial and extremely talented children and geniuses.

But at this time, in the lower level new forms are created instead of the forms of the old art, which can be perceived as no more than grammatical forms in speech that became an auxiliary element from the artistic setting. The younger line robs the older ones of its place and the musical comedian Belopiatkin becomes Nekrasov (the work of Osip Brik); a direct heir of the eighteenth century Tolstoy creates the new novel (Boris Eichenbaum); Blok canonizes the themes and rhythms of the "Gypsy's romance," and Chekhov introduces "The Alarm-clock" into the Russian literature. Dostoevsky raises the *feuilleton's* tropes to the level of the canon. Each new literary movement is a revolution, something like an emergence of a new social class.

But of course it is just an analogy. The defeated "line" does not get destroyed, it does not stop existing. It just gets knocked off from the crest, descends to walk under the fumes and can again resuscitate itself, being an eternal contender to the throne. Besides, in reality the matter is complicated by the fact that the new hegemon usually is not a pure reconstruction of the old form, but is more complex due to the presence of traits from other, lower movements, and also of traits inherited from its predecessor to the throne, but which are now in an auxiliary role].

practical bases for the creation of their own national literature, and in their fight against ‘the reactionary hispanism’ (Obolenskaia 41).

Today’s rethinking⁷⁰ and re-translation of major classics in Argentina also reflects the necessity of breaking away from the center. As the Museo del Libro y de la Lengua clearly shows, the fight that was started by Arlt, Borges, Sarmiento, and many others, continues, with Russian literature translation still playing a role. A look at the work done by today’s translators of Russian literature in Argentina brings to mind the clever phrase, “to translate against somebody,” which Borges used in his essay “The Translators of *The Thousand and One Nights*” (“Lane translated against Galland, Burton against Lane” (34)). For today’s translators, their undertaking of direct translations represents a way to fight against academic and epistemological colonialism. Alejandro Ariel González, Omar Lobos, and Fulvio Franchi are at the forefront of this fight, producing numerous, high quality, direct translations of Russian classics. They are part of a project that started in 2003, the year the publishing house Colihue was founded. Today Colihue is a proud owner of a collection of a well-done, professional translations of the greatest Russian works, including *Crimen y castigo*, *Los hermanos Karamázov*, and *Memorias del Subsuelo* by Feodor Dostoevsky; *Evgueni Oneguín* and *El Zar Saltán* by Alexander Pushkin; *Primer amor* by Ivan Turguenev, and *Pensamiento y habla* by Lev Vigotsky.

Many of these are retranslations,⁷¹ which can be seen as ‘the difference of the

⁷⁰ Last summer’s exhibition “Casi lo mismo” in Buenos Aires’ Museo del Libro y de la Lengua evinces the persistence and actuality of the question.

⁷¹ According to Lawrence Venuti, “[r]etranslations constitute a special case because the values they create are likely to be doubly domestic, determined not only by the domestic values which the translator inscribes in the foreign text, but also by the values inscribed in a previous version” (*Retranslations* 25). And the cases that Venuti considers in his article, just like these new retranslations of Russian literature in

difference,' for they establish their difference from the previous translation, which originally also established its difference either from national literature (by foreignizing) or from Russian literature (by domesticating). Ariel González's translations, paratexts, and conversations clearly demonstrate Venuti's idea that retranslations are characterized by an increase in the translator's self-consciousness, a highlighted "intention [...] to select and interpret the foreign text according to a different set of values so as to bring about a new and different reception for the text in the translating culture" (Venuti, *Retranslations* 29). Just like González's example demonstrates, a retranslator "is likely to be aware, then not only of the competing interpretations inscribed in the foreign text by a previous version and by the retranslation, but the linguistic and cultural norms that give rise to these interpretations such as literary canons and translation traditions" (Venuti, *Retranslations* 29).

Alejandro González, in Juan Manuel Fontán's article called "Como traducir los clásicos rusos," published in *La Nación*, asks himself when it was that Argentina discovered Russian literature. And his answer is: "When Europe discovered them." According to him, there had never been a direct link between Russian and Argentine literatures; rather, the road to Russian literature has always passed through Europe, which González calls an "academic and epistemological colonialism." In this way, he highlights the importance not only of direct translations, but also of the obligation of the translator to study the history of the text that is being translated and its historical context.

Argentina, possess a crucial awareness of preexisting translations and "justify themselves by establishing their differences from one or more previous versions" (*Retranslations* 25).

It is not in vain that Russian, along with other classics, are retranslated in Argentina at a time of heightened national longing for cultural independence. Talk of the need to translate works into Argentine Spanish is very common among scholars, writers, and translators during this period. In fact, there is even a discussion of the need to use *vos* instead of *tú*⁷² in the new translations. This situation is in some way similar to the situation that occurred in Quebec at the end of the 1960's, as described by Venuti in his article on retranslations (2004). Just after the emergence of the national movement for Quebec's political autonomy, the translator's job was to turn local language

into the support of a national literature by rendering canonical world dramatists, such as Shakespeare, Salinger, Chekhov, and Brecht. The goal was to endow Quebecois French with cultural authority so as to challenge its subordination to dominant languages, notably North American English and Parisian French. A key strategy in achieving this goal was the retranslation of canonical drama that had previously been available only in the French of France. (31)

One example that demonstrates the role of translation as a tool in this fight for cultural emancipation is the story of the translation of Vigotsky's *Thought and Language*. Aurelio Narvaja describes the reconstructive work they recently undertook while translating it: "that was a huge reinstatement because it had been pruned by Stalinism, which took out all that it considered to be the subjective and Western psychology and, in the translations that were taken from the US side, they took out all the references to

⁷² For more on the discussion of "el voseo argentino" see Gerardo Oviedo, "Apostillas a la historia del voseo argentino (1828-2006)" in *Beligerancia de los idiomas: un siglo y medio de discusión sobre la lengua latinoamericana*.

Marxism. In other words, they cut both its legs: the left and the right one.”⁷³ The original translation is thus an example of academic colonization that an Argentine, according to González, doesn’t even notice most of the time. In fact, this is the key to the mechanism of colonization: it should go unnoticed to work properly. The reader shouldn’t feel limited, but free.

Thus, Colihue’s⁷⁴ effort to produce translations that respect both Russian and Spanish stems not simply from the translator’s aspiration to make the bridge that connects two worlds be as short as possible, but more so from a fight against academic colonialism that, as many Argentine writers think, deprived Argentina of an opportunity to have a taste of Russian culture.⁷⁵ Aurelio Narvaja says: “We felt the absence of Russian culture and considered it to be one of the fundamental ones, both in the East and West, because Russia is a place where the two converge” (qtd. in Fontán). These claims are in line with what Venuti says about the function of retranslations. He states that usually texts that have entered the canon are chosen to be retranslated because the previous version “is shown to be no longer acceptable because it has come to be judged as insufficient in some sense, perhaps erroneous, lacking linguistic correctness. The retranslation may claim to be more adequate to the foreign text in whole or part, which is to say more complete or accurate in representing the text or some specific feature of it” (*Retranslations* 26).

⁷³ “hicimos una gran reposición porque había sido podado por el estalinismo, que le sacó todo lo que consideró que era la psicología subjetiva y occidental y, en las traducciones tomadas desde el campo de los Estados Unidos, le habían sacado todas las referencias al marxismo. Es decir, le cortaron las dos piernas: la izquierda y la derecha” (qtd. in Fontán 4).

⁷⁴ It is not surprising that Colihue recently republished, along with new direct translations, Luciano Abeille’s *Idioma nacional de los argentinos* (2005), originally published in 1900.

⁷⁵ From the interview I conducted in August 2015 with the editors of Colihue.

All of these retranslations by Colihue have long introductions. Such paratexts, according to Venuti, “signal its [text’s] status as a retranslation and make explicit the competing interpretation that the retranslator has tried to inscribe in the foreign text” (*Retranslations* 33). For him, paratexts “might go some way toward restoring the linguistic and cultural differences that translation necessarily removes from the foreign text by rewriting it in another language with different cultural traditions” (*Retranslations* 34).

Along with translations of the classics, there are also new translations of works that have always occupied a marginal place among Russian authors translated in Argentina.⁷⁶ The function of such retranslations, explains Venuti, is “to achieve canonicity through the inscription of a different interpretation” (*Retranslations* 27). Venuti says that behind such retranslations of marginal works lies a political or cultural agenda “in which a particular ideology guides the choice of a foreign author or text and the development of a retranslation strategy” (*Retranslations* 27). As I argue in the next chapter, the fight against epistemological colonialism consisted not only in claiming the right to direct access to knowledge (thorough direct translations), but also placing what was marginal at the center (hence Argentine translators’ interest in vagabonds, prostitutes, etc.). Particular attention was given to marginal aspects of Russian literature and culture, for example, the southern peoples or the Tatars.⁷⁷

⁷⁶ I discussed this question at the 2016 American Literary Translators Association Conference. My presentation was titled “Russian Literature’s “Asian Face” in Latin America: When the Margins Translate the Margins,” which was part of the panel “Translation and the Minority Languages of the Former Soviet Union.”

⁷⁷ The Tatars are already mentioned in Gerchunoff’s *Gauchos Judios*, in the chapter entitled “Witches.” A family from Haisin, making its long journey, entered something that looked like a tavern but turns out to be the “Inn of the Tatars” (Gerchunoff, *The Jewish Gauchos* 103). According to Kelner, one of the book’s characters, the Inn of the Tatars “was a famous hideout where a band of raiders called “The Tatars” held

While there were fictitious attempts⁷⁸ within the Soviet Union to give the marginal a central role in the arts as part of the rhetoric of an all-inclusive country and culture⁷⁹, Latin American translators managed to conserve the need to search for the genuinely marginal within Russian culture.

For Alejandro Ariel González and the rest of the Colihue team, the fight consists in producing direct translations from Russian into Spanish, stripping Europe and the United States of the control they had over the final product in the process of mediated translation. But the next chapter demonstrates that even the manipulations that the early translations present can be seen as part of this war on epistemological colonialism and as an affirmation of Latin America's own cultural identity.

IV. Translation as Anthropophagy

their hostages until they were ransomed by relatives from the city" (Gerchunoff, *The Jewish Gauchos* 103).

⁷⁸ The Soviet attempt I am talking about is the story of the 'Kazakh Poet' Dzambul Dzhabayev, as told by Gideon Toury in his highly engaging article, "Enhancing Cultural Changes by Means of Fictitious Translations." Dzambul Dzhabayev (1846-1945) was an old Kazakh folk singer who supposedly wrote patriotic poetry in praise of the Soviet Union and the Soviet government in Kazakh. The supposed translations of his poetry into Russian spread his fame not only throughout the Union, but even abroad to Eastern Germany. However, as Shostakovitch reveals in his autobiography, the 'translations' were written by a group of Soviet poets and writers, some of them well-known, none of whom spoke or read Kazakh. The death of the poet put an end to this cleverly set production of patriotic poetry by the "margins" for the center. These translations can be viewed as anachronistic pseudo-attempts at post-colonial writing. Here I am thinking about the comparison that Maria Tymoczko makes between translation and post-colonial writing in *Post-colonial Translation*, in her chapter entitled "Post-colonial Writing and Literary Translation": "[I]n this sense, post-colonial writing might be imagined as a form of translation (attended with much ceremony and pomp, to be sure) in which venerable and holy (historical, mythic and literary) relics are moved from a sanctified spot of worship to another more central and more secure (because more powerful) location, at which the cult is intended to be preserved, to take root and find new life" (20).

⁷⁹ Because "[u]nlike tsarist Russia or the European colonial powers, which defined their metropolises in opposition to their colonized peripheries, the Soviet Union defined itself as a postcolonial state that was the sum of all its parts" (Hirsch 683-684). For more information on the ethnographic question in the Soviet Union, see Francine Hirsch, "Getting to Know "the Peoples of the USSR": Ethnographic Exhibits as Soviet Virtual Tourism, 1923-1934"; Kozlov, V I. *The Peoples of the Soviet Union*; Mandel, William M., *Soviet but Not Russian: The "other" Peoples of the Soviet Union*; Symmons-Symonolewicz, Konstantin. *The Non-Slavic Peoples of the Soviet Union: A Brief Ethnographical Survey*.

As is well known, Haroldo de Campos, in his idea of transcreation, returns to Oswald de Andrade's idea of anthropophagy, in which any concept that is "devoured" inevitably becomes a new phenomenon. According to Gérard Genette, "the art of "making new things out of old" has the merit, at least, of generating more complex and *more savory* objects than those that are "made on purpose"; a new function is superimposed upon and interwoven with an older structure, and the dissonance between these two concurrent elements imparts its flavor⁸⁰ to the resulting whole" (398; my emphasis). Even before Oswald de Andrade's "Manifesto Antropófago" (1928), with its shrewd diagnosis of the anthropophagic condition of Latin American literature and culture,⁸¹ already in 1922 Oliverio Girondo points to its symptoms in the opening paragraph of his first book, *Veinte poemas para ser leídos en el tranvía*,⁸² in which he says that Latin Americans have the best

⁸⁰ It is interesting to note Genette's use of vocabulary pertaining to food and flavor.

⁸¹ Although I will not go into this question in more detail in this dissertation, a comparative analysis of Latin American and Russian anthropophagy would bring many interesting points to light. Already in his 1888 article titled "Тоголь и Диккенс (Открытое письмо к...)" ("Gogol and Dickens (An Open Letter to...))," Yuri Govorukha-Otrok used a similar metaphor, which more than four decades later Olivari would use in his discussion of the eclectic stomach of a Latin American writer: "Вот я и воспользуюсь этим физиологическим термином для еще большего пояснения моей мысли. «В себя вососали» - как организм всасывает в себя пищу, благодаря которой он живет и развивается, т.е. делается иным, но вовсе не похожим на ту пищу, которую воспринимает. Вот эту роль пищи, которую организм претворяет в совершенно иное, на нее не похожее, и играли для Гоголя (так как речь у нас идет о нем) западноевропейские влияния. Теперь, надеюсь, ясно, что именно с моей точки зрения Гоголя никак нельзя назвать подражателем. Остается лишь доказать, что все и действительно было так, как я утверждаю, т.е. что Гоголь создал нечто совершенно особенное, ни на что созданное Европой не похожее, и в то же время равное всему великому, что было в Европе". [Here I will use this physiological term for an even better explanation of my thought. "They swallowed it" – like an organism swallows food, thanks to which it lives and develops, in other words, becomes different, but without in any way resembling the food that it takes in. This exact role of food, that the body turns into something completely different, not looking like it, is what the Western European influences had for Gogol (since we're talking about him). Now, I hope, it is clear that from my point of view there is no way we can call Gogol an imitator. What's left is to prove that everything was actually the way I claim it to be, or in other words, that Gogol created something absolutely unique, not resembling anything that had been created by Europe, but at the same time on par with all the greatest European creations].

⁸² Using literary works as theory helps us to avoid falling into the trap of post-colonial theory that comes from the place of former colonial powers, as discussed by Ashcroft, Griffith and Tiffin: [T]he appropriation of recent European theories involves a number of dangers, the most threatening of

stomach in the world, “an eclectic, an entirely free stomach,”⁸³ capable of digesting anything: “A fraternal coterie, with the comforting conviction that, being Latin Americans, we possess the best stomach in the world, an eclectic, an entirely free stomach, capable of digesting, and of digesting well, a Northern herring or an Oriental couscous, just as well as a fire-cooked Magellan snipe or one of those epic *chorizos* from Castilla.”⁸⁴ Seventy years later, Osvaldo Lamborghini illustrates this eclectic stomach for literary hotchpotch in the second part of his *Odiseo confinado*, called “Cordero, *El paródico*”:

Confined, fed up
with living aground
in this fed-up state,
I took off to navigate those pages
-oh, petty cleverness!-
with a sudden, pretty strange,
enthusiasm.

And one day a Bernardez and another, a Homer;
And a Jose Hernandez, another, and another a Garcilaso;
And another an Eliot and a Lugones, another;
And a Pound one day and another a Discepolo;
And another a Virgil and a Quevedo, another;
and another day a del Campo and another, a Dante and another
a Macedonio;
and an Apollinaire another and a Borges, another day;
and another a Boscan and a Marechal, another,
I came back to senses:

which is the tendency to reincorporate post-colonial culture into a new internationalist and universalist paradigm. This incorporative practice is shared by both the apparently apolitical and ahistorical theories of poststructuralism and the socio-cultural and determinist theories based in contemporary Marxist thought. Conversely, it is arguable that dominant European movements, such as postmodernism, which have sought in recent times to reabsorb post-colonial writing into an international postmodern discourse, may themselves, in fact, be more indebted to the cultural effects of the material practice of colonization and its aftermath than is usually acknowledged. In fact, the history of literary and critical movements in the twentieth century is, as one might expect, deeply determined by an interaction with imperialism (154).

⁸³ “un estómago ecléctico, libérrimo” (Girondo, *Obras poéticas* 34).

⁸⁴ “Cenáculo fraternal, con la certidumbre reconfortante de que, en nuestra calidad de latinoamericanos, poseemos el mejor estómago del mundo, un estómago ecléctico, libérrimo, capaz de digerir, y de digerir bien, tanto unos arenques septentrionales o un kouskous oriental, como una becasina cocinada en la llama o uno de esos chorizos épicos de Castilla” (Girondo, *Obras poéticas* 34).

in a grotesque, infernal – that’s how I see it now –
hotchpotch.

But then,
like it happened in previous crises
it seemed
as if I was hearing those Voices,
in a polyphonic, orderly,
sublime Chorus⁸⁵.

That is how, according to “Manifiesto ‘Martín Fierro’” (1924), the Argentine identity is built, chewing and digesting “the entire menu that the old Europe presents it with, from the Etruscan statues, to Marinetti’s manifesto. In this “organic” process the Argentine personality stands out, taking what fits and what’s good for it. Not as imitation, because it can’t carry out transplants, but as a means of culture to extract from it that which forms it into a new culture.”⁸⁶ As Oswald de Andrade was writing his “Manifiesto antropófago,” which famously alludes to the first cannibalistic encounter between Indians and the Europeans, the victim of which was Bishop Pedro Fernandes Sardinha in his *Manifiesto*, Borges, also in 1928, published his “Fundación mítica de Buenos Aires”⁸⁷ in *Exposición de la actual poesía argentina (1922-1927)*. In so doing, Borges inadvertently

⁸⁵ -Confinado, harto / de vivir, encallado / en esa hartura, / a navegar aquellas páginas / -¡ay nimia astucia!- / con repentino, cuan extraño, / entusiasmo me di. // Y un día un Bernández y otro, un Homero; / y un José Hernández, otro, y otro un Garcilaso; / y otro un Eliot y un Lugones, otro; / y un Pound un día y otro, un Discépolo; / y otro un Virgilio y un Quevedo, otro; / y otro día un del Campo y otro, un Dante y otro / un Macedonio; / y un Apollinaire otro y un Borges, otro día; / y otro un Boscán y un Marechal, otro, / volví a sentirme: / en grotesca, infernal –así lo juzgo ahora— / mezcolanza. // Pero entonces, / como ya en anteriores crisis / habíame ocurrido, / escuchar parecíame esas Voces / en polifónico, ordenando, / excelso Coro (*Odiseo confinado* 15-16).

⁸⁶ “todo el menú que la vieja Europa le presenta, desde las esculturas etruscas, hasta el manifiesto de Marinetti. En este proceso “orgánico”, su personalidad argentina se destaca tomando lo que le cuadra y le conviene. No como imitación porque no puede efectuar trasplantes, sino como medio de cultura para extraer de ella misma lo que la constituye en raza nueva” (*RMF* 68).

⁸⁷ Then in 1929 it opened Borges’ own book of poems, “Cuaderno San Martín,” published by Editorial Proa.

built another bridge between Brazilian anthropophagy and Argentine literature in a very witty manner. He describes the way Juan Díaz de Solís, a Spanish sailor and explorer, was supposedly eaten by the native tribes of charrúas and guaraní upon the arrival of the Spanish crew in 1516: “Pondering well, let us suppose that the river / was blue then like an extension of the sky, / with a small red star inset to mark the spot / where Juan Díaz fasted and the Indians dined.”⁸⁸ (*Selected Poems* 61)

In this anthropophagic context of cultural and literary production, stealing, instead of being concealed or ashamed of, becomes an open source of creation. Macedonio Fernández⁸⁹ says, for example, that when he writes he borrows a character for some time and returns it when he leaves his writing (qtd. in *Diccionario de la novela* 73). Nicolás Olivari starts *La musa de la mala pata* with a warning that all the illustrations in his book were stolen by the author from some French and Argentine magazines (“Advertencia”), explaining that such a treatment of art is the essence of their time:

With the carelessness of the *child of this century* he [the author] didn’t stop to find out who the authors were. But with his defensive instinct of a sniper in the face of artistic property, he will not argue with anyone who presents a complaint in this

⁸⁸ “Pensando bien la cosa, supondremos que el río / era azulejo entonces como oriundo del cielo / con su estrellita roja para marcar el sitio / en que ayunó Juan Díaz y los indios comieron” (*Poesía completa*, 87).

⁸⁹ Macedonio Fernández is a crucial figure for the central argument of my dissertation. Ramón Gómez de la Serna, in his Prologue to Macedonio’s *Papeles de reciénvenido*, describes him in this way: “Macedonio Fernández es un admirable criollo que desde el pórtico de su escondida estancia es el que más ha influido en las letras dignas de lo argentino, fue como el hallazgo de la arquitectura manuelina para Portugal” (9) [Macedonio Fernández is a remarkable creole who, from the porch of his hidden place, is the one who has influenced the literature that is most worthy of being Argentine; he was like the discovery of the Manueline architecture for Portugal.] Ramón Gómez de la Serna also reproduces a fragment from a letter Macedonio wrote to him in 1927: “nací en Buenos Aires [...] el 1° de junio de 1874, de ascendencia, materia y potencia hispana con muchas generaciones de americano, hijo de Macedonio y de Rosa del Mazo” (*Papeles de reciénvenido* 12) [I was born in Buenos Aires [...] on the 1st of June in 1874, of Hispanic lineage, matter, and power, with many American generations, son of Macedonio and Rosa de Mazo].

regard, the authorship of the illustrations and, if they insist a lot, the authorship of the poems, which, fortunately, for the reasons that critics will present, will not occur.⁹⁰

In a similar way, Juan Carlos Onetti also says about Roberto Arlt's work that he never plagiarized – he simply stole, without realizing it.⁹¹

This turn to an open plagiarism affected both Argentine writers' writing and their lives. Oliverio Girondo, in *Exposición de la actual poesía argentina (1922-1927)*, declared that he would prefer to borrow somebody else's biography or use an invented one than to be defeated by the impossibility of putting his life into an organized and clear-cut biography.⁹² "Me pide Vd. algo que no tengo: una biografía compacta y precipitada, la que no soy capaz de escribir: sería demasiado deshilvanada y lenta."⁹³ Atribúyame Vd. la de mi bisabuelo Arenales o la del cotudo que lo asistía; invente la vida más chata y más inútil y

⁹⁰ "Con la despreocupación de *hijo del siglo* no se detuvo a investigar el nombre de los autores. Pero con su defensivo instinto de franco tirador ante la propiedad artística asegura que no discutirá a nadie que presente su reclamación en tal sentido, la paternidad de las ilustraciones y si mucho se empeñan, la paternidad de los poemas, cosa que felizmente, por las razones que darán sus críticos, no sucederá" (*La musa de la mala pata*; my emphasis).

⁹¹ "Nunca plagió a nadie; robó sin darse cuenta" (14).

⁹² A trace of Macedonio's thought is incontestable. As Borinsky points out, in Macedonio's work "[I]a creencia rígida en un orden inalterable es cuestionada por el tratamiento de las fechas como objetos a los cuales se les puede atribuir descomposición por temperaturas inconvenientes o posesión por personas. La enumeración de las teorías que rechaza – la posibilidad de varias fechas de nacimiento, distintos lugares de realización de dicho suceso implica una actitud de credulidad que de por sí crea un absurdo. [...] Una de las creencias que ataca es la de identidad personal. Hemos visto que su visión de un mundo en estado de "almismo ayoico" apoya tales intentos. En su obra abundan juegos con la noción de identidad" (*Macedonio Fernández y la teoría crítica. Una evaluación* 124-137).

⁹³ His *Espantapájaros (Al alcance de todos)* (1932) reveals what triggers these two adjectives. The poet announces: "Yo no tengo una personalidad; yo soy un cocktail, un conglomerado, una manifestación de personalidades.

"En mí, la personalidad es una especie de furunculosis anímica en estado creónico de erupción; no pasa media hora sin que me nazca una nueva personalidad.

"Desde que estoy conmigo mismo, es tal la aglomeración de las que me rodean, que mi casa parece el consultorio de una quiromántica de moda" (*Obras poéticas* 106).

adjudíquemela sin remordimientos... cualquier cosa... menos forzarme a reconocer que soy un hombre sin historia...” (15). Oliverio Girondo thus prefers any mask to the impossibility of giving one and only face to his “yo.”⁹⁴

Two of the possible outcomes of this literary anthropophagy are the disappearance of a single author and the appropriation of a baroque literature which found its true origin in the works of Latin American writers. The former coincides with Macedonio’s search in his work for a place where the existence of one and the only author is impossible, and instead there is writing with no authors, a continuum written collectively, outside of the boundaries of space and time, “in a gigantic space formed by the books that the writer reads when offering his or her own work.”⁹⁵ This writing, which we can call “macedonian,” would then require a “macedonian reader,” who Ricardo Piglia defines as “the hero of a metaphysical adventure: to read (before writing) is to construct a new meaning with the ruins and the forgotten remains of the language.”⁹⁶

Concerning the baroque, one part of the “Manifiesto de ‘Martín Fierro’” (1924) reads: “the baroque had to cross the Atlantic in search of the tropics and the jungle for it to acquire its ingenuousness, naïve and full of pomp, that flaunts itself in America.”⁹⁷ It is this statement that best characterizes the condition in which Latin American art and culture were cultivated.

⁹⁴ One cannot but recall Alejandra Pizarnik’s poem “Yo soy...” in which, in trying to define her own self, she asks herself: “mi rostro?” and she answers: “un cero disimulado” (Pizarnik 30).

⁹⁵ “en un gigantesco espacio formado por los libros que el escritor lee al ofrecer su propia obra” (Borinsky, *Macedonio Fernández y la teoría crítica* 118).

⁹⁶ “el héroe de una aventura metafísica: leer (antes que escribir) es construir un sentido nuevo con las ruinas y los restos olvidados del lenguaje” (*Diccionario de la novela de Macedonio Fernández* 8).

⁹⁷ “barroco necesitó cruzar el Atlántico en busca del trópico y de la selva para adquirir la ingenuidad candorosa y llena de fasto que ostenta en América” (*RMF* 94).

If we consider Picasso's famous quote that "Bad artists copy. Good artists steal," and Jean Giraudoux's declaration that "[p]lagiarism is the basis of all literatures except the first, which happens to be unknown to us" (Genette 381), this artist-as-a-robber mentality was not only present in Latin American culture, but was actually at the core of the European arts of the time. However, the fundamental difference lays in the fact that "stealing" acquires some shades of a political act when committed against the dominant power by marginal or dominated subjects. Ashcroft, Griffith and Tiffin confirm: "It is through an appropriation of the power invested in writing that this [post-colonial] discourse can take hold of the marginality imposed on it and make hybridity and syncreticity the source of literary and cultural redefinition" (77). No wonder Haroldo de Campos, one of the founders of Brazilian concrete poetry, deconstructs the idea of plagiarism, turning to its etymology – 'plagios' means to 'transverse' – in order to define it as "the *translation* of tradition" (Ribeiro Pires Vieira 107; my emphasis).

This cultural and political agenda is present in Oswald de Andrade's "Manifesto antropófago," and later on in the poetry of the concrete poets, who drew their inspiration from the idea of anthropophagy. Haroldo de Campos, one of the leaders of the concrete movement, in his "Reinventing Tradition" says that "[w]ith concrete poetry, the difference (the national) became the place of operation of this universal code's new synthesis. More than a legacy of poets, it became a question of assuming, critiquing, and "chewing up" a poetics" (*Novas* 70). It is through translation, which gives them the potency to re-read and re-appropriate the classics of European literature, that they exercise their literary and

cultural cannibalism.⁹⁸

Describing the work of Gregório de Matos, Haroldo de Campos ties translation and anthropophagy together⁹⁹, calling the writer “a translator-devourer”:

The ‘Creole Muse,’ the ‘Cursing Muse.’ The first cannibal-rogue. I’m not speaking about his biography; I’m speaking of biographical material preserved in the oral tradition and dispersed in apocryphal manuscripts. Of a persona behind which a text resonates. A text of texts. Universal and differential. Parodic. Parallelographic.

The ‘parallel song’¹⁰⁰ of a translator-devourer: decentered, eccentric” (*Novas* 168).

Bassnett in “The Translation Turn in Cultural Studies,” the last chapter in *Constructing*

⁹⁸ “Haroldo de Campos e os concretistas resgatam a antropofagia, usando a tradução como uma maneira de afirmar seu direito de reler e repossuir a literatura canônica europeia” (Magalhães 143).

⁹⁹ In his 1977 article “The Translator: from Piety to Cannibalism,” Serge Gavronsky defines one type of translation as cannibalism, giving in an endnote the definition from Freud’s *Totem and Taboo*: “By absorbing part of the body of a person through the act of eating we also come to possess the properties which belonged to that person” (Gavronsky 62). However, he uses the term in a different sense than the one I intend in my dissertation. For him, “[t]he use of this term emphasizes the disappearance of the slightest trace of the “original” *qua* original, and the presentation of what the “innocent” reader might consider as a perfect text in itself” (59). I do not try to present translation the way Gavronsky does: as an act of the aggressive translator “who seizes possession of the “original”, who savors the text, that is, who truly feeds upon the words, who ingurgitates them, and who thereafter, enunciates them in his own tongue, thereby having explicitly rid himself of the “original” creator” (60).

¹⁰⁰ Translation as a “parallel song” will be central to my chapter on parody in Argentine literature. “Parody” and “a parallel song” are the two terms that the poet in Lamborghini’s *Odiseo confinado* applies to describe his own poetry:

Pero entonces,
como ya en anteriores crisis
hábiame ocurrido
escuchar parecíame esas Voces
en polifónico, ordenado,
excelso Coro.

Y, entre ellas,
mi voz –*en paralelo canto*–
con ellas concertada,
(lo hubiese yo jurado, lo juraba),
magnífica elevábase.
(16; my emphasis).

Cultures, also connects cannibalism with translation, seeing in the former “a clear post colonial metaphor” (129) for the history of the latter. And “[a]ny challenge to that notion of original and copy, with the implications of status that go with it, is effectively a challenge to a Eurocentric world view” (Bassnett and Lefevere 129). Moreover, she sees a similarity between the concept of cultural cannibalism and the concept of “cultural pluralism” articulated by Sherry Simon, who states: “The poetics of translation belongs to a realization of an aesthetics of cultural pluralism. The literary object is fragmented, in a manner analogous to the contemporary social body” (qtd. in *Constructing Culture* 129). She then, together with Harish Trivedi, puts the relation between the concepts of anthropophagy and translation at the center of their Introduction to *Post-Colonial Translation, Theory and Practice*, titled “Of Colonies, Cannibals and Vernaculars,” saying that “[t]he cannibalistic metaphor has come to be used to demonstrate to translators what they can do with a text” (5). If Alejandro González calls the function of such translation a fight against epistemological colonialism, for Else Ribeiro Pires Vieira, such translations participate in the “liberation from mental colonialism” (98).¹⁰¹

Looking at translation as part of Latin American anthropophagy allows me to expand the role of translation as a political and cultural weapon against epistemological colonialism, demonstrating that it is with the help of translation that those literatures learned to speak, as Haroldo de Campos says, “the difference in the gaps of a universal code” (*Novas* 166). According to Haroldo de Campos this difference is actually “a

¹⁰¹ “[I]t stands to reason that Oswald de Andrade’s dialogism has political imports for Brazil, because the denial of univocality means assertion of the Brazilian polyphonic and pluricultural space and, ultimately, liberation from mental colonialism” (Ribeiro 98).

difference of the different,” just like Venuti calls retranslations: “Literature, in the colonies as in the metropolis, was fashioned from other literature. Except that, being eccentric in the colonies, literature could articulate itself as a double difference: a difference of the different” (*Novas* 167). For these literatures, “emerging with the baroque, [and thus having] no infancy,” translation becomes the material, the spring where they get their “origin” from, while still being “adults at birth”¹⁰² (*Novas* 164), just like Lamborghini asks himself: “But us / who / gave birth to us?... // A Chinese / tale / and a shadow puppet?”¹⁰³ They are born as a parody:

The ambiguous
child,
the object
of dispute,
keeps turning
its head
from one side
to the other,
while its
mother,
standing behind,
with an upset face,
pointing at it,
she screams,
all frightened:
What is that?!
What is that?!
What has happened?!

From the most
cruel failure,
the one of being human,

¹⁰² This evokes one of Macedonio Fernández’ prologues from *El museo de la novela de la Eterna*, in which the author suggests that it is the very world that is born old: “Es indudable que las cosas no comienzan; o no comienzan cuando se las inventa. O el mundo fue inventado antiguo” (139) [“Indubitably: things do not begin; or they don’t begin when they are created. Or the world was created old” (*MEN* 7)].

¹⁰³ “¿Pero a nosotros / quién / nos parió?... // ¿Un cuento / chino / y una sombra chinesca?” (Lamborghini 130).

the parodic one is born.¹⁰⁴

Translation as part of Latin American neo-baroque and anthropophagy thus becomes part of “the machinery that crushes the material of tradition, like the teeth of a tropical sugarmill, transforming stalks and husks into bagasse and juicy syrup” (Haroldo de Campos, *Novas* 174). It is the process of Russian literature’s transformation into that tropical sugarmill through translation that constitutes the main focus of the chapters that follow.

¹⁰⁴ El ambiguo / crío, / objeto de / la disputa, / continúa volteando / su cabeza / de un lado / al otro lado, / mientras su / progenitora, / detrás suyo, / desencajado / el rostro, / señalándolo, / grita / espantada: / -- ¡¿Qué es esto?! / ¡¿Qué es esto?! / ¡¿Qué ha pasado?! // Del más cruel / fracaso, / el de ser hombre, / nace el paródico (Lamborghini 79).

CHAPTER TWO: TRANSLATION AND OTHER “CRÍMENES SIN CASTIGO”¹⁰⁵

I Argentina and Russia in a Dialogue

*La trinchera avanzada es en la estepa un barco al abordaje
con gallardetes de hurras
mediodías estallan en los ojos
Bajo estandartes de silencio pasan las muchedumbres¹⁰⁶
y el sol crucificado en los ponientes¹⁰⁶
se pluraliza en la vocinglería
de las torres del Kreml.
El mar vendrá nadando a esos ejércitos
que envolverán sus torsos
en todas las praderas del continente
En el cuerno salvaje de un arco iris
clamaremos su gesta
bayonetas
que portan en la punta las mañanas¹⁰⁷*

“Rusia”¹⁰⁸, Jorge Luis Borges

¹⁰⁵ “crimes without punishment.”

¹⁰⁶ For Balderston, this image of the sunset as a crucifixion – frequent in Borges’ poetry at the time – marks his familiarity with the work of the Russian poets, since it appears in Sergei Esenin’s poem “Товарищ” (“Comrade”) and Alexander Blok’s “Двенадцать” (“The Twelve”). For more indicators of Borges’ familiarity with Russian poetry see Balderston, p. 36.

¹⁰⁷ “The advancing trench in the steppe is a ship set to assail / with its pennons of hurrahs / noons burst in the eyes / Crowds pass under the banners of silence / and the sun crucified at the sunsets / gets multiplied in the uproar / of the towers of the Kremlin. / The sea will come swimming to those armies / that will wrap around their torsos / in every plain of the continent / In the wild horn of a rainbow / we will proclaim their feat / bayonets / carrying mornings at their tips”

¹⁰⁸ First published in *Grecia*, vol. 3, no. 48, 1920, republished in *Índice de la nueva poesía americana* in 1926. Other poems of this period that Borges dedicated to Russia and the Russian Revolution are “Gesta maximalista,” “Trinchera,” “Último rojo sol,” “Guardia roja.” According to the exhibition “Borges. El mismo, otro” dedicated to Borges in the Biblioteca Nacional in Buenos Aires, the poem was part of Borges’ 1921 book poems, titled *Los salmos rojos* or *Los ritmos rojos*, that according to his autobiography, glorified Russian Revolution, brotherhood and pacifism. Three of the poems appeared in different journals, “Épica bolchevique,” “Trinchera,” and “Rusia,” but he destroyed the book just before leaving for Argentina: “Ya estaba preparado para regresar al país,” Borges explains (qtd in “Borges. El mismo, otro”). For more on Borges’ political views in the 1920s and his particular interest in the Russian Revolution see Daniel Balderston, pp. 31-42. There you will also find a short analysis of the poem “Rusia.”

Borges' poem "Rusia"¹⁰⁹ and Raúl González Tuñón's¹¹⁰ "Sinfonía en rojo y negro,"¹¹¹ – in which a white Russian and a black Jamaican play music together, joining the sounds of a balalaika and a piccolo into one melody – both clearly demonstrate that the dialogue between Russian writers and Argentinian culture was not limited to the intermediary space within the borders of translation. During the first decade after the Russian Revolution, references to Russian literature and culture permeated the Argentine cultural world. Raúl González Tuñón remembers that when, at the beginning of 1920s, he

¹⁰⁹ It is important to note that this poem was written during the first of three phases that Dina Odnopozova distinguishes in the development of Borges' relationship with Russian literature in her *Russian-Argentine Literary Exchanges*. She points out that while in Europe (1914-1921), he did welcome the Revolution and expressed his admiration in the poems that were supposed to be all published in one book under a title *Salmos Rojos* or *Ritmos Rojos* (Odnopozova 83). Upon his return to Argentina in 1921, the book of poems was destroyed on the eve of returning to Argentina and the admiration turned into a complete break away from Russian literature. Like Odnopozova says, "he avoided mentioning Russia in his writings, and in the rare cases when he did, it was only to disparage Russian literature as a 'depressing novel of characters'" (21). It is only at the end of his life that he reconsiders Russian classics and even publishes a collection of three Russian short stories under a title *Cuentos rusos*. For a more detailed analysis of the transformations of Borges' views of Russia, see Chapter 2 of Odnopozova's dissertation. For Borges' own words about Russian literature, see Elena Poniatowska, *Todo México*, Tomo I, p. 146; Osvaldo Ferrari, and Jorge Luis Borges, *Diálogos últimos*, pp. 45–52. See Biagio D'Angelo, "B(i)orges dostoevskiano. Una posible resolución de un problema de Don Isidro Parodi" for a possible dostoevskian trace in the work of Borges.

¹¹⁰ Raúl González Tuñón (1905-1974) was an Argentine poet and journalist, brother of another Argentine writer and journalist, Enrique González Tuñón. He published his first poems in *Caras y Caretas* and collaborated in the founded by Borges *Proa*. He is most known for his book *La calle del agujero en la media*. He is also the author of the books *El otro lado de la estrella* and *Todos bailan*, as well as the plays *El descosido*, *La Cueva caliente* and *Dan tres vueltas y se van*, written in collaboration with another prominent Argentine writer, Nicolas Olivari. Many of his poems have been turned into popular songs. The setting for most of his poems is the city and especially its margins: city's ports, suburbs and tenement houses (*conventillos*). "Raúl González Tuñón fundó su poesía en medio de payasos, putas y obreros," confirms it the title of one of the articles dedicated to his work.

¹¹¹ "El uno es ruso y mutilado; / El otro, un negro de Jamaica; / Toca éste un flautín abollado / Y aquel toca balalaika. // Labios gruesos – cabellos rojos – / La balalaika dió sus notas / Y el ruso aquel cerró los ojos / En las nostálgicas gavotas. // Y desacompasado y lento / Sonó el flautín del negro aquel; / Las desgredadas motas al viento / Y sobre las piernas, la gorra de piel. / [...] // ¿Qué piensa el negro? ¿En su lejano / Salvaje y cálido país? / ¿Y el otro? En su siberiano / Suelo frígido, blanco y gris?" (RMF 58).

first met Ricardo Güiraldes,¹¹² the latter unfairly feared “our eyes filled with Russia”¹¹³ (qtd. in Sarlo 129). Russian literature became a common source of reference for Argentine writers and literary critics. In one of Leónidas Barletta’s short stories, for example, the narrator describes the house where the story takes place: “Next to the old ceiling window, there were some clothes hanging to dry, the way it is described in Chekhov’s stories.”¹¹⁴ The same can be said about literary criticism of that time. In the December 1929 issue of *Claridad* (no. 197), Israel Zeitlin,¹¹⁵ better known as César Tiempo, publishes a review of the best literary works of the year titled “Instalación y crónica del año literario.” In the category of the best book of short stories, he chooses Samuel Eichelbaum’s¹¹⁶ “Tormenta de Dios.” As a proof of its quality, he quotes the poet Sebastián Tallon, who sees Anton Chekhov’s spirit floating over one of Eichelbaum’s stories, “Las ideas del señor Rosofí, el tolstoiano” (“The Ideas of Mr. Rosofí, the Tolstoyan”). César Tiempo confirms Tallon’s intuition and says that this assertion makes it useless to enumerate all the merits of this work.¹¹⁷ Russian literature, thus, does not only become a common reference, but also the

¹¹² Ricardo Güiraldes (1886-1927) was an Argentine writer best known as the author of the Argentinian classic – *Don Segundo Sombra* (1926), one of the best prose examples of the genre of *gauchesca* literature. It presents an image of a *gaucho* and his life in *la pampa*. Güiraldes’ other books include *Un idilio de estación*, *El sendero*, *Poemas místicos*. He was part of the group of avant-garde writers “Martinfierristas” that sometimes would get together at his and his wife Adelina del Carril’s Buenos Aires apartment in *la calle Solís*. He was also part of the group of writers who ran the *Proa* journal, along with Jorge Luis Borges, Rojas Paz and Brandan Caraffa.

¹¹³ “Raúl González Tuñón recuerda que, cuando conoció a Güiraldes, a comienzos de la década de 1920, éste temía “injustamente, por nuestros ojos llenos de Rusia”.

¹¹⁴ “Cerca del tragaluz, de una cuerda penden algunas ropas puestas para secar, como se describe en los cuentos de Chéjov” (“La flor” 10).

¹¹⁵ The first part of Chapter 4 is dedicated entirely to Israel Zeitlin’s ‘writing’ of Russian literature in Argentina.

¹¹⁶ César Tiempo dedicated a whole chapter of his book *Mi tío Aleijem y otros parientes* to Samuel Eichelbaum.

¹¹⁷ “El poeta José Sebastian Tallon, que es un lector de aguda penetración, ve flotar sobre “Las ideas del señor Rosofí, el tolstoiano”, uno de los relatos del tomo, el espíritu de Anton Chejov, parentesco que se nos ocurre el más certero y cuya veracidad evidente hace ocioso mayor abudamiento en los méritos de Samuel

quality measuring standard.

Apart from the general fascination with the culture and enthusiasm for the revolution that enveloped the world, in Argentina there existed a particular interest in Russian literature based on special characteristics that the two countries share. In fact, John Eipper even gets to the point of saying that “populist intellectuals from both ends of the ideological spectrum were eager to situate the USSR as *the alter ego* of Argentina. Their nation’s specific demographics, marked by a recent influx of Eastern European immigrants, made the association almost biological” (108; my emphasis).

The first of their shared characteristics is the two countries’ peripheral positions in relation to the Occidental “literary Greenwich meridian” (Casanova 4) and the need of self-definition through their relation with the Western world. For Omar Lobos, Professor of Slavic Literatures at the University of Buenos Aires and a prolific translator of Russian literature,

the two cultures are pierced with a search for identity of a different nature, but that has a strong force. Russians in the XIX century yearn to recover their ties with their people. Here, our search for identity is different in nature. Who are we, Argentines? We came in ships? There is something of this kind that we don’t want to recognize. We are Europeans. One starts to dig and finds contradictions. [...] Russians deal with the same question of identity in relation to Europe, in the same way we do. The two nations deal with the same multi-ethnic question: Caucasus, Siberia, and the Asiatic Russia.”¹¹⁸

Eichelbaum.”

¹¹⁸ “están atravesadas, las dos culturas, por una búsqueda identitaria de distinto tinte, pero que es muy potente. Los rusos buscan, sobre todo en el siglo XIX, volver a recuperar los lazos con el pueblo. Acá nosotros tenemos una búsqueda identitaria de otra naturaleza. ¿Quiénes somos los argentinos? ¿Venimos de los barcos? Hay algo de ese orden que no queremos reconocer. Somos europeos. Uno empieza a escarbar y encuentra las contradicciones. [...] Los rusos tienen esa cuestión identitaria con respecto a Europa, de la misma manera que nosotros la tenemos. Ambas naciones tienen el tema multiétnico: el Cáucaso, Siberia y la Rusia asiática” (qtd. in Fontán 4).

Indeed, Russian history has always been pierced with a two-poled discussion between Slavophiles and Westerners¹¹⁹ and a continuous oscillation¹²⁰ between Europe and Russia's

¹¹⁹The terms and the formal opposition of the two groups appeared in the times of Nikolai I (1825-1855) in response to the dilemma that Russia had to face in the first half of the XIX century: should it stay an agricultural country or follow the Western way of development – towards capitalism. Among these “Westerners” were Belinsky and Herzen. The leaders of the opposing group were brothers Kireevsky, brothers Aksakovs and Khomiakov. The two groups, however, stem from Hegel's ideas as the two believe in some kind of a Russian “predestined” way, its Spirit. The “discovery” of Western philosophy was a “side effect” (for the Russian government) of the victory over Napoleon, when Russian young and filled with enthusiasm soldiers and officers entered Paris and came back to Russia inspired by the ideas of the French revolution. At the same time, the ideas of the German philosophers, Shelling, Hegel, Fichte started to exercise a great influence over the Russian *intelligentsia*. But even before Nikolai I, before there appeared two formal antagonistic groups, the existence of the dilemma can be clearly seen in Denis Fonvizin's (1744-1792) plays. In his comedy *Brigadir (Brigadier)*, criticizing the young generation for following the trends of the West, it tries to defend the Russian culture and its own development. As a matter of fact, the Western-versus-authentically-Russian antinomy transpires at any period of Russian history and many times defines it. The very story of the origin of Kiev *Rus'* still has to accept the possibility that Riyrikh was invited to govern the Slavic people of that region, who was a Norman knight and not a descendant of the Western Slavic tribes.

If we look at the first heraldic moments of the incipience of the Russian Empire, there we see Ivan III, whose wife was a niece of the last Byzantine emperors. That made him feel a successor of the Greek emperors and an heir of their power. He, thus, borrows their coat of arms – the two-headed eagle. But for many, it was Peter the Great's “window to Europe that let the Western ideas “contaminate” the supposed purity of the Russian culture and deviated it from the way of finding its own authentic self. Peter the Great's fascination with Europe that permeated his reforms laid the most durable foundation for the “Westerners” as well as their opponents. Peter's West-bound thinking and Western-based education beg one's special attention as they are combined with the fact that he was the first Emperor and the “father of the motherland.” From his trip through Europe he brings home ideas of the first Russian flag – the inversion of the order of two colors marks its only difference with the Holland flag –, the Russian school education system, the first Russian newspaper *Vedomosti*. As Alejandro Ariel González quotes in his article «По поводу одного эпизода в повести Ф. М. Достоевского "Записки из подполья"» (“Regarding one episode from Dostoevsky's short novel *Notes from Underground*”), Dostoevsky thinks that Peter the Great's reform separated them from the real Russian people. He says that at first, Russian people refused to accept the imposed by Peter the Great's European way of life since it was not compatible with their spirit and aspirations. They would call that style German and those who would follow in the steps of Peter the Great – foreigners. Dostoevsky sees that such a bifurcation came to its limit within a Russian society that found itself at a dead end – there was nowhere to go anymore, that the entire road envisioned by Peter the Great had been explored, that everyone who followed the Tsar had learnt what it was to be a European but never managed to become one. And this is when coming back to a true Russian people became a necessity. The struggle between Slavophiles and Westerners was of course on the bolshevik's agenda as well as they aimed at fighting against not only the Russian absolute power, but any manifestation stemming from the Western democratic world. The complexities of each of the sides during and after the Russian Revolution are reflected in Mikhail Slonimsky's “Западники” (“The Westerners”). After 1945 Stalin's chief task also became “to defend” Russia from “иностранина” (anything foreign (pejoratively)), to prevent “the worship of the West.” More on the development of the two movements and their polemics in *A.S. Pushkin and A.N. Ostrovskii. “Западники и славянофилы” (Westerners and Slaphophiles)*.

¹²⁰Samuel Huntington actually calls Russia, along with India, “swing civilizations” (my emphasis). See Samuel Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*.

“authentic” self. As Kropotkin explains,

The Westerners were, broadly speaking, for Western civilisation. Russia – they maintained – is no exception in the great family of European nations. She will necessarily pass through the same phases of development that Western Europe has passed through, and consequently her next step will be the abolition of serfdom and, after that, the evolution of the same constitutional institutions as have been evolved in Western Europe. The Slavophiles, on the other side, maintained that Russia has a mission of her own. She has not known foreign conquest like that of the Normans; she has retained still the structure of the old clan period, and therefore she must follow her own quite original lines of development. (Kropotkin 266-267)

Argentine writers from *Martín Fierro* also reclaim Argentina’s own “original lines of development” by way of a drastic cut of the umbilical cord that was tying the country to Europe.¹²¹ They add, however: “To emphasize and generalize, with the rest of the intellectual manifestations, independence in the language movement initiated Rubén Darío, doesn’t [...] mean that we should renounce, let alone pretend, that we don’t know that every morning we use a Swedish toothpaste, French towels and English soap.”¹²²

This last addition, not a rejection but a recognition and acceptance of the presence of a European aspect of its culture, is what brings Russia and Argentina together. It is not only the fact that both countries’ search for identity is always a dialectical process oscillating between local, indigenous elements and the borrowed, European or North American ones, but also that both countries’ “original lines of development” are defined by their original way of *interpreting and appropriating* those “outside” ideas, not in their supposed authenticity, which, as discussed in the first chapter, is an idea both utopian and

¹²¹ “previo tijetazo a todo cordón umbilical” (RMF XVI).

¹²² “Acentuar y generalizar, a las demás manifestaciones intelectuales, el movimiento de independencia iniciado, en el idioma, por Rubén Darío, no significa, empero, que habremos de renunciar, ni mucho menos finjamos desconocer que todas las mañanas nos servimos de un dentífrico sueco, de unas toallas de Francia y de un jabón inglés” (RMF XVI).

counterproductive for the arts.

According to Sergia Adamo, it was precisely this oscillation between civilization and barbarity,¹²³ East and West that, at the turn of the last century, attracted the world's attention to Russia.¹²⁴

Between the 19th and the 20th century, when the world opens up towards new spatial and planetary hierarchies, from which the need for new cross-cultural contacts stems, all Western Europe is in search of new, non-definite, non-monolithic terms of comparison. The completion of colonial expansion, the constant confrontation with distance and difference arouse great interest in problematic and hybrid cultures. Russian culture, always swinging from East and West, from "civilization" to "barbarity", from otherness to assimilation, becomes an unavoidable and highly significant reference. (79)

However, in Argentina, within the interest in the described oscillating condition there is also a particular interest in the possibility of a complete overturning of the dichotomy:¹²⁵

¹²³ Whenever these two terms appear together in the context of the Argentine culture and literature, one cannot but think of Domingo Faustino Sarmiento's *Facundo o Civilización y barbarie en las pampas argentinas* (1845) and Ángel Della Valle's *La vuelta del malón* (1892). Some theoretical works that deal with this fundamental dichotomy are Fermín Chávez, *Civilización y barbarie en la historia de la cultura argentina*; Fernández Retamar, *Algunos usos de civilización y barbarie y otros ensayos*; Dessau, "Civilización y barbarie en la novela latinoamericana"; Carlos Alonso, "Civilización y barbarie"; Moreno-Durán, *De la barbarie a la imaginación: la experiencia leída*; Ana María Barrenechea, "Estudios sobre el "Facundo," *Textos hispanoamericanos: De Sarmiento a Sarduy*.

¹²⁴ Russia's unique geographical position between East and West, Europe and Asia, led to the need to create of the "third" continent – Eurasia. More on the idea of the third continent in "The Orient in Russian Thought at the Turn of the Century" in *Russia between East and West*: 23-25. For example, geographer and linguist Lamanskii in his «Три мира евро-азиатского материка» (*Three worlds of the Euro-Asian Continent*) proposes an idea of a unique Euroasiatic continent as Russia's unique place of existence where three radically different worlds were brought together: the Romano-Germanic world, the Greek-Slavic world, and a non-Christian world, Asia. More on this "in-betweenness" of Russia in Nicolas Zernov. *Three Russian prophets: Khomiakov, Dostoevsky, Soloviev*; Milan Hauner. *What is Asia to Us? Russia's Asian Heartland Yesterday and Today*. London.; Nikolai Berdiaev, *Sud'ba Rossii*.

¹²⁵ Much later, in Cuba, there would appear another canonic attempt at overturning the dichotomy – Roberto Fernández Retamar's essay "Calibán." In it, he goes back to the metaphor of the "cannibal" but taking a detour through Europe. He employs Shakespeare's Caliban that, as he reveals to the reader, is a play on the word "cannibal." For Retamar, Latin American writers' identification with Caliban represents their yearning to break away from the "civilization-barbarity" dichotomy in which accepting their being "barbaric" they can expose the barbarism of the "civilization." One of the first Latin American writers who did it was José Martí whose statement: "No hay batalla entre la civilización y la barbarie, sino entre la falsa erudición y la naturaleza [*It is not a battle between civilization and barbarity, but between a false erudition and the nature*]" (26) was a direct response to Sarmiento's *Civilización y barbarie*. For Martí the

making the West look towards the East,¹²⁶ and “civilization” look up to “barbarity.”¹²⁷ It is through translation that we can discern this particular interest¹²⁸, both in the selection of works and in their adaptations. For example, *Claridad*¹²⁹ published Alexander Blok’s “Los

dichotomy is a “pretexto de que la civilización que es el nombre vulgar con que corre el estado actual del hombre europeo, tiene derecho natural de apoderarse de la tierra ajena perteneciente a la barbarie, que es el nombre que los que desean la tierra ajena dan al estado actual de todo hombre que no es de Europa o de la América europea” [excuse for the civilization, which is a common name in which the present state of the European man is defined, to have a natural right to take hold of the land of others that belongs to the barbarity, which is the name that those who want somebody else’s land give to the present state of any man outside of Europe or the European America] (qtd. in Retamar 44). Carlos Alonso in his “Civilización y barbarie,” however, points out that Retamar, by not stepping out of the dichotomy, falls in the very trap for which he criticized Sarmiento. Alonso questions such an approximation. He focuses on the “and” particle of the phrase that does not separate, but “separates and joins at the same time” (Gass qtd. in Alonso 258). It equalizes the two terms. One term contaminates the other. To bolster his argument, he brings in Walter Benjamin’s words: “There is no document of culture which is not at the same time a document of barbarism” (259). What Alonso is trying to demonstrate is that the very phrase tries to establish the difference between the two terms, but in evoking it indicates its own failure (259). In a similar manner Enrique de Gandia in his 1962 article “Sarmiento y su teoría de “civilización y barbarie” blends together the binary terms saying that neither is pure and finished his argument stating that neither of the term exists. What exists are two groups with different ideas (74).

¹²⁶ More on the Argentine writers’ interest in the Orient can be found in Alex Gasquet’s *Oriente al sur: el orientalismo literario argentino de Esteban Echeverría a Roberto Arlt* and Edward Said’s *Orientalismo* in a more general sense.

¹²⁷ However, we have to keep in mind that Russia has been also identified with barbarity, with no positive undertones whatsoever, strictly opposed to civilization. Dionisio Napal’s eighth chapter of *El imperio soviético* is titled “The Russian Example and Civilization” and as Eipper says: “The “Russian example” and “Civilization,” as the chapter heading indicates, create a powerful disjunction harking back to Sarmiento’s 1845 metaphor for the newly formed Argentine state: Civilization versus Barbarism” (103). In the internal discourses in Russia, the adjective “barbaric” would many times appear as a purely negative term in the discourses of the Westerners who yearned to propel Russia away from the Eastern barbarity towards the Western civilization. It is reflected in the aforementioned “Zapadniki” by Mikhail Slonimskii. One of the characters for example, upon his return to Russia after visiting several European countries found his motherland “варварской, рабской и нищей” [barbaric, enslaved and poor] (21).

¹²⁸ It is not surprising that it had to be translation that would be in the center of this inversion of the dichotomy since, like Roberto Hernández Retomar notes: “el colonialismo ha calado tan hondamente en nosotros, que solo leemos con verdadero respeto a los autores anticolonialistas *difundidos desde las metropolis*” [colonialism has infiltrated into us so profoundly that we can read with a real respect only those anticolonialist writers *that start circulating from the metropoli*] (*Todo Calibán* 39-40). Although Russia is not a metropoli, the world’s recognition of the grandeur of its literature satisfies the necessary dominant status.

¹²⁹ On *Claridad*’s role in the popularization of Russian literature in Argentina, see the next section of this chapter.

escitas”¹³⁰ (“The Scythians”),¹³¹ in December of 1929, translated by Llinás Vilanova,¹³²

where the prominent Russian poet underlines Russia’s uniqueness in acting as a shield

¹³⁰ The translation is not a re-publication of the Spanish translation made in Spain, which was made by Enrique Díez-Canedo in 1922. His was a full (not fragmented) prose translation of the poem published in *España*, no. 315 (Pérez Zorrilla 672).

¹³¹ The translation published in *Claridad*, along with the English translation by Kurt Dowson, can be found in Appendix A (II, III). The original poem was published on January 30, 1918, the height of the time when the Orient had been taken up as an axis of the development of the political, cultural, literary, philosophical ideas. As Laurelle notes “[t]he half-century between the 1870s and the 1920s sees the emergence of this theme in Russian geography (the idea of the third continent), historiography (rehabilitation of Moscow under the Tatar yoke), philosophy (Vladimir Soloviev’s pan-mongolism), literature (the decadent symbolists and the theme of Huns and Scythians), and especially art (Nikolai Rerikh’s orientalist painting) more than in the ideological geopolitical field (the “Oriental” movement)” (*Russia Between East and West* 9). The poem expresses the central idea of the so-called Scythian movement. As Lareaulle explains: “With the Revolution was developed the idea of solidarity between Russia and Asia. The Mongol themes were replaced by the Scythianism and Eurasianism. The two Revolutions of 1917 reversed the steppe peril: facing Bolshevism and western cultural shock, Scythianism wanted to be an even more virulent Russian nationalism than that of the Slavophiles, endowing Russia with the least possible European past” (28). Alexander Blok was one of the main participants of the movement, whose founder was Ivanov-Razumnik. This movement was part of the attempt of the Russian intellectuals to redefine Russia in its relation to Europe: “accustomed to rejecting Europe in order to claim to emanate from the Slavic or Byzantine world, Russian intellectuals turned for the first time, from a symbolic point of view, toward the real “antithesis” of the West, Asia. This thematic, which appeared in Russia in Mongolian terminology, knew a spectacular reversal: born from nightmares of certain thinkers and fear of the “yellow people,” it was brutally changed into a symbol of regeneration, an incarnation of a Russianness that would finally be revealed to itself. Asia then became the natural narrative space of Russia.

“The idea of a “yellow peril,” which was also present in the West at that time, gave Russia a European nation’s position in its consideration of Asia, apprehended as foreign, diabolic, and nearly extra-human. The narrative rebirth of Asia under the shape of Scythism made Russia pass on the other side: it became integrated into Orient and opposed the West from then on in the name of a “not civilized” space carrying a regenerative strength” (30). More on Russia’s relations with Asia as part of the Russian identity see Sanjay Pandey, “Asia in the Debate on Russian Identity.” *International Studies*, vol. 44, no. 4, 2007, pp. 317-337. The similarity with the idea of barbarians and cannibals in Latin America is obvious. However, there is a fundamental difference. Although for Russia, the turn to the Orient was a way of differentiating itself from Europe, it was simultaneously a way of legitimization of their imperialism. Latin American turn to Russia’s turn to the Orient helped to pave the way towards the “epistemological decolonization” and legitimization of their “cannibalistic” approaches in literature and culture.

¹³² I must note here that the work of Llinás Vilanova demonstrates very well the presumed division between Boedo and Florida, between realist and avant-garde writing. Although he is one of the principle writers and translators for *Claridad*, his own poetry could successfully be part of *Martin Fierro*. For example, in the issue 183 of *Claridad* appears a poem called “Metrópolis”. Even a brief look, immediately places it next to the European and Latin American avant-garde poets of the first decades of the XIX century, fascinated with the city, such as Gerardo Diego, Guillermo de Torre, Federico García Lorca, Vicente Huidobro. For example: “Babel inmensa / de cemento y acero. / Miles de rascacielos / taladran las nubes / girando sobre el disco de tu suelo. / Diez millones de automóviles / se deslizan por tus asfaltados / a velocidades fantásticas. / Por los diez túneles / superpuestos / que perforan todas tus calles, / circulan rápidos, / largos convoyes de tranvías. / Por los aires, vertiginosos, / Con precisión cronométrica, / avanzan los trenes eléctricos, / devorando los rascacielos. / Y más arriba, / mucho más arriba, / los aeroplanos trazan arabescos / al compás de la música de sus hélices.”

between two hostile races, the Mongolians and the Europeans. It is interesting to note here that the Spanish version correctly conserves the original idea of the hostility of Europe as well,¹³³ while in the English translation by Kurt Dowson,¹³⁴ Russia has to “shelter you, the European race / From the Mongolians’ savage raids and sieges.” Although the Spanish translation published in *Claridad* is an indicator of the interest of the Argentine writers in Russia’s intermediary place between East and West, it is clearly trying to show Russia’s “Asian face”.¹³⁵ *Claridad*’s translation returns us to those violent Scythians that Herodotus described in Book IV of his *Histories*.¹³⁶ Although Blok himself did want to lay bare

¹³³ The original says: “Мы, как послушные холопы, / Держали щит меж двух враждебных рас / Монголов и Европы!”, which literally means: “We, like obedient slaves, / Were holding a shield between the two battling races / The Mongols and Europe!” and the Spanish translation says: “Esclavos sumisos, / fuimos la barrera entre dos razas hostiles, / entre Mongolia y Europa”.

¹³⁴ See Appendix A (III).

¹³⁵ In this context especially significant becomes Edgardo Cozarinsky’s and Clara Vaccaro’s interest in Tatars of Russia (from our conversations in Buenos Aires in the summer 2015.)

¹³⁶ Herodotus dedicates Book IV of his *Histories* to the Scythians who “continued as lords of the whole of Upper Asia” (Book IV, Chapter 1) for 28 years. Their cruelty is evinced in the ways they punished their slaves for marrying their wives in their absence: “Now the Scythians blind all their slaves, to use them in preparing their milk. The plan they follow is to thrust tubes made of bone, not unlike our musical pipes, up the vulva of the mare, and then to blow into the tubes with their mouths, some milking while the others blow. They say that they do this because when the veins of the animal are full of air, the udder is forced down. The milk thus obtained is poured into deep wooden casks, about which the blind slaves are placed, and then the milk is stirred round. That which rises to the top is drawn off, and considered the best part; the under portion is of less account. Such is the reason why the Scythians blind all those whom they take in war; it arises from their not being tillers of the ground, but a pastoral race” (Book IV, Chapter 1). In what concerns the prisoners of war, this is the way they were sacrificed: “When prisoners are taken in war, out of every hundred men they sacrifice one, not however with the same rites as the cattle, but with different. Libations of wine are first poured upon their heads, after which they are slaughtered over a vessel; the vessel is then carried up to the top of the pile, and the blood poured upon the scymitar. While this takes place at the top of the mound, below, by the side of the temple, the right hands and arms of the slaughtered prisoners are cut off, and tossed on high into the air. Then the other victims are slain, and those who have offered the sacrifice depart, leaving the hands and arms where they may chance to have fallen, and the bodies also, separate” (Book IV, Chapter 62).

We do have to note though that Herodotus, using Borges’ idea that each writer creates his own predecessor, plagiarizes Borges by anticipation by including the following disclaimer in his historic account about Targitaus: “He was a child – I do not believe the tale, but it is told nevertheless – of Jove and a daughter of the Borysthenes” (Book IV, Chapter 5). Herodotus continuously, throughout his account, reminds us, as Borges’ narrators do, that if we take the account to be true, we are fully responsible for it, as the narrator did warn us of its possible falsity: “At this feast, if the man who has the custody of the gold should fall asleep in the open air, he is sure (*the Scythians say*) not to outlive the year” (my emphasis, Book IV,

Russia's "Asian face"¹³⁷ he nevertheless also recognizes the touch of an inbred European fineness: "We love cold figures' hot illumination, / The gift of supernatural vision, / We like the Gallic wit's mordant sensation / And dark Teutonic indecision. // We know it all: in Paris hell's dark street, / In Venice bright and sunlit colonnades, / The lemon blossoms' scent so heavy, yet so sweet, / And in Cologne a shadowy arcade" (Dowson).

The Spanish version omits the part that mentions Europe and focuses on the virulent side inherited with the Asian blood that flows in any Russian. Indeed, for Elías Castelnovo, who went to Russia and collected his impressions in *Yo vi...! en Rusia*, "the so-called *mystery* of Asia seems to start in Russia because Russia looks more like Asia than like Europe. For somebody who knows it only through its literature, Russia has kept in reserve a series of surprises, so strange, so different, often, so chilling, that one comes to a conclusion that there coexist two worlds in one: Russia... and the other."¹³⁸ There might

Chapter 7). After describing the story of their origin, Herodotus notes: "Such is the account which the Scythians give of themselves, and of the country which lies above them. The Greeks who dwell about the Pontus tell a different story" (Book IV, Chapter 8), thus making the reader rethink all what has been said before. But he does not stop there as after telling the Greek side, he turns to the story that he is most inclined to believe: "There is also another different story, now to be related, in which I am more inclined to put faith than in any other" (Book IV, Chapter 11). Moreover, it turns out that they are not really Scythians, but Scoloti, and that it is really the Greeks that call them Scythians (Book IV, Chapter 6). The fact that information is passed in a translated form is also of a constant presence in his account: "The regions beyond are known only from the accounts of the Issedonians, by whom the stories are told of the one-eyed race of men and the gold-guarding griffins. These stories are received by the Scythians from the Issedonians, and by them passed on to us Greeks: whence it arises that we give the one-eyed race the Scythian name of Arimaspi, "arima" being the Scythic word for "one," and "spu" for "the eye." (Book IV, Chapter 27).

¹³⁷ That was not a common gesture – the fact laid bare in for example Kropotkin's Introduction to *Los Ideales y la realidad en la literatura rusa*: "a pesar de la asimilación de numerosas nacionalidades y tribus de origen urálico o turanio que ha tocado en suerte a la nación rusa, en el transcurso de largas generaciones, su lengua, sin embargo, se ha conservado notablemente pura" (12).

¹³⁸ "[e]l llamado *misterio* de Asia comienza, tal vez, en Rusia. Porque Rusia se parece más a Asia que a Europa. Le reserva al que no la conoce más que a través de su literatura una serie de sorpresas tan raras, tan distintas, a menudo, tan escalofriantes, que termina por suponer uno que coexisten dos mundos en el mundo: Rusia y... el otro" (qtd. in Saïtta 85).

be the same reason of focusing on the Asian, fierce side of Russia, behind the omission of the epigraph in the Spanish version: ‘Panmongolism – fierce the word may seem, yet how I love its sound.’ In Russian, this verse, taken from Vladimir Soloviev’s¹³⁹ poem titled “Panmongolism” (1894), is expressed in a much more eloquent and fine way – it literally says “yet it caresses my ear” – that more explicitly emphasizes the fact that even as barbarians they have aesthetic values. They are like Haroldo de Campos’ “Alexandrian Barbarians” who “for some time, in an alternative and different context, have been devouring them [Europeans] and making them flesh of their flesh and bone of their bone. They have long been resynthesizing them chemically, through an impulsive and uncontrollable metabolism of difference. [...] These are Alexandrian barbarians, equipped with chaotic libraries and labyrinthine card catalogs” (*Novas* 173). But if Haroldo de Campos, following Oswald de Andrade’s idea of anthropophagy,¹⁴⁰ inverts the civilization-barbarity dichotomy¹⁴¹ by recognizing the barbarians’ power in devouring the civilization,

¹³⁹ Vladimir Soloviev (1853-1900) was a Russian philosopher known for introducing the idea of *vseedinstvo* (totality). He in part based his ideas on Madame Blavatsky’s mysticism and called for a return to the spiritualism of the Orient (Laurelle 20 in *Russia Between West and East*) and actively participated, “on a more conceptual level, in this effort to develop a mystical syncretism between Orient and West” (Laurelle 21). His idea of totality had great repercussions in Russian literature and philosophy as it directly affected the symbolist movement. For more details on Soloviev’s idea of *vseedinstvo*, see page 21 of *Russia Between West and East*. In his “Panmongolism”, he prophesies a new Mongolian invasion and sees the solution in the “marriage” of the two worlds – Catholic and Orthodox.

¹⁴⁰ While conducting the research for this dissertation, another indirect connection between Oswald de Andrade and Russian literary world of the beginning of the XIX century came to light. Tarsila do Amaral, whose famous painting *Abaporu* (1928) inspired Oswald de Andrade’s “Manifesto Antropófago”, travelled to the USSR in 1931 with her husband Osório Cesar. The two were accompanied by one of the first Russian Hispanists David Vigodsky whose literary activities and contributions to the literary and artistic exchanges between Latin America and Argentina will be discussed later in this dissertation.

¹⁴¹ Michel de Montaigne, already in 1580, made an attempt at inverting the dichotomy as well, in relation to the tribes of Brazil. When in his essay “On Cannibals” he talks about a tribe in Brazil, recently “discovered,” he points out: “I do not find that there is anything barbaric or savage about this nation, according to what I’ve been told, unless we are to call barbarism whatever differs from our own customs. Indeed, we seem to have no other standard of truth and reason than the opinions and customs of our own country. There at home is always the perfect religion, the perfect legal system—the perfect and most

the translator of Blok's poem (or *Claridad's* editors) cut the poem's link with Europe by simply cutting any allusion to it, even if the allusion reveals a love-hate relationship between a margin and its center. For instance, the omitted part of the poem also included two lines: "For you [Europe] with longing she [Russia] has looked and waited, / Replete with ardent love and ardent hate."

In the context of the literary and cultural anthropophagy, described earlier, in which translation was published, the Spanish version of Blok's "Scythians" serves as a clear sign of Argentine writers' identification with this barbaric side of Russia's identity, through which they define their own relation with high art. This can be clearly seen in the Roberto Arlt's idea of "Etching", which unfortunately stayed in its embryonic state as a note published by Piglia in *Assumed Name*. It retells the story, commented by Maxim Gorky, of hundreds of peasants invading the Winter Palace, who while staying there utilized the Sèvres Urns, "from Saxony, and from the Orient, as urinals. And not out of necessity, for

accomplished way of doing everything. These people are wild in the same sense that fruits are, produced by nature, alone, in her ordinary way. Indeed, in that land, it is we who refuse to alter our artificial ways and reject the common order that ought rather to be called wild, or savage." He does rethink his own society as savage and barbaric. At one point, he seems to be idealizing the "barbarity", saying "It displeases me that Lycurgus or Plato didn't know them, for it seems to me that these peoples surpass not only the portraits which poetry has made of the Golden Age and all the invented, imaginary notions of the ideal state of humanity, but even the conceptions and the very aims of philosophers themselves." In spite of that he does not take away their force and pride: "They have their wars against peoples who live beyond their mountains, further inland, to which they go entirely naked, bearing no other arms than bows and sharpened stakes like our hunting spears. The courage with which they fight is amazing: their battles never end except through death of bloodshed, for they do not even understand what fear is. Each one carries back as a trophy the head of the enemy that he has skilled, and hangs it up at the entrance to his home. After having treated their prisoners well for a long time, giving them all the provisions that they could one, he who is the chief calls a great assembly of his acquaintances. He ties a rope to one of the arms of the prisoner and on the other end, several feet away, out of harm's way, and gives to his best friend the arm to hold; and the two of them, in the presence of the assembled group, slash him to death with their swords. That done, they roast him and eat him together, sending portions to their absent friends. They do this, not as is supposed, for nourishment as did the ancient Scythians; it represents instead an extreme form of vengeance." Michel de Certeau in Chapter V of his *Heterologies: Discourse on the Other* analyzes the formal construction of the process of the reversion of this dichotomy.

the toilets were in order and the pipes were functioning” (qtd. in *Assumed Name* 107). If for Gorky this was an “expression of the desire to ruin, to damage beautiful objects” (qtd. in *Assumed Name* 107), Arlt sees this as an act of denial of the idea that “beauty is universal” (*Assumed Name* 107). For Arlt, these peasants “are actually opposed to the bourgeois idea of a beauty that is more beautiful the less useful it is (when it is not useful for anything). By using them in such a “brutal” manner (so unaesthetically) the peasants are looking at the “beautiful object” to know what purpose it serves” (*Assumed Name* 107). This can serve as a parallel to the Latin American writers’ appropriation of the classics, whose work was treated as an “untouchable beauty” and putting them to serve their own literature. The idea is reaffirmed in Arlt’s quote of Trotsky’s words who talks about the right to tear up something of aesthetic value for utilitarian purposes:

When the soldier, yesterday’s slave, suddenly finds himself in a first-class car of a train and he rips off the velvet that covers the seats to make himself a pair of gaiters, even in such a destructive act, the awakening of personality is revealed. The ill-treated and trampled Russian peasant, accustomed to receiving slaps and the worst insults, found himself all of a sudden, perhaps for the inside of his own boots he has foul-smelling rags; and he rips off the velvet, saying to himself that he too has a right to something better. (Trotsky qtd. in *Assumed Name* 108)

In his own literature, Arlt continues the idea that barbarity can actually cure humans from civilization. For example, in his *Los siete locos*, the Gold Prospector says about the pampa: “everything is huge... enormous... eternal down there [...] That’s where souls made sick by civilization can be cured”¹⁴² (*The Seven Madmen* 152). This idea has been central for Argentine literature since *Martín Fierro* and still persists in the work of many

¹⁴² “Todo es grande... enorme... eterno allá. [...] Allá se salvan las almas que enfermó la civilización” (122).

writers. Leónidas Lamborghini, for example, notes in his article “El gauchesco como arte bufo” that already in *Martín Fierro* two friends Fierro and Cruz, tired of the oppressive system, of its injustice and lies, see their salvation, not in the “civilization” but in the “barbarity.”

The translation of Blok’s “The Scythians” seems more like an appropriation than translation by the Argentine poets that pursues its own goals, since it does not indicate in any way that this significant omission took place. This appropriation becomes even more explicit with the omission of the only direct reference to who “we”, the Scythians, of the poem are: “The sphinx is Russia, sad and yet elated.” This appropriation of the poem can be seen as a sign of full identification with Russian barbarity, but it is “Russian civilization” that confirms its force and preeminence. Transferring this dialectic onto the Latin American relation with Europe, it helps the former to affirm its force before Europe.

In Armando Stiro’s translation of Romain Rolland’s “La respuesta del Asia a Tolstoy” published in *Claridad* (no. 167), Tolstoy’s interest in the Orient is also emphasized:

The Orient always attracted him. As a young student at the University of Kazan, he had chosen to study the Arabic-Turkish Oriental languages. While in Caucasus, he maintained communication with the Muslim culture and was profoundly impacted by it.

A short time after 1870, there begin to appear, in his compilations of short stories and legends for elementary schools, Arabic and Indian stories.¹⁴³

¹⁴³ “El oriente lo atrajo siempre. Joven estudiante de la Universidad de Kazan, había escogido las lenguas.

The article emphasizes the role Tolstoy played for the Muslim ethnic groups living within Russia and outside of it. It recounts the number of Muslims in Russia – 20 million – along with Tolstoy’s acknowledgement of them, and then states that many Bashkirs of Russia and Muslims of Constantinople wrote to him that they were crying with joy while reading his response to the Christian world after his excommunication. Rolland’s text closes with the influence that Tolstoy had in the development of Ghandi’s thought and his conception of non-resistance. About Europe he says, “[b]y a sharp contrast, Europe, at the very same time, was answering with the war of 1914, where it devoured itself,”¹⁴⁴ putting Europe’s “savage clamour” on display and, thus, flipping the dichotomy to make Europe the barbarity.

The new direct translations of Russian literature in Argentina still exhibit a similar drive to tilt the scale of civilization-barbarity/ center-margin/ colonizer-colonized. One such translation is that of Mandelstam’s *Trip to Armenia* (2011) by Fulvio Franchi. Like Blok, Mandelstam, supposedly representing an Occidental look and voice, includes in his work admiration for the South and the East, and for the richness of the Armenian culture and wisdom of their people.¹⁴⁵ This is different from the period’s unfolding interest in

orientales árabe-turcas. En sus años de Cáucaso estuvo en contacto prolongado con la cultura mahometana, y sufrió fuertemente su impresión.

Poco tiempo después de 1870, comienzan a aparecer, en sus compilaciones de cuentos y leyendas para las escuelas primarias, cuentos árabes e indios. Cuando llegó la hora de su crisis religiosa, la Biblia no le bastó; no tardó en consultar las religiones del Oriente” (no. 167).

¹⁴⁴“Por un contraste punzante, Europa, en la misma hora, respondía con la guerra de 1914, donde se entredevoró”.

¹⁴⁵His work falls directly into the period when the Orient and especially the Caucasus became a romantic symbol of freedom: “For Russia of the 1930s and 1940s, the Caucasus played the role of revolutionary Greece for Byron or America for Chateaubriand” (*Russia Between West and East* 17). The beginning of the twentieth century is marked by Russia’s search for its “Asian genealogy” (Nivat qtd. in Laurelle 18). For more on the development of the interest in the Orient in Russia, see “The Orient in Russian Thought at the Turn of the Century” by Laruelle in *Russia Between West and East*. Yet, while Russia “colonizes” the

Japanese culture and poetry,¹⁴⁶ that awoke in Europe and later in Latin America, in that it is not an exotification, but rather an identification. Mandelstam in his poem inverts the entire dichotomy and, in calling himself Maugli, recognizes himself as part of the 'barbarity,' while admiring the richness of the Armenian culture.¹⁴⁷ Since Russia's relationship with the Orient can be described as parallel to one between a colony and its colonizer,¹⁴⁸ identifying themselves with the Armenian people¹⁴⁹ connects them to the marginalized within the Russian culture and literature. Through their concentration on

Orient, Latin America through its translations manages to use the same works precisely as a decolonizing tool. See note 132.

¹⁴⁶ It is almost ironic that one of the ways in which the image of the Orient was constructed in Europe and later in Latin America was with the help of Ballets Russes: "Paris of the beginning of the century got to know the legendary pomp, the opulence – Asian – of famous Diaghilev's Ballets Russos, in Lev Bakst's exuberant sets and costumes that inspired the designer Poiret, Paris' King of fashion till after the Great War" [París de comienzos de siglo conoció el fasto legendario, el lujo – asiático – de los célebres Ballets Russos de Diaghilev, en los exuberantes decorados y trajes de León Bakst, explosión de colores en telas increíbles, que inspiraron al modista Poiret, rey de la moda en París hasta después de la Gran Guerra] (Ioana C. Zlotescu Simatu in the Introduction to *Seis falsas novelas* 8).

¹⁴⁷ The interest of Russian poets in Armenia and Georgia has been continuously overlooked by Russian critics, as noted in Kldiashvili's *Russian writers about Georgia* (1980), not coincidentally.

¹⁴⁸ As Laruelle rightly notes, the center, Moscow, has been perceived even by Russian provinces, within the confines of the country, as a colonial power (*Russia Between West and East* 16). More on the issue in Aleksandr Ètkind, *Internal Colonization: Russia's Imperial Experience*.

¹⁴⁹ There is a big Armenian community in Argentina that found shelter here fleeing from the genocide by the Ottoman Empire in 1915-1923 that exterminated 1500000 Armenians. In spite of its centurial age, the conflict has still not been settled even in the question of its very definition. The Turkish government up to this day does not agree to call it a genocide and has recently criticized Pope Francis for using the word "genocide" in reference to the conflict (Kennedy). There is around 130,000 Armenians in Argentina today most of whom are the descendants of those refugees. One of the streets, calle Acevedo, where many Armenians received their new home was renamed into calle Armenia to reflect the identity and culture of its inhabitants. Although concentrated in their own *barrio* in Palermo, Armenians are not isolated from the Argentine world and have always played an important part in the kaleidoscope of the Argentine culture. Centro Armenio de la República Argentina located on calle Armenia 1366 where cultural festivals and artistic exhibitions take place, shares space with a popular *milonga* "La viruta" that attracts crowds of *porteños* and tourists seeking to dance tango, along with folklore and swing. Apart from the explicit Armenian marks on the Argentine literature, like for example the poetry of Ana Arzoumanian, there are some subtle ones as well. Borges, for instance, started his interview with Rosa Majian by saying that his mother admired William Saroyan's work and translated *The Human Comedy* into Spanish. "I also recall a great Armenian director, Reuben Mamoulian," says Borges, "I think he was Steinberg's best disciple. In fact, I was more interested in Mamoulian than in Orson Welles" (qtd. in Majian 54). For more general information on the Armenian immigration in Argentina see Boulgourdjian-Toufeksian, Névida, and Juan C. Toufeksian, *Inmigración armenia en la Argentina: Perfiles de una historia centenaria a partir de las listas de pasajeros (1889-1979)*.

work that inverts the power relation between the center and the margin, Argentine writers bolstered their own struggle against colonial hegemony with the words of Russian writers.

As stated earlier, this interest and identification with the “barbarity” of the Argentine writers transpires not only in their translation – through the selection and fragmentation of works, – but in the process of the adaptation of Russian works as well. An interview with Clara Vaccaro, the director of Chekhov’s *El pedido de mano* (*The Proposal*) presented at the Museo de Artes Plásticas Eduardo Sívori in Buenos Aires in the summer of 2015, provides an opportunity to glimpse the possible reasons behind her interest in Russian “barbarity.” In her version of “El pedido de mano” Vaccaro moves the setting of the play from Moscow or St. Petersburg, the two cities where the action of the play would usually take place, to some town near the Black Sea that she sees as an ethnic melting pot of Russia – Jews, Gypsies, Tatars among many others.¹⁵⁰ “I will situate it in a place close to the Black Sea,” a region where all are mixed, says Vaccaro. Translation was the catalyst for her decision. She states that in a Spanish translation, one of the characters uses a word “Jesuit” as an insult, which leads her to the idea of making the character receiving the insult a Jew. Thus, although hearing Jewish music in Chekhov’s play can be shocking (at least, for a Russian person entering a theater to see Chekhov’s play in Buenos Aires), in the case of *El pedido de mano*, the director’s choice of music is governed by the same interest for the marginal inside the Russian canon. Vaccaro also emphasizes that some elements of the play came in part from the Gypsy culture, that, as she rightly notices, constitutes a part of Russian culture as well. This can be seen in the costumes – the

¹⁵⁰ From an interview on August 11, 2015, conducted in Clara’s apartment in Buenos Aires.

protagonist is dressed like some precarious sultan or a Cossack – that for its mixture of different styles and cultures in Russian would be precisely characterized as “Gypsy style” («по-цигански».) Vaccaro says that Argentina, being a country that received immigrants from all corners of the world, was always curious to know about those “marginal places.”

It is clear that this interest in the marginalized and Alberto Gerchunoff’s interest in gauchos have a common root as well: the identification with barbarity. Martínez Estrada remembers Sarmiento’s comparison of Argentine country people with Tatars: “When in *Facundo* our country people are defined as having customs similar to those of the Tartars and the Arabs, these characteristics are attributed to the plains” (*X-Ray* 68). Jewish people, the film based on Gerchunoff’s book reminds us, were also marginalized: “In the Tsarist Russia, Jewish people lived marginalized. This situation was often aggravated by outbreaks of violence, called “pogroms” that would destroy the defenseless communities.”¹⁵¹

It is not only in literature and theater that the Oriental side of Russia wins over the interest of the Argentine; the same happens in music. Diego Bosquet, Professor of Choral Conducting at the Universidad Nacional de Cuyo and a principal investigator of one of the first direct Russian translators in Argentina, Alejo Abutcov,¹⁵² points out that it is always ‘lo oriental,’ – the Oriental traits – in Russian music that attracts Argentines. Moreover, this oriental flavor is what Russian music is associated with. “But, of course, for a Russian person,” he says, “it is not Russian. We have no interest in the truly Russian part, in the

¹⁵¹ “En la Rusia de los zares el pueblo judío vivía marginado. Está situación era a menudo agravada por estallidos de violencia, llamados “pogroms” que asolaban a las comunidades indefensas” (*Los gauchos judíos*).

¹⁵² See the last part of Chapter 2 of this dissertation.

mujiks” (Bosquet). He explains that Chaikovsky, for example, was for a long time not popular in Latin America, because the music was deemed too Western. Ironically, in Russia, he was initially not accepted for not representing Russian music.

Going from the margins back to the center, one of the most influential Russian writers for Argentines is, of course, Dostoyevsky, who continues to be a source of inspiration, images and thoughts euphonious with the way they perceive the world. For Omar Lobos, “Argentina is a Rusophile and very Dostoyevskian country.”¹⁵³ Raúl Scalabrini Ortiz says that “Buenos Aires has something Russian in it, in the results, from different causes. Kuprin’s *Yama*, for example, is an Argentine novel, the same with some passages from *Humiliated and Insulted*”.¹⁵⁴

Borges, in his preface to *Los Demonios*, rejects any proximity to or identification with Russian literary characters when he talks about *Crimen y castigo*, but this changes drastically when addressing *Los Demonios*. The latter turns the Russian steppe into the Argentine Pampa, and Dostoevsky’s characters into “the old irresponsible Argentines”:

Just like the discovery of love, the discovery of the sea, the discovery of

¹⁵³ “Argentina es un país muy rusófilo y muy dostoiievskiano” (qtd. in Fontán 4). And when an Argentine says that Dostoevsky’s characters “se le mitieron en la piel [got under their skin],” it is not necessarily a metaphor. Facundo Leone, a bookseller at Guadaquivir, one of more than four hundred bookstores of Buenos Aires, has a tattoo on his arm with a name of *Crime and Punishment*’s protagonist, Rodion Romanovich Raskolnikov, written in Russian, but, as Facundo himself was quick to point out, it has a spelling mistake: an “e” instead of an “c.” Although I discovered this in a spontaneous conversation with Facundo at the bookstore, I also later discovered an article, “Literatura rusa, en clave porteña” about Facundo that has a photo of the tattoo as well. Orthographic mistakes in Russian words or names is not an uncommon phenomenon in the literary world either, even in the work of the writers with Russian roots, those who translated Russian literature. For example, when César Tiempo quotes Dostoevsky – first in Russian and then in Spanish translation – in his “Con Igor Stravinsky,” he writes: “‘Ertzo, eto Glavno’ -- ¡el corazón, esto es lo importante!” (*Mi Tío Scholem Alejtem y otros parientes*), which in reality should spell “Serdze – eto glavnoe”.

¹⁵⁴ Buenos Aires tiene algo de ruso, en resultados, con causas distintas. *Yama* de Kuprin, por ejemplo, es una novela argentina y lo son asimismo, algunos pasajes de *Humillados y ofendidos*” (qtd. in *Manos de obra* 45).

Dostoyevsky marks a memorable date in our life. [...] To read a book by Dostoyevsky is to penetrate a great city you don't know or that is covered by the shade of a battle. *Crimen y castigo*, had revealed to me, among other things, a world alien to me. But I started to read *Los Demonios* and something very strange happened. I felt that I was back in my homeland. The novel's steppes seemed a magnification of the Pampa. Varvara Petrovna and Stepan Trofimovich Verjovensky were, in spite of their cumbersome names, old irresponsible Argentines.¹⁵⁵

Similarly to the fusion of the steppe and the pampa produced for Borges' by his reading of *Los Demonios*, Roberto Arlt also projects the Russian literature characters onto the Argentine soil in "La amarga alegría del mentiroso," in his *Aguafuertes porteñas*:

Fedor Dostoevsky has painted in his *Stepanchikovo and its inhabitants* the figure of a brilliant jealous character: Foma Fomich. And Foma is brilliant because in him the excess of vanity goes together with such a great disdain towards the others, that despicable character, that he is in reality, is suddenly turned into a spectacle of the grotesque. [...]

In Buenos Aires there also lives and thinks Foma Fomich. In the last corner of a slum, Foma will have his own form and idiosyncrasy. Certain details will vary, but in substance, the *porteño* Foma is like the Russian of the Bulgarian Foma. For this case, it's all the same.

Who has been to cafes without meeting a Foma. That is where Foma can be more frequently and abundantly found.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁵ "Como el descubrimiento del amor, como el descubrimiento del mar, el descubrimiento de Dostoievski marca una fecha memorable de nuestra vida. [...] Leer un libro de Dostoievski es penetrar en una gran ciudad, que ignoramos, o en la sombra de una batalla. *Crimen y castigo* me había revelado, entre otras cosas, un mundo ajeno a mí. Inicié la lectura de *Los demonios* y algo muy extraño ocurrió. Sentí que había regresado a la patria. La estepa de la obra era una magnificación de la Pampa. Varvara Petrovna y Stepan Trofimovich Verjovenski eran, pese a sus incómodos nombres, viejos argentinos irresponsables" ("Prólogo").

¹⁵⁶ "Fedor Dostoievski ha pintado en *Stepanchikovo y sus habitantes* la figura de un genial envidioso: Foma Fomitch. Y Foma es genial, porque en él el exceso de vanidad va acompañado de tal rencor a los otros, que de una figura vil, que es en realidad, de pronto presenta el divino espectáculo de lo grotesco. [...] Diríase que Foma fuera exclusivamente un personaje ruso; pero ello no es verdad. En Buenos Aires también vive y cavila Foma Fomitch. En el último rincón de un arrabal, Foma tendrá una forma y una idiosincrasia. Variarán determinados detalles, pero en substancia, el Foma porteño es como el Foma ruso o búlgaro. Para el caso es lo mismo.

¿Quién ha recorrido los cafés literarios sin conocer a un Foma? Allí es donde con más frecuencia y abundancia encontramos a Foma" (*Aguafuertes porteñas*).

Goštautas then, knowingly or not, defines Arlt's Erdosain, the main character of *Los siete locos*, in a similar manner: "Erdosain is the man from the Notes from Underground."¹⁵⁷

Similarly to Borges, Ernesto Sábato sees affinities between the two literatures in the fact that both of them represent open space, both physically and metaphorically. He thinks that the plain – pampa in Argentina and steppe in Russia, two endless, monotonous and dangerous terrains, where one's will and character can barely change anything in a person's life – determines the character and the philosophy of life of the Argentine¹⁵⁸ and Russian people (qtd. in González 122).

Although a comparison of the Russian steppe with the Argentine pampa has already become cliché, a discerning look evidences an infinite range of shades of difference that every similarity conceals. The endlessness of the two terrains¹⁵⁹ means freedom for one, monotony for others and melancholy for others still. For Hernan Silva,¹⁶⁰ the owner of the bookstore "Memorias del subsuelo", the steppe that he saw in Serguei Bondarchuk's film "The Steppe",¹⁶¹ was reminiscent of the pampa he saw as a little boy with his grandfather,

¹⁵⁷ "Erdosain es el hombre de Memorias de subsuelo" (qtd. in Odnopozova 188).

¹⁵⁸ Although Cozarinsky rejects the idea of the pampa being a founding element of the *porteños*: "es el gusto a cloro del agua de la canilla, el urbanismo salvaje y la locuacidad confianzuda de su gente lo que nos formó; no la vacía inmensidad de la pampa, ni los cristalinos lagos de montaña, ni las selvas lujuriosas" (*Vudú urbano* 52).

¹⁵⁹ The pampa's endlessness is reflected in its very name, since, as Borges wittingly notices: "¿Quién dio con la palabra *pampa*, con esa palabra infinita que es como un sonido y su eco?" (*El tamaño de mi esperanza* 21).

¹⁶⁰ The interview with Hernán took place on July 25, 2015 at the bookstore located in the basement of the Buenos Aires Galerías, quite appropriately named "Memorias del subsuelo."

¹⁶¹ The movie theater "Cosmos" was located on 2046 Avenida Corrientes and showed Russian films that started to operate in 1955 under the control of Isaac Argentino Vainikoff. It is curious that in an article "Tolstoy en el cinematógrafo" published by *Claridad* (no. 167) on September 22, 1928, cinema is called "the most Tolstoian of the arts [el más tolstoyano de las artes]." It says that Russia is the country that has most followed Tolstoy's doctrines in what concerns cinema. Tolstoy's work served as an inspiration for the best films and has been taken to screen the most. The first film adaptations of his work were made by the French and the Germans. "Pathé Cinema's 'Sonata de Kreuzer' saw light for the first time in 1916, almost

a landscape that to him represents freedom. The association of pampa with freedom also appears in Arlt's *Los siete locos* where the Gold Prospector says about the pampa: "When you're up against solitude, all the dangers, sadness, the sun, the infinite empty plains, you become a new man... completely different from the herd of slaves eking out an existence in the city¹⁶²" (153). This echoes Raskolnikoff's vision of the steppe:

Raskolnikov walked out of the shed and right to the bank, sat down on some logs piled near the shed, and began looking at the wide, desolate river. From the high bank a wide view of the surrounding countryside opened out. A barely audible song came from the far bank opposite. There, on the boundless, sun-bathed steppe, nomadic yurts could be seen, like barely visible black specks. There was freedom, there a different people lived, quite unlike those here, there time itself seemed to stop, as if centuries of Abraham and his flocks had not passed.¹⁶³ (*Crime and Punishment*)

The same feeling of freedom and protection, can be seen in the old Gaucho Don

Estanislao's comments about the pampa in Gerchunoff's *Gauchos judíos*:

His pure simple soul was also relaxed in the warmth and security of this glorious night; beneath his incomparable native sky that offered protection, warmth and freedom. At that moment, they heard the bell of an ox tinkle softly near the corral and the pleasant homely sound lent a further reassurance.

The old Gaucho sighed deeply and felt himself nestling into the warm protective embrace of his native lands. (Gerchunoff 98)

According to Perla Sneh, the author of the Introduction to the *Gauchos judíos*

at the same time with the adaptation of "Ana Karenina" badly filmed by the Germans" [Un "Sonata de Kreuzer" de la Pathé Cinema, vio la luz en 1916, casi paralelamente a una adaptación de "Ana Karenina" malamente filmada por los alemanes] (*Claridad* no. 167).

¹⁶² "Desafiando la soledad, los peligros, la tristeza, el sol, lo infinito de la llanura, uno se siente otro hombre... distinto del rebaño de esclavos que agoniza la ciudad" (122).

¹⁶³ "Раскольников вышел из сарая на самый берег, сел на складенные у сарая бревна и стал глядеть на широкую и пустынную реку. С высокого берега открывалась широкая окрестность. С дальнего другого берега чуть слышно доносилась песня. Там, в облитой солнцем необозримой степи, чуть приметными точками чернелись кочевые юрты. Там была свобода и жили другие люди, совсем не похожие на здешних, там как бы самое время остановилось, точно не прошли еще века Авраама и стад его. Раскольников сидел, смотрел неподвижно, не отрываясь; мысль его переходила в грезы, в созерцание; он ни о чем не думал, но какая-то тоска волновала его и мучила" (261).

published by the Biblioteca Nacional in 2007, together with the feeling of freedom and protection, pampa can also bring a feeling of an enormous helplessness for those Jewish people who, having escaped *pogroms* and found themselves in this enormous open space, know that they have nowhere to return. A similar fear overcomes Yegorushka, the protagonist of Bondarchuk's film, as he faces a powerful storm in the Steppe, being alone for the first time. No wonder for Borges, the Pampa is at the same "a great force and great meekness."¹⁶⁴

The pampa's endlessness can also be seen as monotonous, as in Chekhov's *The Steppe*:

But a little time passed, the dew evaporated, the air grew stagnant, and the disillusioned steppe began to wear its jaded July aspect. [...] the sky, which seems terribly deep and transparent in the steppes, [...] seemed now endless, petrified with dreariness...

How stifling and oppressive it was! The chaise raced along, while Yegorushka saw always the same – the sky, the plain, the low hills. . . . The music in the grass was hushed, the petrels had flown away, the partridges were out of sight, rooks hovered idly over the withered grass; they were all alike and made the steppe even more monotonous. (*The Steppe*)

Carlos Astrada also describes the pampa as a "monotonous and melancholic sea"¹⁶⁵ in his *Metafísica de la pampa*. The endlessness of the steppe and the pampa inevitably translates into an infinite loneliness. Chekhov says it makes one feel as alone as the limits of a grave:

When you gaze a long while fixedly at the deep sky thoughts and feelings for some reason merge in a sense of loneliness. One begins to feel hopelessly solitary, and everything one used to look upon as near and akin becomes infinitely remote and valueless; the stars that have looked down from the sky thousands of years already, the mists and the incomprehensible sky itself, indifferent to the brief life of man, oppress the soul with their silence when one is left face to face with them and tries

¹⁶⁴ "una gran fuerza y una gran mansedumbre" (*El tamaño de mi esperanza* 22).

¹⁶⁵ "mar monótono y melancólico" (17).

to grasp their significance. One is reminded of the solitude awaiting each one of us in the grave, and the reality of life seems awful . . . full of despair. . . . (*The Steppe*)

Chekhov's description is very similar to the one that Ezequiel Martínez Estrada¹⁶⁶ gives in his seminal work, *Radiografía de la pampa*, which also underlines the pampa's loneliness:

The loneliness of the landscape implies another solitude from which it is in part derived. [...] The natural aridity is joined by that barrenness felt only by the soul, but felt very deeply, when under one's feet there is nothing but the physical support of the world. The solitude that spreads through the soul with unmotivated anguish and subtracts human interest from the spectacle of panoramic beauty exists because of a lack of history. [...] There, a man is alone, isolated as if he were in the field of vision of a microscope or a telescope. (137)

Loneliness, suffering, and death bring the Russian steppe and the Argentine pampa together in Martínez Estrada's book:

In that stony ground grows a suffering flora composed of stubborn plants. The Argentine steppe is so similar to Siberia that even the suffering human being is not omitted. The noxious flora, sparse and bitter, extends from the precordillera to the Neuquén. [...] it is a vegetation like that of the circle of suicides. Behind those plants hid terrified souls who were to be found there by evil people seeking to destroy them. In the midst of those plants man sometimes dies, pursued relentlessly by terrible diseases. He dies alone, like a dog that bites its liver or its peritoneum.

¹⁶⁶ Ezequiel Martínez Estrada (1895-1964) was an Argentine essayist, writer, poet, and one of the most distinguished intellectuals of the XX century. Although the work that he is most known for is *Radiografía de la pampa* (1933), he started his literary career as a poet, publishing six books of poems between 1918-1929. *Radiografía de la pampa* is his fundamental and most polemic work that he wrote in response to Uriburu's military coup of 1930. As Graciela Corvalán describes it, it is one of his first experiments at social psychology in Latin America ("El hombre y su obra"). Horacio González, former director of the Biblioteca Nacional, in a documentary by the historian Gabriel Di Meglio, says that this book contains a complete idea about Argentina (*Ezequiel Martínez Estrada*). He was also an active contributor and part of the editorial committee of the magazine *Sur*. Many of his writings are dedicated to the life and work of Sarmiento, including his biography and such essays as "Sarmiento a los 120 años", "La inmortalidad de *Facundo*", "Sarmiento y los Estados Unidos" that are included in Ezequiel Martínez Estrada's *Meditaciones Sarmientinas*. Although still staying within the binary system of "civilization" and "barbarity," he nevertheless inverted the terms and criticized Sarmiento's "civilization" project. For him our civilization was a barbarity dressed up as civilization (González in Di Meglio). He was also a close friend of Horacio Quiroga who with his "Cuentos de la selva" was bringing the so-called "barbarity" to what we call "civilization" ("El hombre que nos enseñó a tener frío", *Página 12*). Other of his works that are central to our dissertation are «El colonialismo como realidad» and *Muerte y transfiguración de Martín Fierro*, a complete critical analysis of José Hernández' *Martín Fierro*.

(X-Ray 148)

But both in the Russian steppe and the Argentine pampa, loneliness and freedom can also lead to an endless imagination, the imagination that turns the steppe and the pampa into a boundless field of creation. We see this in Chekhov. For example, Yegorushka, the protagonist of Chekhov's *The Steppe*, thinks:

Everything looks different from what it is. You drive on and suddenly see standing before you right in the roadway a dark figure like a monk; it stands motionless, waiting, holding something in its hands. . . . Can it be a robber? The figure comes closer, grows bigger; now it is on a level with the chaise, and you see it is not a man, but a solitary bush or a great stone. Such motionless expectant figures stand on the low hills, hide behind the old barrows, peep out from the high grass, and they all look like human beings and arouse suspicion. (*The Steppe*)

The steppe, thus, reveals itself as a projection of our interior, a reflection of ourselves. Like the pampa, it becomes an enormous white screen onto which we project our internal world, and through which we create the very world that surrounds us: "Landscape is lacking, and man is lacking; bottomless chasms open toward the past and the future; one's mind improvises arias on well-known themes, creating its own free, unleashed destiny. [...] The landscape of the plains if there is such, assumes the form of our dreams, the shape of a chimera; it becomes sterile when the dream is unworthy" (*X-Ray* 7). It becomes this "horizontal plane for one to project and disperse his indeterminate and fleeing being."¹⁶⁷ No wonder there is a windmill that appears at the very beginning of Yegorushka's journey through the steppe and seems to be following him throughout:

At first in the distance before them a broad, bright, yellow streak of light crept over the ground where the earth met the sky, near the little barrows and the windmills,

¹⁶⁷ "plano horizontal sobre el que se proyecta y dispersa su ser, impreciso y en deserción" (Astrada 18).

which in the distance looked like tiny men waving their arms. [...]

[...] In the distance a windmill waved its sails. . . . [...]

But now the wheat, too, had flashed by; again the parched plain, the sunburnt hills, the sultry sky stretched before them; again a hawk hovered over the earth. In the distance, as before, a windmill whirled its sails, and still it looked like a little man waving his arms. (*The Steppe*)

Already in Sarmiento's *Facundo: Civilización y Barbarie*, the pampa¹⁶⁸ is turned into an extension of the incomprehensible, since only from there – where the material, the common, the palpable end –, emerge the lies coming from the imagination and from the ideal world.

In this quixotic way, Borges also sees the steppe as a space for creation and lies, as evidenced in his often-quoted joke about Mosche and Daniel who meet each other in the middle of a Russian steppe:

“Where are you going, Daniel,” says one.

“To Sebastopol,” says the other.

Mosche then looked at him and concluded:

“You are lying, Daniel. You tell me that you're going to Sebastopol so that I think that you're going to Nizny Novgorod, but the truth is that you're really going to Sebastopol. You're lying, Daniel!”¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁸ For more about the Pampa in Sarmiento's *Facundo*, see Horacio González, “Función estética y significación histórica de las compañías pastoras en el “Facundo” in *Textos hispanoamericanos: De Sarmiento a Sarduy*, pp. 66-72;

¹⁶⁹ - ¿Adonde vas, Daniel? – dijo el uno.

- A Sebastopol – dijo el otro. Entonces Mosche lo miró fijo y dictaminó:

- Mientes, Daniel. Me respondes que vas a Sebastopol para que yo piense que vas a Nijni-Novgóród, pero lo cierto es que vas realmente a Sebastopol. ¡Mientes, Daniel!” (*El idioma de los argentinos* 11-12).



Figure 1. Still shots from Bondarchuk's *The Steppe*

In *Gauchos judíos* the pampa, the steppe and the Russians finally overlap:

It was a pale wintry morning, and it was cold. The sun was coming up over the hills and tinting the frost that covered the ground. The fences, too, were frosted, as were the roofs of the ranch houses and the roadway, and this little piece of Entre Ríos looked more like a village in the north, a little cut of the frozen Russian steppes dropped on the warm, friendly soil of the Gauchos. (Gerchunoff 71)

References to Russia permeate Gerchunoff's novel.

"Do you remember how, back in Russia, you laid the ritual tables for our Passover's glory?"¹⁷⁰ (*The Jewish Gauchos* XX), Gerchunoff asks in the

Prologue, immediately making the nostalgia for Russia a setting of this Argentine work. In the film

by the homonymous name, based on Gerchunoff's novel, everything echoes Russia from the very start:

the first phrase, the first images – a samovar,

Russian steppes (fig. 1).

For one of Gerchunoff's characters, Rabbi Abraham, what brings a gaucho and a *mujik* together

is the attitude of a Jew: "The Gaucho, he thought, is

¹⁷⁰ ¿Recordáis cuando tendíais, allá en Rusia, las mesas rituales para glorificar la Pascua?" (*Los gauchos judíos* 41).

not the same as a Russian *mujik*, but he himself is still the same Jew, and apparently the situation doesn't change. A horse is stolen? Then it must be a Jew who stole it" (*The Jewish Gauchos* 115). Both Chekhov and Gerchunoff caricature Jews of the steppe and the pampa, especially through the difficulty that the narrator and reader will have in understanding the Jewish language. Chekhov's narrator, instead of translating or leaving their words in Hebrew, imitates the way they talk:

Still sighing, Moisey Moisevitch and the Jewess went to the chest of drawers and began talking in Yiddish. Moisey Moisevitch spoke in a low bass undertone, and altogether his talk in Yiddish was like a continual "ghaal-ghaal-ghaal-ghaal, . . ." while his wife answered him in a shrill voice like a turkeycock's, and the whole effect of her talk was something like "Too-too-too-too!" [...]

"Ghaal-ghaal-ghaal-ghaal!" said Moisey Moisevitch.

"Too-too-too-too!" answered the Jewess.

[...]

A little later Yegorushka, half asleep, heard Solomon in a hoarse hollow voice choked with hatred, in hurried stuttering phrases, talking about the Jews. At first he talked correctly in Russian, then he fell into the tone of a Jewish recitation, and began speaking as he had done at the fair with an exaggerated Jewish accent.

"Stop! . . ." Father Christopher said to him. "If you don't like your religion you had better change it, but to laugh at it is a sin; it is only the lowest of the low who will make fun of his religion."

"You don't understand," Solomon cut him short rudely. "I am talking of one thing and you are talking of something else. . . ."

"One can see you are a foolish fellow," sighed Father Christopher. "I admonish you to the best of my ability, and you are angry. I speak to you like an old man quietly, and you answer like a turkeycock: 'Bla---bla---bla!' You really are a queer fellow. . . (*The Steppe*)

Gerchunoff also often emphasizes the lack of his Jewish characters' understanding of Spanish¹⁷¹: "Rabbi Abraham was dignified, solemn and courteous. He nodded frequently

¹⁷¹ The problem with learning a language was not fictional. Due to an enormous number of immigrants coming to Buenos Aires, understanding and speaking Spanish became a common issue. Dina Odnopozova equalizes defending bad translations of Russian literature with defending the rights of new immigrants

to the friendly questions and comments without fully understanding their meanings”; and, the other way around, of Hebrew by the Argentines: “Don Abraham composed a hymn of praise for his friend’s beautiful daughter. It was conceived in his usual elegance and erudition and, after a great effort, he succeeded in translating it into Spanish”. He also draws attention to the inability of the Jews to speak the language: “Jacobo interrupted when he saw his mistress stumbling over her Spanish”; and to their limited vocabulary: “Rabbi Abraham listened in silence, and then – as was customary for an old debater – mediated on what had been said. When he answered, his tone was courteous and persuasive, and he used gestures to help along his sparse Spanish vocabulary¹⁷²” (*The Jewish Gauchos* 96, 97, 114). Difficulties with understanding Spanish constitute part of Gerchunoff’s own story. In his *Nuestro Señor Don Quijote*, he remembers that as he was reading *El Quijote*, he certainly “was not getting into the depths of the meaning of that language, so different from the one heard at the factory.”¹⁷³

The entire language of Gerchunoff’s novel seems to be made of an implicit translation from Russian and Hebrew. For example:

Awaiting the new arrivals recalled deep and lasting memories for most of the crowd. Many remembered the morning on which they had fled the unhappy realm

learning to read in the work of such writers as Roberto Arlt: “Because of the rather primitive format and poor quality of Dostoevsky’s translations into Spanish available at the time to Argentine readers, he [Arlt] was regarded as a spokesman for the working class and immigrants, many of whom only recently learned to read. As a result, the cult of Dostoevsky in Argentina of the 1920s was more than a personal preference based on taste, but rather – a social statement (deliberately made by the Boedo group)” (187).

¹⁷² It reminds us of the real episode that occurred to Vaslav Nijinsky during his first visit to Buenos Aires where he decided to marry the great Hungarian dancer Romola de Pulszky: “Nijinsky se casó en *Bartolomé Mitre y Suipacha*, esquina tradicional de Buenos Aires, el 13 de septiembre de 1913. A las 13 en la sección 13 del registro civil se requirió de un traductor que causó mucha gracia a Romola: “La figura espantosa de un español muy estirado”. Nijinsky contestó en ruso y su esposa en húngaro y francés, mientras el magistrado decía algunas palabras en español” (Nogués 186).

¹⁷³ “no penetraba bien el sentido de aquel idioma, tan distinto al que oía en la fábrica” (12).

of the Czar. Then they recalled their arrival in this promised land, in this new Jerusalem they had heard proclaimed in the synagogues and had read about in the circulars carrying little versus in Russian, praising the soil of this country:

*“To Palestine, to the Argentine,
We’ll go – to sow;
To live as friends and brothers;
To be free!”¹⁷⁴
(The Jewish Gauchos 42)*

Later on, the mayor says translating a Russian proverb into Spanish: “Moisés: como decíamos en Rusia, yo deseo que tu tierra sea siempre fecunda y que, por abundante, no logres juntar su fruto” (*Los gauchos judíos* 62) [“As we used to say in Russia, Moisés: May your land be always fertile, and may the fruit of your orchards be so plentiful that you can’t gather it all” (*The Jewish Gauchos* 46)].

The Russian language starts to weave itself into the very texture of the pampa, for example, when Don Jacobo, one of Gerchunoff’s characters, gives such names to oxen as Czar, Moscow, or Czarevitch (*The Jewish Gauchos* 63). This character later notices that “Russian and Jewish songs were being sung in all parts of the caravan, the voices fresh and happy. At other points, the songs of this, their new country could be heard being sung in a language that few understood” (*The Jewish Gauchos* 83). No wonder Francisco García Calderón starts his introduction to Gerchunoff’s *Nuestro Señor Don Quijote* by saying that

¹⁷⁴ “La espera de aquella multitud evocaba en cada uno recuerdos borrosos. Cada uno veía la mañana en que abandonó el fosco imperio del zar y revivía la llegada a la tierra prometida, a la Jerusalem anunciada en las prédicas de la sinagoga y en hojas sueltas se proclamaba, en versos rusos, la excelencia del suelo:

A Palestina y Argentina,
iremos a sembrar,
iremos amigos y hermanos,
a ser libres y a vivir...”
(*Los gauchos judíos* 58)

Alberto Gerchunoff, being of Russian origin, brings new accents into Argentine literature (5) and ends it by reiterating Gerchunoff's Russian roots: "Let's not forget this powerful writer who, in dense Cervantesque language, will tell us stories of dread and pain that Dostoevsky will teach him".¹⁷⁵

This book is crucial to understanding the role of translation in Argentine literature, and Argentine culture in general, because it emphasizes the fact that any communication, especially between cultures, is a translation. It establishes a distance between the original text, thought, and image and the reader's perception of them. For example, in the chapter "The Owl", Doña Eva is looking at a sunset in the pampas but sees in this view a landscape from an old Hebraic poem that the reader cannot read directly and has to try to imagine through the narrator's paraphrased prose: "The sun was going down now; [...] With the pale green of the pasture grass, the yellow hue lent a sweet melancholy to the scene facing the women, and the old lady remembered an old Hebraic poem of a lone shepherdess leading home her sleepy flock of sheep under Canaan's sky" (*The Jewish Gauchos* 76).

Such examples as Gerchunoff's novel serve as proof that the soil of Argentine literature – its creative methods, its style, its literary characters and landscapes – are permeated by Russian literature in translation, Borges reminds us, and, hence, re-created.

II History of Translation of Russian Literature in Latin America

The first Russian literary work that was translated, or, as Schnazer prefers to say

¹⁷⁵ "No olvidemos a este fuerte escritor que nos dirá en densa lengua cervantesca historias de pavor y de dolor que le enseñará Dostoiiewsky" (8).

“adapted,” from French into Spanish was Gavriil Derzhavin’s¹⁷⁶ “Oda al Ser Supremo” or “Ode to the Supreme Being,” originally written in 1784, translated into French not long after, and published in Spanish in the Catholic journal *La Religión* in Barcelona in 1838. Monforte states that the translation inherited key flaws of the French translation – it doesn’t respect the composition, meter, rhyme, or accents of the original, turning it into “a series of lines lacking expressive force, wrapped into an excessive affectation, unable to transmit the greatness of the Russian original.”¹⁷⁷ Six years later it appeared in Santiago de Chile, presumably making 1844 the year of the first appearance of a Russian translation of a literary text in Latin America. In the forties, the first Spanish translations – also from French – of Pushkin’s¹⁷⁸ short novels appeared in Spain: “El turbión de nieve” – one of *The*

¹⁷⁶ Gavriil Derzhavin (1743-1816) is considered one of the greatest Russian poets. His work marks the heyday of the Russian poetry, being an innovation within the genre of ode in the Russian literary tradition. In spite of the fact that he belongs to the Russian classicism, he did renew the tradition. He liberated poetry from the fetters of the stifled forms by using a simple language and writing about the everyday topics. Yuri Tynianov says in his «Архаисты и новаторы» (*Archaists and Innovators*): «Making the revolution in the sphere of the ode, having introduced in the lexicon of the high style elements of the middle (or even low), having oriented it towards the prose of satirical journals both in terms of composition and style, having developed its image to the limits of a lyrical fable, Derzhavin has not «lowered» the ode. [Производя революцию в области оды, внося в лексику высокого стиля элементы среднего (и даже низкого), ориентировав ее на прозу сатирических журналов и в композиционном и в стилистическом отношении, развив образ до пределов лирической фабулы, Державин не «снизил» оды] (Tynianov, *Archaists and Innovators* 75). Derzhavin is considered Pushkin’s precursor. He was among the first ones to recognize the poet’s genius.

¹⁷⁷ “una serie de versos carentes de fuerza expresiva, recubiertos de una excesiva afectación, e incapaces de transmitir la grandeza del original ruso” (309).

¹⁷⁸ It is interesting to note that Pushkin (1799-1837) did not only have African roots, but his ancestors’ last name was Hannibals, obviously connected to cannibals: “The poet’s mother Nadyezhda Osipovna, née Gannibal, was called “*la belle créole*.” Her black grandfather, Ibrahim Gannibal, had been kidnapped in his childhood from Central Africa, sold by slave traders to Turks, and then bought and sent as a “gift” to Tsar Peter the Great. Tsar Peter baptized the boy Abraham, raised him fondly, and, seeing his aptitude, made him his personal secretary, then sent him to study military engineering in France” (Lowenfield 23). That indirectly leads us back to the topic of anthropophagy and directly makes us think of Pushkin’s metathesis and literal translations from French in his poetry. His poetic language is a synthesis of the Church Slavonic, the Western European influences, influences and literal translations and the spoken Russian deeply rooted in the Russian folklore. It becomes even more important when we remember that Pushkin is considered *the* poet of Russia and the founder of the Russian literary language. Anna Akhmatova’s account that countless Russians’ last move before being taken in the middle of the night by Stalin’s Terror forces, “was to clutch

Tales of Belkin – was published in 1847 in *El Fénix* in Valencia, one year after it came out in Madrid in the *Revista Hispanoamericana*, and by 1850 in Santiago de Chile. For Monforte these translations

are no more than Spanish versions of some very romanticized and linguistically ennobled French translations, which as a consequence brought a loss of all the *realist and ironic details*. In these Spanish versions Pushkin's special traits and literary originality get blurred, for his works lose that balanced synthesis of brevity, concision, simplicity, and clarity through which the Russian poet could, getting rid of all the affectation and artificiality, recreate fictitious worlds, that managed to relate the Russian reality¹⁷⁹. (my emphasis)

In the sixties and seventies, translations of Turgenev and Tolstoy began to gain popularity. The *Revista Contemporánea* published three novels by Turgenev: *Rudín* (1883), *Humo* (1882), *Nido de hidalgos* (1883), and a short story *Toc...Toc...Toc...* (1876). *La España Moderna* in its “Colección de libros escogidos” (“Collection of Selected Books”) published Tolstoy's *La sonata a Kreutzer* (1891), *El Príncipe Nekhli* (1892), *Los casacos* (1892), *Mi confesión* (1893), *En el Cáucaso* (1892), *El camino de la vida* (1893), *La muerte* (1894), *Placeres viciosos* (1893). According to Monforte, French and Spanish critics considered these two authors “los más grandes e ilustres representantes de las nuevas corrientes literarias que llegaban de Europa oriental, [lo cual] repercutió muy notablemente en que las publicaciones de la literatura rusa en España se centraran en sus obras” (313-314).

at a pocket book of Pushkin's poetry” (Lowenfeld 2) confirms that. The greatest Russian poets and writers acknowledge themselves his “heirs and literary debtors” (Lowenfeld 3).

¹⁷⁹ “no son más que variantes en español de unas traducciones francesas muy romantizadas y ennoblecidas lingüísticamente, lo que trajo como consecuencia la pérdida de todos los detalles realistas e irónicos de los originales. En estas versiones españolas la fisonomía y originalidad literaria de Pushkin aparecen muy diluidas, pues sus obras perdieron esa equilibrada síntesis de brevedad, concisión, sencillez y claridad a través de la cual el poeta ruso pretendía, despojándose de toda afectación y artificialidad, recrear mundos ficticios que pudieran codearse con la realidad rusa” (310).

Barcelona, “as the center of the Spanish book industry” (Schanzer XIX), played a crucial role in the popularization of Russian literature in Spain and Latin America, not only because it published Spanish translations of Russian authors, but also because “its tremendous overseas trade placed Barcelonan versions of Russian writers in all public and private libraries in Spanish America” (Schanzer XIX). Barcelona’s Casa Editorial Maucci and Valencia’s F. Sempre and Company at the beginning of the 20th century “flooded the Hispanic world from the Pyrenees to Patagonia” (Schanzer XX) with their inexpensive paperbacks. Not long after, in 1922, it was Calpe, later named Espasa-Calpe, with its branches in Buenos Aires and Mexico City, that took a leading role in the diffusion of Russian literature, with its “mainly cheap editions of vintage translations” (Schanzer XX). With Calpe Director Nicolás de Urgoiti’s, first delegation in Buenos Aires, the city became the primary destination point of books shipped from Barcelona, and the starting point for their subsequent distribution through Southern America (Castellano 494).

Espasa-Calpe became the major “rusophile” publisher in Spain at the beginning of the XX century, annually publishing in its *Colección Universal* 10-12% of Russian literature. Its importance can be seen in Rafael Alberti’s words in *La arboleda perdida*, where he talks about his cousin, Luis, who worked at the publishing house:

Luis would receive me in his office of the Calpe house, the publishing house where he worked. It is to him that I owe the development of my literary culture, for, being always generous, rarely in the morning he wouldn’t come home with a pile of books under arm. That *Colección Universal*, with yellowy covers, initiated all of us in the knowledge of the great Russian writers, very little known before Clapa started publishing them. Gogol, Goncharov, Korolenko, Dostoevsky, Chekhov, Andreiev... would disturb me days and nights.¹⁸⁰

¹⁸⁰ “Luis me recibía en su oficina de la casa Calpe, editorial en la que trabajaba. A él le debo el aumento de mi cultura literaria, pues, siempre generoso, rara era la mañana en que no volvía a casa con un montón de

When it comes to Latin America, Santiago de Chile seems to Schanzer a logical place for the initial diffusion of Russian literature, “[i]n view of [its] [...] peaceful and consolidated state of the last century” (XIV). Mexico City and Buenos Aires, in the sixties, and Havana and Lima in the eighties and nineties later took on this role. With time, the diffusion of works in Latin America got much faster. For example, it took only six months for a translation of one of Tolstoy’s tales to appear in Caracas after its initial publication in Valencia in 1893. Although Santiago de Chile was the first to start the process, the leading role in the distribution of translations of Russian literature belonged to Buenos Aires, the central point of the book industry in Latin America.

It was Argentine and Chilean writers and poets who first started to do their own translations into Spanish, bypassing Spain but not France, Germany, or Italy.¹⁸¹ This was precisely the case with Dostoevsky’s work (with the exception of *Crimen y castigo* that was first published in Madrid). Because these translations were completed several years

libros bajo el brazo. Aquella Colección Universal, de pastas amarillentas, nos inició a todos en el conocimiento de los grandes escritores rusos, muy poco divulgados antes de que Calpe los publicara. Gogol, Goncharov, Korolenko¹⁸⁰, Dostoievski, Chejov, Andreiev... me turbaron los días y las noches” (160-161).

¹⁸¹ Even today, and even in an academic world we find articles of Russian criticism retranslated from other languages. For example, *Cuadernos de literatura* #39, from the Facultad de Humanidades y Ciencias de la Educación de Universidad Mayor de San Andrés (Bolivia), in August 2001 published a translation of Yuri Tynianov’s *Достоевский и Гоголь (К теории пародии)* (*Dostoevsky and Gogol (Towards a Theory of Parody)*) that was done from Italian by Beatriz Cajías de la Vega. Though in general the translation is good, it is riddled with misspellings of transliterated titles of Russian works, such as *Povest’ o tom kak possorilsia Iván Ivánovic’s Ivanom Nokoforovicem* (9), *Izbranie mesta iz perepiski s durz’iami* (14), *O teatre, ob nostoronmem zgljade na teàtr* (28).

The author of the introduction to the issue, Alba María Paz Soldán, does indicate that the translation of the articles based on the Italian translation published in 1968, “pero presenta un problema para los lectores, pues la fotocopia que nos llegó no incluye las notas, que han debido estar al final del libro” (5). I believe that at the time when technology and communication possibilities offer us a great opportunity for interaction between cultures and across languages, such kind of problems can be avoided, and if occurred, it should be acknowledged as a great limitation.

earlier than those done in Spain, readers in Latin America discovered his work before those in Spain (Obolenskaia 70). Due to bad reviews from French critics and very low quality of the translations of his work done by Galperin-Kaminsky, Dostoevsky was not popular in Spain until the 1920s. His *Brothers Karamazov* became available in Latin America in 1915, three years earlier than in Spain (*Los hermanos Karamazof*. Translated by De J. Zamacois. 2 vols. Buenos Aires: Biblioteca de “La Nación”, 1915) and as a more robust version than the one published by Maucci in Barcelona.

It is important to point out the crucial role of French translations not only because of their intermediary role between Russian originals and their Spanish translations, but because many readers in Spain and Latin America, even before the appearance of Spanish translations, were already familiar with some Russian works through their French versions, articles and biographies, written by French critics and disseminated in Spain. In this way, France imposed views and criteria to judge Russian literature, which were later adopted by Spanish and Latin American translators and critics (Obolenskaia 170). Roberto Monforte in his article “Las ediciones periódicas en la difusión de la literatura rusa” says: “France, the cultural beacon of Europe, in addition to imposing its language as a bridge-language¹⁸² between Russian literature and Spain, also exported its methods and interpretations of Russian works, which manifested itself in its turn in the selection of works, their genre and the translation methodology.”¹⁸³

¹⁸² Many works of literary criticism in *Claridad*, were left with the titles of Russian works in French, which for me, being Russian and not always understanding which Russian work was under discussion, was a clear indication of an anthropophagic nature of Latin American literature.

¹⁸³ “Francia, faro cultural europeo, además de imponer su idioma como lengua puente entre las letras rusas y España, también exportó sus métodos e interpretaciones de las obras rusas, lo que se manifestó a su vez en la elección de la obra, su género y el método traductológico” (308).

Even though the determining factors in the public's reception of the Russian authors were Emilio Castelar and Emilia Pardo Bazán's conferences and works, such as *La revolución y la novela en Rusia* (1887), their observations were still mainly based on the reading of the Russian literature in French translation and French books of criticism. In Anatole Leroy-Beaulieu's *L'Empire des Tsars et la Russie* and M. de Vogüé's *Le Roman Russe* (1886), Russian writers, "les génies grossiers et lamentables" (388), are even presented as lacking necessary novel-writing techniques and incapable of finding the appropriate artistic form to express the deep philosophical content of Russian novels. Another figure that added to the growth of interest in Russian literature in the Hispanic world, is Russian writer and historian K.L. Kystodiev, who at the time lived in Madrid and gave lectures about Russian literature in Ateneo in 1869. He knew Russian literature well and wrote for a range of Russian journals. Alekseev, the author of "Очерки истории испано-русских литературных отношений XVI-XIX веков" (*Essays on the History of Hispano-Russian Literary Relations in XVI-XIX centuries*), considers his lectures the first major attempt to expose Spanish people to the Russian language and Russian literature of the XIX century based on the original sources. It appears that Emilio Castelar was also among those who attended the conferences.

When considering Russian literature of the XIX century, it is always long novels that first come to mind. According to George Portnoff, Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina* and Dostoevsky's *La novela del presidio* were the first Russian literature translations published in Spain (both in 1888, both translated from French.) It was the translations of short works, however, that publishing houses focused on: "From Pushkin on, Russian writers of short

stories became a gold mine for editors of literary journals or the literary supplements of great newspapers, perhaps even more in Spanish America than in Spain” (Schanzer XV). Along with publication of short works, there were cases of both the shortening and the fragmentation of the original work that sometimes resulted in two or more books out of one known work. For example, *Barbas de estopa* and *Los muchachos* are taken from *The Brothers Karamazov*, as is “El pobrecito Ilucha”. “The title *Sonia* disguises the second booklet of a series reproducing *War and Peace*” (Schanzer XVII). Fragmentation of Russian works was also due to the fact that some works would be censored by Russia, and then further censored or only partially translated in Western Europe, and only then translated into Spanish and adapted for Latin American readers.

In Buenos Aires there were several Publishing Houses that published Russian literature translations. For example, *Biblioteca de La Nación* published Tolstoy’s *El Sitio de Sebastopol* (1903) and *Resurrección* (1905), Dostoevsky’s *El sueño del tío* (1910), *Los humildes* (1912), *El idiota* (1914), *Los hermanos Karamazof* (1915), *El crimen y el castigo* (1918), and *El eterno marido* (1919), among others. The series *Los intelectuales* published by Editorial Tognolini included Dostoevsky’s *Las etapas de locura* (1922), Maksim Gorky’s *En la cárcel* (1922), Leonid Andreiev’s *La risa roja* (1922), Chekhov’s *Los campesinos* (1922). There are some Russian titles published by the Maucci’s Buenos Aires branch, for instance, Tolstoy’s *La salvación está en vosotros* (1902). Other publishing houses like Editorial Tor (1916), M. Gleizer Editor (1922), Editorial Claridad (1922), and Babel (1922) are especially important in publications of foreign literature, including Russian.

Although there were a large number of publishing houses that focused on Russian literature, the number of works published and distributed by *Claridad* (1922-1960) cement the primacy of its role in the diffusion of these works (Cedro 49). It was founded by Antonio Zamora on February 20, 1922, being inspired by Henri Barbusse's *Clarté*. Along with world classics, it published two journals *Los Pensadores* and *Claridad*. Zamora called the latter "Tribuna del pensamiento izquierdista." The importance of the Editorial Claridad can be understood through the words of Emilio Corbière, Argentine writer and journalist:

Tengo 38 años, y puedo afirmar, que aprendí si no a leer, a formarme intelectualmente, en los libros de la Editorial Claridad. Mi abuelo – el escritor Emilio P. Corbière – y, especialmente mi padre, el Dr. Emilio Corbière, habían atesorado a lo largo de sus vidas una importante biblioteca, que aún conservo. Millares de libro, entre los que se destacan los publicados por Claridad. En esas páginas leí a los clásicos universales y nacionales; a los autores "malditos" que las editoriales tradicionales ignoraban; las obras más representativas del pensamiento social contemporáneo. [...] la historia de Claridad [...] forma parte indisoluble de la vida intelectual de los porteños. (Corbière 20)

The publishing house was located on Boedo Street, 83 and this location is not a coincidence. Run by members of the leftist writers' group Boedo, it was closely linked with the Communist party of Argentina. The very moment of its conception is intimately connected with Russian literature:

Later Zamora would remember that while he was fully immersed in the reading of "My Confession," by Lev Tolstoy, it occurred to him to count the lines that the book had. There were too many, so many that occupied four hundred pages. With this kind of information, he headed to the closest printing house "Crítica" and asked what the cost of an edition of a volume of that length would be.

- For two thousand copies, we charge you 175 pesos – was the response. Not a word more. He talked with a friend. They made some calculations. They counted their means and right there decided to dive into the adventure.¹⁸⁴

¹⁸⁴ "Zamora recordaría más tarde que mientras estaba entregado a la lectura de "Mi confesión", de León Tolstoi, tuvo la ocurrencia de contar las líneas de este libro. Eran muchísimas, tanto que ocupaban cuatrocientas páginas. Con semejante dato, se trasladó hasta una imprenta vecina de "Crítica" y preguntó

It started by publishing the works of some Russian and French writers in a journal called *Los Pensadores*. César Tiempo in his *Mi tío Scholem Aleijem y otros parientes* notes that this name can seem “hiperbólico y presuntuoso pero que, en realidad había heredado de una publicación manuable y barata, que lanzaba al precio mitológico de veinte centavos (viejos) el ejemplar, obras famosas de pensadores universales” (281). Russian literature was at the center of this publishing house, not only in terms of the number of works published, but also of the esthetic parameters by which it judged other literary works. For example, along with Tolstoy’s *Confession*, they also published the two volumes of his *What is Art?* In its series, *Joyas Literarias*, the journal published such Russian works as Dostoevksy’s *La patrona*, *Los precoces*, *Las noches blancas*, *El idiota*, *El eterno marido*, *Los Hermanos Karamazof*, *Los humildes*, *El sueño del Tío*, Tolstoy’s *Resurrección*, *Amo y criado*, *El príncipe Neklindoff* and *El padre Sergio*, Gorky’s *Cain y Artemio* and *En la estepa*, Chekhov’s *El loco*, Turguenev’s *Primer amor*, *Así pasó el amor*, *Aguas primaverales*, *Demetro y El reloj*, Sofia Kovalevskaya’s *Una nihilista*, Trotsky’s *¿Qué es la revolución de Octubre?*, *La revolución desfigurada*, and *Lenin, su vida y su obra La revolución traicionada*, and *Taras Bulba* by Nicolai Gogol, among many others.

According to its editors, the books are “eclectic¹⁸⁵ – in the real sense of the word –

cuál era el costo de una edición de un volumen de igual extensión.

- Por dos mil ejemplares, le cobramos ciento sesenta y cinco pesos – fue la respuesta.

Ni una palabra más. Habló con un amigo, hicieron cálculos, contaron sus recursos y ahí mismo decidieron lanzarse a la aventura” (*Todo es historia* 10).

¹⁸⁵ It is interesting to think that later on, this heterogenous mixture will be put under one umbrella of Judaism by the journal *Clarín* that in its first issue proclaimed: “Programa de lucha sin cuartel contra ese ejército de alimañas, integrados por fuerzas aparentemente heterogéneas: materialismo, liberalismo, marxismo, comunismo, socialismo, anarquismo, ateísmo, masonería, etc., pero que están unidas en la misma finalidad : la destrucción de la civilización cristiana y que obedecen al mismo comando que las

in order to ensure that the good taste and aesthetic sense of our readers are always cared for by the selection of the works that we publish¹⁸⁶.¹⁸⁷ Sergio Bagú attributes such eclecticism to their “search, sometimes lacking organization and critical view, in the American and European thought” (“Sergio Bagú in “Claridad” a EUDEBA” in *Todo es historia*), stemming from their urgent need to be knowledgeable in all possible areas. This puts translation at the center of the anthropophagic process of the construction of the culture and literature of Argentina.

As was mentioned earlier, *Claridad* first published works of only 32 pages,¹⁸⁸ but they shut down this first version of the company in December of 1924 and started a

dirige desde las tinieblas: el judaísmo.” (no.1, mayo 1937). Although we do need to acknowledge the fact that, as Manuela Fingueret says, the Jewish immigrants in Argentina were “universales en pensamiento y acción. Comunistas, anarquistas, librepensadores, sionistas, antisionistas, religiosos, laicos; desde ese pensamiento múltiple, crearon fraternidades, bibliotecas, cooperativas, medios de comunicación” (20), we cannot assert the opposite: not all communists, anarchists, etc were Jewish. We hear an echo of this political collage in the character of the Astrólogo in Roberto Arlt’s *Los siete locos* who was an admirer of at the same time Lenin and Mussolini.

¹⁸⁶ “eclecticos— en el sentido real de la expresión – con el propósito de contribuir a que el buen gusto y el sentido estético de nuestros lectores sean siempre bien impresionados por la selección de las obras que editamos” (*LP*).

¹⁸⁷ This eclecticism of Argentine press is what distinguishes Argentine press from others, says David Vigodsky in his article “Советская литература в странах Латинской Америки” (“Soviet literature in Latin American countries”) published in *Звезда (The Star)*, no. 10, 1931 (part of Bruno Gomide’s unpublished manuscript): “Аргентина занимает у нас первое место не потому, что она больше других стран интересовалась советской литературой, а в силу того, что ее пресса значительно богаче, разнообразнее и дифференцированнее прессы остальных республик Латинской Америки” [“Argentina takes the first place for us not because it was interested in Soviet literature more than other countries, but because its press is richer, diverse, and more heterogeneous than the press of other republics of Latin America”]. He also notes the unsystematic and arbitrary approach in the selection of works which he explains by the lack of expertise in Russian literature and lack of the knowledge of the Russian language: “Уже приведенные нами названия статей, имена авторов и темы, которым уделяют внимание латиноамериканские переводчики, критики и историки литературы, достаточно говорят о случайности, о несистематичности ведущейся работы. Основные причины этого – недостаточная осведомленность в вопросах советской литературы с одной стороны, и малораспространенное знание русского языка – с другой” [The very titles of the mentioned articles, names of the authors and the topics that Latin American translators, critics and literary historians focused on, reveal the arbitrariness and lack of systematic approach in the work”].

¹⁸⁸ Among the works published were Maxim Gorky’s “Cuentos de Vagabundos,” Dostoevsky’s “La mujer del otro” (o “Un marido bajo la cama”), “El ladrón honrado” y “El sepulcro de los vivos,” Bujarin’s “El A.B.C. del comunismo,” Leónidas Andreieff’s “Los espectros,” Korolenko’s “En Siberia.”

different style of journal that included poems and critical essays by both foreign and Argentine writers just five days later. This is the origin of Boedo, a group of young Argentines who were propagating the idea of education through reading. For them, language was secondary, the fundamental idea being “truth over beauty.” They used to say: “We write badly because our wish is not to get to writing well. We are sloppy: we know it. Dirty. Spontaneous. But even a watchman at the corner can understand us,”¹⁸⁹ they would say bolstering this lack of interest in form with the supposed lack of style and “gusto artístico” of the Russian authors – a perception formed from the way Russian authors “wrote” in translation. The role the Boedo group and those “bad” translations played in the development of Argentine literature is examined later in this chapter.

Another crucial era for the Russian translations in Argentina was the 1940s, during which time many translations were done by the publishing house “Progress”, staffed by Russian translators in Russia. It was also an important moment for the Argentine publishing industry in general. According to Jorge B. Rivera, the industry’s rapid growth extended through a period between 1936 and 1956.¹⁹⁰ This is a period when “Buenos Aires se convirtió en la meca editorial de América Latina. Se trata, sin duda, de la edad de oro del libro argentino: durante ese período, Sur y otras editoriales con sede en Buenos Aires exportaron sus libros a otros países de Latinoamérica y España” (Wilson 36). Patricia Wilson notes that it was also a very active time for translation, and the moment when “la

¹⁸⁹ “Nosotros escribimos mal porque nuestra aspiración no consiste en llegar a escribir bien. Somos desaliñados: lo sabemos. Sucios. Espontáneos. Pero nos hacemos entender hasta por el vigilante de la esquina” (qtd. in Ferreira de Cassone 58).

¹⁹⁰ See Patricia Wilson, p. 36.

literatura en traducción ocupa [...] un lugar destacado en la literatura nacional y un grupo de traductores-escritores contribuye, con su actividad a modelar nuevas poéticas del relato dentro de ella” (Wilson 36). The consequences of this transpire in Adolfo Bioy Casares’ *La invención de Morel*, where already on the second page we read: “An Italian rugseller in Calcutta told me about this place. He said (in his own language): “There is only one possible place for a fugitive like you – it is an uninhabited island, but a human being cannot live there”¹⁹¹ (*The Invention* 10).

The fact that something is written in Spanish does not mean that it was said in Spanish and needs to be clarified. This makes the reader doubt whether the rest of the statements without similar clarification had been originally said in a different language and immediately converted into Spanish without any notice to the reader:

Al llegar arriba oí un motor; la luz, con oblicua velocidad, alcanzó todo y me puso frente a dos hombres: uno vestido de blanco, otro de verde (un cocinero y un sirviente). No sé cuál preguntó (en español):

-- ¿Quiere decirme por qué eligió este lugar perdido?

-- Él lo sabrá (en español, también)” (67-68).

[When I came upstairs I heard the hum of a motor; with incredible speed the light touched everything and placed me in front of two men: one in white, the other in green (a cook and a servant). They were speaking Spanish.

“Do you know why he chose this deserted spot?”

“He must have his reasons”¹⁹²]

These examples lay open the relation between the development of translation consciousness and critical reading: just by adding a note warning the reader that the

¹⁹¹ “Un italiano, que vendía alfombras en Calcuta, me dio la idea de venirme; dijo (en su lengua): --Para un perseguido, para usted, sólo hay un lugar en el mundo, pero en ese lugar no se vive” (*La invención* 18).

¹⁹² I decided to leave the original in Spanish and provide the English translation to illustrate my point. Leaving just the English translation would be confusing.

language of his reading coincides with the language of a character's utterance, reminds the reader of the distances between what is thought, said, written, and understood that exist inside of any language, let alone between languages.

III The Selection Process in *Los Pensadores* and *Claridad*

As was mentioned earlier, when we think of Russian literature, it is always long novels that come to mind. However, it was short stories, poems and fragments from novels that were published in such journals like *Los Pensadores*, and later on, *Claridad*, that achieved the greatest diffusion in Argentina.¹⁹³ Even just a brief analysis of the works selected for publishing shows that, concerning politics and literature, works already as they entered would find themselves in a critical space. For example, Nikolai Bukharin's *El ABC del Comunismo* enters "the stage" – Argentine literary and cultural world – when there are already Maksim Gorky's "vagabundos" and the illiterate and aggressive masses of his critical essay *Lo que yo pienso del pueblo ruso*. Works by the great Russian authors, like Tolstoy and Dostoevsky, occupy the central place in *Los Pensadores* and *Claridad*, but always surrounded by parodies, criticism, letters, personal anecdotes, and caricatures. It is in such a critical place that Lamorghini's *Odyssey* finds himself confined:

And he sailed – oh, vicissitudes of the layout! –

¹⁹³ For more information on these and other journals of the time, see Lafleur, Héctor R, Sergio D. Provenzano, and Fernando P. Alonso, *Las revistas literarias argentinas, 1893-1967*; Saúl Sosnowski, *La cultura de un siglo. América latina en sus revistas*; Horacio González, *Las hojas de la memoria: Un siglo y medio de periodismo obrero y social en Argentina*.

drifting through articles, reviews, notes
and photographs; illustrations
and drawings;
and advertisements,
and little, and medium-sized, and big headlines,
going from margin to margin
of each page, (47 pp.),
as if from one sea—, to the other sea—,
crossing hundreds of typographic
columns,
all through those white,
super tight cracks!¹⁹⁴

This in its turn echoes Luis Cané's¹⁹⁵ poem "Siempre" which ends with this lament:
"Always the same petty pleasures, / always yearning to enjoy / always dreaming of the
journeys, / from the same very spot."¹⁹⁶ In this way, a more intimate approximation to the
work of an author is created at the same time as a critical distance is formed. *Claridad*
published, for example, "Anécdotas de Tolstoy," narrated by Tolstoy's son and comprised
of selected episodes of his father's life, allowing us to see a human being behind the image
of Tolstoy, who was elevated to the level of a saint. One fragment of the book, titled "Cria
Cuervos", has the following epigraph: "Tolstoy got quiet for a second, and in a low voice
whispered into Strakof's ear: "It would have been better for me if I hadn't had a son."¹⁹⁷
This brings us closer to the writer by exposing his human flaws and, at the same time,

¹⁹⁴ "¡Y navegó -joh peripecias de la Diagramación!- / derivando por artículos, reseñas, notas / y fotografías;
/ ilustraciones / y dibujos; / y avisos publicitarios, / y pequeños, y medianos, y grandes titulares, / yendo de
un margen al otro margen / de cada página, (47 págs.), / como de un mar--, a otro mar--, / atravesando /
cientos de tipográficas / columnas, / a lo largo de aquellos blancos, / apretadísimos resquicios!"
(Lamborghini 9).

¹⁹⁵ Luis Cané (1897-1957) was an Argentine writer, poet, and journalist. His work bore a strong influence
of the Spanish Golden Age poetry. His works include *Romancero de Río de la Plata*, *Bailes y coplearía*,
Canciones de Buenos Aires, *Libro en espera*.

¹⁹⁶ "Siempre los goces mezquinos, / siempre el afán de gozar; / siempre soñando caminos, / siempre en el
mismo lugar" (*Exposición* 28).

¹⁹⁷ "Tolstoy calló un instante, y en voz baja murmuró en el oído de Strakof: -- Habría sido mejor para mí
que no hubiese tenido hijo" (*Los pensadores*).

creates a critical distance that allows and forces us to interpret his words more carefully and critically. Other fragments of the same book, however, create only the critical distance, as the son criticizes and rejects some of his father's ideas. For example, in "Cría Cuervos," the son not only criticizes the revolution, but blames his father for it: "The French sometimes say that Tolstoy was the first big cause of the Russian Revolution. There is a lot of truth in this. [...] the absolute denial of the Christian ideal, -- that is the venom that gets disseminated in the semicivilized brains of the Russian mujiks, of the semiintellectuals and of the rest of Russian elements."¹⁹⁸ Although such fragments have footnotes that such criticism is not convincing, the very fact of their publication already gives the reader an opportunity to take the ideas of the great Russian classic critically.

Along with the well-known Russian authors, some lesser-known and virtually unknown Russian writers who immigrated to Europe – and whose work was prohibited after the Revolution – were also published. For example, "La buena acción del anciano Vladímiro" by Nadezhda Aleksandrovna Teffi¹⁹⁹ – who after 1920 lived in Paris – published her works in Paris, Berlin, Praga and Stockholm. It is only at the end of the sixties that her works were published in Russia again.

Although we still associate translation with loss or with not getting the full picture, translations published by *Claridad* gave Latin American readers a chance to see an even broader panorama of the question and a more profound vision. In Russia, it was only a very

¹⁹⁸ "Los franceses dicen a menudo que Tolstoy fue la primera grande causa de la revolución rusa. Hay en eso mucha verdad. [...] negación de todo frente al ideal cristiano, -- he aquí el veneno que se propagaba en los cerebros semicivilizados de los mujiks rusos, de los semiintelectuales y de los demás elementos rusos".

¹⁹⁹ The pen name of Nadezhda Lokhvitskaya. See *Tolstoy, Rasputin, Others, and Me. The Best of Teffi*. Ed. Robert Chandler and Anne Marie Jackson.

small group of people that had access to such broad knowledge:

To speak of political literature in a country which has no political liberty, and where nothing can be printed without having been approved by a rigorous censorship, sounds almost like irony. And yet, notwithstanding all the efforts of the Government to prevent the discussion of political matters in the Press, or even in private circles, that discussion goes on, under all possible aspects and under all imaginable pretexts. As a result, it would be no exaggeration to say that in the necessarily narrow circle of educated Russian “intellectuals” there is as much knowledge, all around, of matters political as there is in the educated circles of any other European country. (Kropotkin 263)

According to Kropotkin, one of the ways to express a political thought was by publishing literature abroad, mainly in Switzerland or in England. Hérzen, for example, settled in London in 1875 and the same year there “the first leaf of a free Russian Press was printed” (Kropotkin 273). He founded a paper called *The Bell*, that would reveal “facts of mal-administration [by the Tsar], as it was impossible to bring to public knowledge in Russia itself, while the leading articles were written by Hérzen with a force, an inner warmth, and a beauty of form which are seldom found in political literature” (274). Even at the beginning of the 20th century his works were still not allowed to circulate in Russia. Kropotkin also reminds his readers that “the greatest Russian writer of our own time, Leo Tolstoy, cannot have many of his works printed in Russia, and that therefore his friend V. Chekhov, has started in England a regular publishing office, both for publishing Tolstoy’s works and for bringing to light the religious movements which are going on now in Russia, and the prosecutions directed against them by the Government” (Kropotkin 278). Europe was the source of Russian literature for Latin America. It was also publishers in Europe or the United States who distributed works prohibited in Russia. One such example is Peter Kropotkin himself. Although his name evokes associations with political writings, he also

wrote books of literary criticism, such as *Los ideales y la realidad en la literatura rusa* (1926) (*Ideals and Realities in Russian Literature* (1915)), that were originally written in English in 1901. In this book, he not only gives general facts about Russian literature, but also includes writers that were little known in Russia. For example, Kantemir (1709-1744), “the son of a Moldavian prince who had emigrated with his subjects to Russia. He wrote satires, in which he expressed himself with a freedom of thought that was quite remarkable for his time” (22). He also includes such minor poets as Kozloff (1779-1840), the author of the saddest elegies which Russian literature possesses [and of] [...] a great number of our most perfect translations [...] from the English idealists, and some of his translations from the Polish, such as *The Crimean Sonnets* of Mickiewicz, are real works of art” (61-62).

From the three versions of Kropotkin’s book – the English original and the Russian and Spanish translations – it is the Spanish translation that can be identified as the fullest. It is more full than even the original, because it includes a facsimile of the letter that Kropotkin’s wife wrote to the editors of the newspaper *Mundo Israelita* where she had read a review of Salomon Resnick’s *Peter Kropotkin*, a book of memories. Salomon Resnick is also a translator of *Ideals and Realities in Russian Literature*. In this letter, Mrs. Kropotkin informs the newspaper of a new museum in Moscow devoted to Kropotkin, in the house where he was born. She also informs that since the museum is anarchical and they do not receive help from the State, and in the same turn since the entrance is free of charge, they find themselves in a very difficult financial situation, and asks their foreign “tovarishi” to help them make ends meet.

It is also more full even in comparison with the Russian translation, which, though published earlier than the Spanish one, is still one step further from the original. While the Spanish version is a very close translation of the English original, the Russian translation, made by Baturinsky, has a note that clearly points to its being adapted for the Russian public and government by Kropotkin himself. It says: “The only edition permitted by the author to be published in Russia, revised and extended”. There is also a Russian version published in Buenos Aires by the Publishing House “Sembrador” (Seyatel). This version of the book appears more full than the Russian one and the English original. It starts with the Introduction by the Publisher that tells more about Kropotkin’s life and includes a picture of him taken in 1861. Moreover, at the end of the book, there is an afterword that explains Kropotkin’s relationship with the Soviet government. Although Kropotkin returned to Russia full of hope after 41 years of exile, he gradually realized that reality there was far from his ideal. Instead of love, comradeship and equality, he saw the reign of hatred, animosity, and violence (301). Some passages are openly denouncing: “And when the power was in a usurpatory way turned to bolshevik, they shamelessly began to persecute and simply physically exterminate the cream of the Russian intelligentsia, in order to later on ruthlessly turn to the workers and peasants, the heart of the old idealist-revolutionary began to break, but for now he kept his silence...”²⁰⁰ (301). But when the Government decided to create a hostage department, his heart could not take it anymore

²⁰⁰ “А когда власть перешла узурпаторским путем в руки большевиков, и они без всякого зазрения совести стали преследовать и попросту физически уничтожать цвет русской интеллигенции, чтобы затем без всякой жалости обрушиться и на рабочих и крестьян, сердце старого идеалиста-революционера стало обливаться кровью, но он пока молчал...”

and he turned to protest (301), which resulted in Kropotkin's letter to Lenin that was also fully reproduced at the end of this Russian version published in Buenos Aires. In the letter he wonders how no one from the party can see that such measures pave the road back to the medieval epoch, that such a department where one will be kept hostage in order to manipulate enemies with the possibility of his or her death. He cannot conceive of the fact that no one in the party understands that such methods are no different from torture for the family of the hostage. He asks Lenin whether such methods would be an indicator of their failure, of the fact that they're no longer building a new life, but simply are desperately trying to save their own. This afterword also helps us to identify the direction of the newspaper *Seyatel* that, as we see from the "Afterword," informed its readers on February 9, 1921, about the publication of an "Appeal", a response of the "Russian Literates and Journalists of Paris" to the Soviet Government intent to create a Hostage Department. Their slogan screamed: "No Crime – No Punishment".

This version contains images of the Russian writers and critics along with a quote next to each photo. For example, next to one of the last images of Tolstoy there appears his phrase: "The main reason of the existence of evil today, that people suffer, is because the majority of people of our time have no faith" (140). When Kropotkin talks about Pushkin, he mentions the importance of the poet's nanny, Arina Rodionovna. The Russian version published in Argentina includes her picture and a poem Pushkin dedicated to her:

My friend through my travails, woes hardest,

My dear bedraggled little dove!

Alone you pine, in deep pine forests,

And wait for me, so long, so long!

The significance of this addition lies in the fact that it was in his nanny's fairy-tales, songs, and epic poems, *byliny*, where the Russian poet found much of his inspiration and it is the spoken, the living language of the Russian people, and the voices of the Russian peasants that Arina Rodionovna brought to Pushkin through her tales that the poet wove into his own poetic language.

IV. The Translation Process

Many of the Russian works that appeared in *Claridad* were republications of the versions translated in Spain, such as Leonidas Andreiev's *Los espectros*, translated by Nicolás Tassin, or Lev Tolstoy's *¿Qué es el arte?*, translated by A. Riera. Nevertheless, there are also works translated into Spanish from Italian, like Teffi's "La buena acción del anciano Vladimiro" translated by Roberto Mariani from Alfredo Pollerdo's Italian version. There are also examples of Russian works translated into Spanish from German,²⁰¹ like for example, Maksim Gorky's poem "El Águla", translated by Llinás Vilanova.²⁰² "Anécdotas

²⁰¹ In the issue 12 of *Claridad* they published a prologue by the translator of Lenin's "¿Qué hacer?" who explicitly indicates which German version they used for their translation: "La presente versión del "¿Qué hacer?" ha sido hecha de acuerdo con el texto de la edición alemana: W.I. Lenin: Samtliche Werke, Band IV, Verlag für Literatur und Politik, Berlín, 1929. Luego ha sido cotejada con la traducción francesa: V.I. Lénine: Oeuvres complètes, tome IV. Editions sociales internationales, Paris, 1929. Que nosotros sepamos, ésta es la única versión completa en castellano de dicha obra de Lenin. Existe solamente una edición fragmentaria de la editorial Sudam (Buenos Aires, sin fecha)." (Luis Waismann 31). The translator then continues giving other details regarding the process of translation: "Hemos preferido servirnos del texto alemán por ser el más completo desde el punto de vista de la factura literaria y de la exactitud científica. En él se consignan rigurosamente los matices más sutiles del pensamiento de Lenin. Con ser excelente, la traducción francesa es, en este aspecto inferior a la alemana" (Luis Waismann 31).

²⁰² We know that most probably he did not know any Russian and would translate from German or French, since in his letter on November 9, 1933 to César Tiempo he said that he was reading a French version of Erenburg's "The Second Day."

de Tolstoy” were translated from the French “La Verité sur mon Père”, a French version of Tolstoy’s son’s book. There were also works written directly in Spanish by Russian authors, like for example, a series of critical articles written by Constantin Derzhavin under the title “Literatura rusa contemporánea.”

Although Russian literature *was* translated from French or English, it is crucial also to point out that many works were already written by Russian authors in French, Spanish or English.²⁰³ For example, Kropotkin spent forty-two years in exile in England, and wrote many of his works directly in English or French. He was publishing in France in *Le Révolté* later named *La Révolte*, and in *Les Temps Nouveaux*, and eventually started an anarchist paper in London named *Freedom*. He also published a series of articles in the *Atlantic Monthly* in Boston. According to Baldwin, “[m]ost of his scientific articles and his larger books were written in English. The pamphlets were translated into a dozen languages, -- their greatest circulation being in Latin and English-speaking countries” (31).

But all in all, because literature was seen at that time as a carrier of “light”, knowledge, new ideas, teachings and new models to follow (Wilson 58), that fact that it

²⁰³ In the 40s there started to appear a lot of translations into Spanish made in Russia by *Lenguas Extranjeras* and sent to Latin América. There are many letters in César Tiempo’s archives that he received from Press and Publisher Literary Service in Moscow, *Agencia Literaria* that kept a long correspondence with César Tiempo in Spanish and French, exchanging books, articles, poems and news in the world of literature and art. For example, there is a letter, dated January 9, 1940, that says: “Hoy le enviamos el artículo de L. Leonidov, Artista popular de la U.R.S.S. ‘El ‘Tartufo’ en el teatro de Arte de Moscú’ con fotografías. [...] Pronto le enviaremos otros artículos sobre la vida artística de la Unión Soviética.” On April 20 of the same year, there is a letter that is written to Tiempo from the Foreign Commission of the Union of Soviet Writers of the USSR in Moscow, signed by Mich. Apletine. This one is written in French and lets Tiempo know that due to his great interest in Mayakovksy, they sent him a translation of one of his poems and an issue of “Moscow News” dedicated to the poet: “Je sais que vous appréciez énormément l’œuvre de Maiakovski. Je me fais le plaisir de vous envoyer le numéro de «MOSCOW NEWS» (15/IV-40) avec un article sur Maiakovski et une traduction de son poème «LE PASSAPORT SOVIETIQUE». [...] Je vous ai adressé il y a quelques jours le numéro de la «LITERATOURNAIA GAZETTA» consacré à Maiakovski ».

was translated mattered little (unlike in the forties, as demonstrated in *La invención de Morel*²⁰⁴). Patricia Wilson notes that the idea of there being a direct link between a word and reality overlooks the fact that words in themselves are already an interference, an obstacle. The idea of transparency, and a possibility of transference of reality through words, is common among the social sectors who are not accustomed to reading fiction, or who have recently learnt to read and write (58).

Indeed, comments about works taken from other literatures that were published in *Los Pensadores*, often clearly showed that there did not yet exist a consciousness of the violence that translation implies²⁰⁵; translated versions was not in any way differentiated from the version in the work's original language. For instance, the introduction to *El sepulcro de los vivos* promises: "Following the established practice, we will deliver the entire work, of an incalculable value, in its entirety, without omitting a single comma, a single quotation. "Los Pensadores" will rather disappear than publish an incomplete work. We do it well, or we don't do it. To offer good, complete and cheap works, that is the goal of the Publishing House "Claridad"."²⁰⁶

²⁰⁴ See pages 117-118 of this dissertation.

²⁰⁵ It still did not exist in highly educated circles in the United States either and many of today's reviews of the foreign literature in English translation go so far as commenting on the author's language quoting directly from the translated text without any mention of the translator's work. Lawrence Venuti addressed this issue in his talk "Translating J.V. Foix's *Daybook 1918: The Strangeness of Minority*" that took place at Boston University on February 19, 2016. Or, for example, *The New York Times* accepts a review of a translation of a French book by a person who does not read French and thinks that to confirm that the original fully corresponds to the translation it is enough to ask others. Alice Gregory, the author of "Francophone Hit, American Letdown", a review of Joël Dicker's "The Truth About the Harry Quebert Affair", says as she tries to explain the unexpected unpopularity of a French hit: "It's hard to tell whether the novel is as wooden in the original French, but I'm told that it is" (Gregory).

²⁰⁶ "Toda esta obra, de incalculable valor, siguiendo la práctica establecida, la daremos íntegra, sin omitir ni una coma, ni una cita. "Los Pensadores" dejarán de aparecer antes de dar una obra trunca. O haremos las cosas bien, o no las haremos. Ofrecer obras buenas, completas y baratas, es el propósito de la Cooperativa Editorial 'Claridad'" (*LP*, vol. 1, no. 7).

At the same time, the comments to the texts in the journal *Claridad* often demonstrate a very open and honest position of the translator, who usually says that he did what he could. In other words, translation was not hiding its nature behind a veil of a supposed transparency, like it tends to do today. For example, M. Gorenberg, in the introduction to his translation of one of Botachinsky's short stories "La primera Tormenta" says: "I have extracted this short story, which I translated, as far as I could, literally. I hope my fellows will know to judge it accordingly."²⁰⁷ The same way Guido Paci also says in "La Poesía Bolchevique": "I give here an excerpt of an untranslatable gibberish."²⁰⁸ He also in his "Dostoievsky y la idea Eslava" in the issue 94 of *Claridad*, directly in the text of the article notes that there are certain words impossible to translate into Spanish: "Europe takes Russian intellectuals as idiots (Dostoevsky uses an untranslatable word), as vile and often drunk beggars. It doesn't take them seriously, not even the great geniuses of Russia, nor the ones from literary Olympus."²⁰⁹

This conscience²¹⁰ grows and in the 40s Russian Literary Agencies, that sent some copies to be translated into Spanish to César Tiempo, asks the translations to be direct. For example, in the letter written on June 19, 1941, Press and Publisher Literary Services Sovunion Authors' Agents says:

Nous préférons, naturellement, que la traduction espagnole soit fait directement de

²⁰⁷ "he extraído el presente cuento, el cual traduje, hasta donde ello me ha sido posible, literalmente. Espero que los compañeros sabrán juzgarlo debidamente" (*Claridad*, no. 175).

²⁰⁸ "De un galimatías intraducible, doy aquí este extracto" (*Claridad*, no. 186)

²⁰⁹ "Europa juzga a los rusos intelectuales como idiotas (Dostoiewski usa una palabra intraducible), como mendigos viles y a menudo ebrios. No los toma en serio, ni aun a los grandes genios de Rusia, ni los de su Olimpo literario."

²¹⁰ Which can also be a reflection of the government's growing conscience about the power of translation and the subsequent need to control the "quality" of translations.

l'original russe et ne doutons pas de ce que vous nous garantirez une traduction irréprochable tant au point de vue de l'exactitude du texte et de l'idée de l'ouvrage qu'au point de vue du niveau stylistique. Toute modification du texte ne doit être faite qu'après un accord préalable avec nous qui représentons les auteurs.

However, even today on the shelves of Ateneo we find translations of Russian literature published in 2015 that do not indicate the translator, nor the version from which it was republished. At the same time there exist works like those of Alejandro Ariel González that not only provide a direct translation, but also build a genealogy of past translations and can even create a more complete work than its original version in the source language. His translation of Trotsky's *Literatura y revolución* is a great example.

V. *A переводчики кто?* (And who are the translators?²¹¹)

Previous analysis exposes a great disparity of tendencies, quality levels and ways to utilize translation for a specific purpose. In an attempt to avoid generalizations and simultaneously follow Walter Benjamin's insistence on the importance of an individual translator, in this part I pay special attention to some individual translators' voices. Among these, Alejo Abutcov stands out as an interesting figure due to being one of the few direct translators from Russian into Spanish at a time when most translations passed through French, Italian, or German first. I analyze how their translations raised an early, yet unintentional, challenge to epistemological colonialism.

²¹¹ This is an allusion to the famous phrase "А судьи кто?" (And who are the judges?) from Griboedov's comedy «Горе от ума» (*Woe from Wit*) that circulates widely in Russian colloquial phraseology.

ALEJO ABUTCOV

Abutcov was not only one of the first direct translators from Russian into Spanish, but his life in Argentina also serves as a metaphor or a visual representation of the process Russian literature would undergo once it arrived on Argentine soil. He hispanicized his name Aleksey Vladimirovich Abutkov into Alejo Vladímir Abutcov and rewrote his life story. For Diego Bosquet, Abutcov's biography is in a permanent state of flux.²¹² Each new piece of biographical information unsettles the entire system of facts that have to be rethought, rearranged and adjusted.²¹³ This is one of the reasons for the title of one of his first articles about Abutcov published in *Huellas* no. 8, in 2014: "De San Petersburgo a San Pedro del Atuel: *Aproximación a la biografía del compositor Alejo Abutcov.*"

Bosquet first heard of Abutcov during a call from Museo Municipal de Historia Natural de General Alvear. They wanted him to look at some documents donated to the museum. He realized that it was part of the personal archive of a Russian composer who fled Russia to find shelter in Argentina and who not only composed music, but also founded

²¹² Abutcov's story brings him close to Oliverio Gironde (see pages 66-67 of this dissertation) and Macedonio and their disbelief in the possibility of constructing a sole neatly-carved plotline for one's biography. As was mentioned earlier, Gironde preferred somebody else's biography or an invented one, to a "real" autobiography, far from complete and nowhere close to reflecting the flux of his life and the multifaceted nature of each experience. Macedonio preferred not to squander an opportunity to put his "theories" into practice: he wrote an autobiography that defies its own existence, an anti-biography, a parody of the entire genre: "La burla que Macedonio hace con cifras, fechas, acontecimientos históricos es constante. Ni siquiera su historia personal le merece seguridad y confianza. Duda de ella y la hace pasible de sus juegos: "Nací, otros lo habrán efectuado también, pero en sus detalles es proeza. Lo tenía olvidado, pero lo sigo aprovechando a este hecho sin examinarlo, pues no le hallaba influencia más que sobre la edad. Mas las oportunidades que ahora suelen ofrecerse de presentar mi biografía (en la forma más embustera de arte que se conoce, como autobiografía, solo las Historias son más adulteradas) háceme advertir lo injusto que he sido con un hecho tan literario como resulta la natividad. (El dato de la fecha de ésta se me ha perdido tanto y con una sonrisa de juguetera, que tuve la ilusión de que ello significaba que era posible una fecha mejor de nacimiento mío y se me alentaba a elegirla y pedirla, que se me habría de conseguir. Por si acaso, aunque no han progresado ni declarándose estas cortesías, dejo dicho que me gustaría haber nacido en 1900)" (qtd. in *Macedonio Fernández y la teoría crítica* 144).

²¹³ I spoke with Diego Bosquet on August 6, 2015, in Mendoza.

a music school in Mendoza. He started to look for other sources of information and at first, the only biographical references that he could find were writings by Salvador Calafat (1995) and Higinio Otero (1970) that in addition to being short and romanticizing Abutcov's life, seemed to be mere copies of each other. Finding a short biographical note written by Abutcov himself would seem equal to finding a key to the true story of Abutcov. However, the biography created more incoherence, gaps and mysteries. After researching in the archives in Russia, he was able to confirm that all the autobiographical information written by Abutcov was simply a lie.²¹⁴ Among the false information was the fact that he was married and had a son, that he graduated from an agricultural department, his age and his date of birth. Hence, if even in translating his own life into a different language and inserting it into a different world a person could not but create a new original, how can one expect literature stay the same after passing through many hands and minds, years and miles?

From what we know, Abutcov immigrated to Buenos Aires from Russia in 1923. In 1924 he bought a farm in Colonia San Pedro del Atuel (Carmensa) to found a colony following the ideas of Tolstoy, that assembled only one family of followers. Along with writing music, working on music theory, and teaching at Conservatorio "Schubert" in

²¹⁴ Also from our conversation. This should not be taken as anything surprising if we take into consideration Macedonio's definition of autobiography as "la forma más embustera de arte que se conoce, [...] sólo las Historias son más adulteradas" (*Papeles de reciénvenido* 110). Then, in the subtitle of the "Autobiografía no sabe de quién" he jokingly says: "Autobiografía de un desconocido hasta el punto de no saberse si es él" (135). Later he adds: "la popularidad y la autobiografía o la confesión biográfica son las dos oportunidades más logradas de ocultarse, al par de la "fíel" fotografía. [...] las biografías, autobiografías y entrevistas a hombres célebres son los novelones máximos y que deben manejarse al revés, como a los tercos vanidosos, mandándoles que hagan lo que no deseamos que hagan: todo lo que afirma de sí el autobiografiado es lo que no fué y quiso ser" (138-139).

General Alvear, he also translated from Russian. Although I focus on his translations and writings, Bosquet also considers his music to be an intersemiotic translation, using Jakobson's terminology. Since Abutcov was a follower of Tolstoy's ideas and tried to found a tolstoyan commune both in Russia and in Argentina, Bosquet sees his music as a musical translation of Tolstoy's ideas. In his *What is Art?* Tolstoy does discuss how literature and painting should be, but never talks about music. Hence, his music is the representation of such ideas. Moreover, his political thoughts also transpire in his music. Bosquet's comparison of Abutcov's music with the work of the writers of the Boedo Group is also worth mentioning. Abutcov's music is a simplified version of the music of great Russian composers, such as Balakiriev, Mysorgskii, Borodin, Rimsky-Korsakov, in the same way that the writers of Boedo brought a simplified version of world literature to a larger readership.

In addition to his musical activities, Abutcov also played an important part in the field of literature. First he published in *La campana del palo* a supposed translation of an "unknown pamphlet" written by Lev Tolstoy, titled "¿En qué consiste la verdadera libertad?".²¹⁵ It was preceded by a note announcing that the magazine would be publishing Abutcov's translations of Tolstoy:

As was announced before, with this beautiful piece by Lev Tolstoy, we start a series that will be translated especially for *LA CAMPANA DE PALO* by Alejo Abutcov, that is the most direct representative of Russians in this country, who is trying to put his theories to practice, living a humble life among peasants in Mendoza. – "What does real freedom mean?", the piece, unknown until today in any language other than Russian, was prohibited like Tolstoy's other writings that we will be making public, by the Commission of Public Education of the USSR, with their disseminator persecuted.

²¹⁵ Diego Bosquet kindly shared a copy of the essay with me.

In this essay Tolstoy talks about the division between the material and the spiritual in human beings. The spiritual is expressed through love and is the same in all of us, unlike the material which does differ. The desires of the physical substance are the obstacles that do not allow us to recognize and achieve the spiritual in us and others. The censors may have been alarmed by his call for a union with God and others, but it is clear that in his view, god is this spiritual beginning, the love in us.

Abutcov's translation, "Algunos pensamientos desconocidos de León Tolstoi sobre la Iglesia",²¹⁶ was published in October of 1926 in *Claridad*. In it, he also took the most controversial and loud ideas out of the context and put them all together. For example: "As far as I understand, any church is based on a lie, since a human being cannot be faultless. Because of treating some people as faultless, wars were started and blood was shed".²¹⁷ Or, for instance: "Today I saw some children: so cute, so lovely! And all of them will be perverted by those priests".²¹⁸

Abutcov's hand is seen not only in the selection of the five quotes, but in the retelling, instead of direct quotation of Tolstoy's words:

One priest told Leon Tolstoy that church ceremonies were like an eggshell. If it is removed too early, the chick will not be born.

Tolstoy answered him that the eggshell is the body; the chick is the spirit, and the

²¹⁶ See Appendix A(I).

²¹⁷ "A mi entender toda iglesia está cimentada en la mentir, pues el hombre no puede ser impecable. Por habersepreciado algunos hombres de impecables sucedían las guerras, ha sido derramada tan [sic] sangre" (*Claridad*, no. 4).

²¹⁸ Hoy encontré a los niños: ¡son tan bonitos, tan preciosos! Y todos serán pervertidos por estos curas" (*Claridad*, no. 4).

Church doctrine is the dung around the eggshell. (*Claridad*, no. 4)

The first three issues of *Claridad* include “Cartas del campesino” (“Letters from a peasant”), where Abutcov writes imaginary letters from a certain Antonio Derevensky – ‘Derevensky’ meaning ‘from a village’, or ‘a peasant’. This is not the only implicit connection with Russia. The place that he is supposedly writing from is Maina, which is the name of a town in Russia, as Bosquet correctly notices.²¹⁹ The third letter is addressed to Nicanor Chufari, who, again according to Bosquet, was Abutcov’s great grandfather. These letters can be in some way seen as a creative manner of literary criticism in which Abutcov puts on the mask of another character in order to present his own way of understanding Tolstoy’s writings. In the first issue, he writes a letter to his imaginary nephew José in which he explains his reasons for moving from the city to the countryside. The main reason is the desire to lead a more productive life, quoting Tolstoy’s question: “What would happen if all the people left their work and started to play a violin or write poetry?”²²⁰ Antonio Derevensky himself says: “I think that no matter how well men play violin, and how excellent is the poetry that they write, if they don’t want to end up dying of hunger, in addition to the study of music and poetry, they should also do some productive work.”²²¹ In his second letter, he continues to argue for life in the countryside and signs it with his own name at the end. In the third letter, he explains what a Tolstoyan commune is and what kinds of problems the tolstoyans run into trying to organize one in Argentina. He

²¹⁹ From our conversation in Mendoza.

²²⁰ “¿Qué sería si todos los hombres dejasen sus labores y se pusieran a tocar el violín o a componer versos?” (*Claridad*, no. 1).

²²¹ “creo, que por muy bien que toquen los hombres el violín, y por muy excelentes versos que compongan, si es que no desean al fin y al cabo morir de hambre, deberían realizar, además de estudios musicales y poéticos, una labor productiva” (*Claridad*, no. 1).

says that Tolstoy never promoted a reclusive life; on the contrary, he was for a life based on collaboration and mutual help. He then quotes Tolstoy's words from his diary, dated September 13, 1890:

Going through a small village, I see several villagers digging (each one for himself) ditches to store potatoes, each one roofs his ditch and does other things of this kind. How much wasted work! Wouldn't it be better to do all of this work collectively and then divide what is done? It doesn't seem to be difficult: bees, ants, beavers do it. But in reality it is difficult. Man is very far from it, and precisely because he is a rational being. Man has to consciously do that which is the collectivism of bees and ants; the man has to deliberately attain the way of life of animals, from whom he is far behind: not to fight (make war) because of the necessities; not to satisfy one's needs and fornicate and after he will carefully arrive at the collectivism of bees and ants, which communes begin to attain.²²²

Abutcov's own words about collective work are clearly based on Kropotkin's writings:

The superiority of collective work over that of the individual is almost undeniable, and the possibilities of participation in such work attract many tolstoyans to enter one of the communes. In effect, in the communes, work is not a harsh law of human destiny, but a pleasure; the duration of daily work is reduced significantly, which allows followers to dedicate some hours to the mental and individual work. In general, they work much less than those who live in bourgeois society.²²³

Which echo Kropotkin's "Anarchist Communism":

²²² "Yendo por el pueblecillo veo varios aldeanos cavar (cada uno para sí solo) las zanjas para guardar patatas, cada uno techa su zanja y muchas otras cosas de este género. ¡Cuánto trabajo excedente! ¿No sería mejor hacer todos los trabajos colectivamente y después dividir lo que está hecho? Al parecer ello no es difícil: las abejas, las hormigas, los castores lo hacen. Pero en realidad es difícil. El hombre está muy lejos de esto, y precisamente debido a que es un ser razonable. El hombre tiene que hacer a sabiendas lo que es colectivismo de las abejas y de las hormigas, el hombre ha de lograr deliberadamente la vida de los animales, de los que todavía está lejos: no batirse (guerrear) por causa de las necesidades; no hartarse, no fornicar y después habrá de llegar cuidadosamente al colectivismo de las abejas y hormigas, lo que ya empiezan a alcanzar las colectividades" (*Claridad*, no. 3).

²²³ "La superioridad del trabajo colectivo sobre el individual es casi indiscutible, y las posibilidades de participar en tal trabajo atrae a muchos tolstoyanos a entrar en una de las colectividades. Efectivamente en las colectividades el trabajo no es una dura ley del destino humano, sino un placer; la duración del trabajo diario está reducida notablemente, lo que permite a los adherentes a dedicar unas horas a la labor mental e individual. En general, ellos trabajan mucho menos que los que viven en la sociedad burguesa" (*Claridad*, no. 3).

Overwork is repulsive to human nature – not work. [...] Work is a psychological necessity, a necessity of spending accumulated bodily energy, a necessity which is health and life in itself. [...] But we know – old Franklin knew it – that four hours of useful work every day would be more than sufficient for supplying everybody with the comfort of a moderately well-to-do middle-class house. (*Anarchism* 71)

It is clear that Abutcov was one of the translators' that early on participated in the fight against epistemological colonialism. Another strong voice was Benjamin Abramson, who served as a direct bridge between Russian and Spanish literature and culture.

BENJAMIN ABRAMSON

Condemned to death in Russia, Abramson found shelter against Tsarist repression in Argentina in 1910. Due to the scarcity of direct biographical material available, his extensive literary work – articles, translations, letters – becomes a vast terrain from which one must handpick bits and pieces of information to reconstruct some type of chronological order in Abramson's life, with only one wellspring of historical facts and personal details: his daughters Adelina and Paulina Kondratievas' biographical book *Mosaico roto* (*The Broken Mosaic*). In it we see the family life, cultural, financial and political difficulties of Argentine immigrants in the Soviet Union, the atrocities and little deeds and victories in the Spanish Civil War, and also precious pictures from Adelina's personal archives with her parents, her father's office and her life in Spain.

What is most interesting in this book is Abramson's translation and literary activities. According to Paulina, their father participated in every protest in the streets of

Buenos Aires, including the general strike of 1919. The family was so involved in helping Soviet Russia, that even the daughters, ages four and six, actively participated in collecting money and clothes to send to starving Soviet children (26). As Paulina says, they were not quite sure where “Soviet Russia” was located, but all of them knew more than well what it meant to be starving. For this cause, they would go to expensive restaurants to beg for money with a group of children of immigrants specially organized with the purpose of helping their compatriots in Russia. Just how deep this affected Adelina and Paulina was demonstrated by the fact that Adelina’s first phrase after not talking until the age of 3 was, “Don’t go to Russia because bolsheviks will eat you,” which she said to a neighbor for whom she had developed a particular dislike.²²⁴ Paulina also tells her readers that she and her little sister were making their own contributions to the proletarian fight. Not far from where they lived, there also lived a family that Adelina considered too rich. Their little daughter would always show off her fancy toys and clothes. To fight against social injustice, Adelina bit that girl a couple of times, but the biggest revenge was when she stuck a chickpea in the girl’s ear.

As can be seen from Adelina and Paulina’s book, Benjamin Abramson’s political and literary work was not only expressed in publications and translations, but also in his daughters’ upbringing. He forced them to regularly go to the children’s library in Parque Palermo where they read classic literature adapted for children. They also had to read *Compañerito*, a children’s magazine published by the Communist Party.

In his article “Советская литература в странах Латинской Америки” (“Soviet

²²⁴ “No vayas a Rusia porque te comerán los bolsheviks” (Abramson 26).

Literature in Latin American countries”) published in issue 10 of *Звезда* (*Star*) (1931), David Vigodsky calls Abramson one of the most active promoter of Russian literature in Latin America.²²⁵ He says that Soviet writers owe their popularity in Latin America to this talented translator and essayist fluent in both Russian and Spanish. According to Vigodsky, in the twelve issues of *Vanguardia* from May to September, 1930, Abramson published twelve works of Russian authors: short stories, poems, and fragments from Gorky, Mayakovsky, Zoshchenko, Gladkov, Lyashko, Gumilevsky, Romanov, and Ehrenburg.²²⁶ Abramson was closely connected to Boedo group until 1931. In *Claridad*, he published his translations of *Don Quijote Libertado* (*Liberated Don Quixote*) by Lunacharsky,²²⁷ “Una noche en el vagón de campaña de Budenny (“A Night in the Train Car of Budenny’s

²²⁵ One of the first Hispanists in the Soviet Union. Bruno Gomide, Russian Literature Professor at the University of São Paulo, kindly shared with me his unpublished manuscripts about David Vgódsky. The works talk about his translations, articles and relationships with Spanish and Latin American literary world. He also established some organizations that were the first ones to deal with Hispanic literature and cultural studies: “Vigodsky fundou e co-dirigiu algumas das primeiras associações de estudos hispânicos da União Soviética, inclusive no âmbito acadêmico da Universidade de Leningrado. Foi um dos criadores, em 1929, da Sociedade Hispano-Americana, a ISPAMO, da qual se tornou presidente, em 1931. A sociedade promovia encontros, cursos, publicações de artigos, intercâmbios culturais e traduções. Ajudava também na recepção a visitantes latino-americanos e espanhóis, inclusive Tarsila do Amaral e seu marido, o médico e escritor comunista Osório Cesar, na famosa viagem que fizeram à URSS” (10).

²²⁶ “Одним из таких пропагандистов, которому советские писатели обязаны своей популярностью за океаном, является выходец из России Б. Абрамсон, хорошо владеющий как русским, так и испанским языком, переводчик и очеркист. Перед нами комплекс еженедельной литературной страницы аргентинской газеты “Vanguardia” с мая по сентябрь прошлого года. В двенадцати номерах газеты т. Абрамсон напечатал двенадцать произведений советских авторов, давая то рассказы и стихи, то отрывки из романов Горького, Маяковского, Зощенко, Гладкова, Ляшко, Гумилевского, Романова и Эренбурга. Если прибавить, что в этих же номерах другим переводчикам принадлежат три стихотворения Некрасова и одно Маяковского, что каждому переводу предпосылается вступительная заметка об авторе и его произведении, а Маяковскому посвящена целая статья, что в одном из номеров переведена глава об аргентинской литературе из книги пишущего эти строки, если, наконец, сопоставить это с тем, что из прочих иностранцев в тех же номерах фигурируют только два француза, один немец, и один северо-американец, – то станет ясно, какое исключительное внимание уделяет газета советской литературе. В разрозненных номерах за текущий год, имеющихся в нашем распоряжении, несмотря на гонения на советскую литературу со стороны диктатуры, мы встречаем имена Горького, Безыменского, Шагинян, Пильняка, Панферова, Гладкова, Пушкина и т.д.”

²²⁷ A comparative analysis of Lunacharsky’s *Don Quijote Libertado* and Gerchunoff’s *Nuestro Señor Don Quijote* can turn out fruitful in the process of understanding the differences and similarities of the

Campaign”) by León Sosnovsky, “Homenajes (“Tributes”) by Zoshchenko, and “Trotzky” by Koltzov. In this journal he also published articles that dealt with political and economic problems, such as “Un veneno poderoso (“A Powerful Poison”), the title referring to “the written word in the hands of the capitalist octopuses” (13). In general, these articles and essays denounce the wrongs of the bourgeoisie, capitalism and imperialism.²²⁸

Abramson also translated Maksim Gorky’s article “Об антисемитизме» (“About Antisemitism”) that was published in Russia in the newspaper *Pravda* on September 26, 1929 and on November 28, 1931.²²⁹ Abramson’s translation appeared in *Claridad*. In it Gorky, who had always been a strong voice among Russian writers in the fight against antisemitism, denounced those authors who participated in persecutions against Jews. Gorky’s writings that dealt with the Jewish question were not included in the 30-volume collection of his writings published in Russia between 1949 and 1955. One more time, a translator turned into a cultural contrabandist, smuggling across the border already or soon to be illegal words wrapped in another language.

According to David Vigodsky, Abramson also translated Vladimir Mayakovsky’s “Левый марш» («Left March») which appeared in “Novela seminal” on June 30, 1930.²³⁰ Although David Vigodsky does not think that Abramson did his best, he considers this to

appropriation of the figure of Don Quijote in Russia and Argentina.

²²⁸ Abramson for example translated Henry Barbusse’s “Mi conversión al comunismo” that was written for *Ogoniok*, no. 21, May 1927, and that was originally translated from a manuscript by G. Nashatyr’ (Г. Нашатырь).

²²⁹ The timing is really surprising. Even more so is the appearance of the article “El kilómetro 27...,” written by A. Sorich and translated by Abramson (wrongly spelled Abramón). It appeared in *Los Pensadores*, num. 120, in April 1926 and originally published in *Pravda* on October 27, 1925.

²³⁰ The article is part of Bruno Gomide’s unpublished manuscript.

be one of the most successful translations of Mayakovsky into Spanish among those that were known to him at the time. Vigodsky notes that Abramson knew Russian well and tried to create a poem identical to the original with its broken syntax and strong, unusual words.²³¹

Abramson also translated the ending of the second act of “Mysteria Buff,” which was published in the first issue of the magazine of the Argentine Revolutionary Youth, edited by Llinas Villanova. Vigodsky says that this translation reveals the seriousness with which Abramson took the task of translation, although he failed to fulfill the task. What suffered the most, according to Vigodsky, is the phonic side of the poem, especially rhyme: rich and unique in Mayakovsky, it is absent in the translation or is replaced by a poor or chance one.²³²

Working on either end of translation – Spanish or Russian – and sending his criticism to either of his two motherlands – Soviet Union or Argentina, Abramson always participated in the fight against epistemological colonialism, in the cultural contraband of ideas and knowledge by way of translation. In his article dedicated to Mayakovsky in *Claridad* no. 228, for instance, he corrects the French version of the poem, saying that

²³¹ “Этот переводчик, хорошо владеющий русским языком, попытался дать идентичное оригиналу стихотворение с ломаным синтаксисом и крепкими необычными словами. Нельзя сказать, чтоб он вполне справился со своей задачей, однако это все же один из наиболее удачных переводов Маяковского на испанский язык, которые мы знаем.”

²³² “Тому же Абрамсону, усердному пропагандисту советской литературы в Аргентине, принадлежит и ряд переводов из Маяковского в левой печати, отнесшейся к поэту с большим вниманием и с большим пониманием. В первом номере нового журнала аргентинской революционной молодежи, редактируемом другим другом советской литературы М. Льянас-Виланова, напечатан переведенный Абрамсоном большой отрывок из “Мистерии-Буфф” (конец второго действия). И здесь мы видим ту же серьезность поставленной переводчиком перед собой задачи, хотя и не всегда хорошо разрешенной: больше всего пострадала звуковая сторона оригинала, в частности рифма; такая богатая и своеобразная у Маяковского, она в переводе или вовсе отсутствует, или заменена бледной и случайной.”

Mayakovsky's poem was called "La Guerra y la Paz" ("War and Peace") and not "La Guerra y el Mundo" ("The War and the World"), like it was translated to French for Ivan Goll's anthology and says: "we must note that the Russian word "mir" in Spanish means both world and peace... ."233

In the first issue of *Claridad*, Abramson published his translation of A. Sorich's article about Turguenev's *Отцы и дети* (*Fathers and Sons*). Here again, he does not just translate the article, but also writes his own introduction to it in order to "facilitate the readers' understanding of the aforementioned article."²³⁴ He also inserts translator notes in the text. For example, before Sorich's quote from Turguenev's novel, Abramson clarifies: "Here the author reproduces an excerpt from Turguenev's novel."²³⁵ The quote itself is taken from the most dramatic moment of Turguenev's novel, when the son recognizes the fact that he and his father are strangers to each other:

...The Old General, furious, lifted his hand, pointing to the door, and yelled:
– Get out of here, disgraceful. You are not my son anymore!
It casted a shadow over Nicolas' delicate countenance.
– We are strangers to each other, dad! – he answered downcast, putting on his student hat with the emblem of the polytechnical institute.
In the dining room, sitting on an old-fashioned settee, a little old woman who did not understand anything that was going on around her, was crying bitterly. And her golden curls were shaking.²³⁶

²³³ "debemos advertir que la palabra "mir" en ruso significa en español: mundo y paz..." (*Claridad*, no.1).

²³⁴ "facilitar la comprensión de dicho artículo a los lectores" (*Claridad*, no. 1).

²³⁵ "Aquí el autor reproduce un trozo de la novela de Turgueneff" (*Claridad*, no. 1).

²³⁶ ...El Viejo general lleno de ira, levantó la mano indicando la puerta, y gritó:

– "Fuera de aquí, infame. ¡Tú no eres más mi hijo!" El semblante fino de Nikolás ensombreció.

– "Somos extraños el uno para el otro, papá! – contestó cabizbajo, poniéndose la gorra de estudiante con el emblema del instituto politécnico.

"En el comedor, sobre un canapé anticuado, una viejecita que no comprendía nada de lo que sucede a su alrededor, lloraba amargamente. Y sus bucles plateados se sacudían" (*Claridad*, no.1).

Sorich's comment that followed relaxes the tension of the moment: "I never fully understood this mystery: why it was the curls that were shaking and not other accessories... But let's leave the curls alone."²³⁷ This article participates in the creation of critical space for Latin American writers when dealing with Russian literature. When a Russian critic permits himself to make such a joke about one of the greatest novels in the Russian literature, it gives others a license to come out of the blindness that a grand work can cause. The article summarizes the entire novel in a humorous way, putting aside the tragedy of the situation.

Abramson's own work was also manipulated by *Claridad* to effectuate or underline *Claridad's* editors' own agenda. One fragment of his translation of Lunacharsky's *Don Quijote Libertado (Liberated Don Quixote)*²³⁸ was published in the first issue of *Claridad* and the entire work had been published when *Claridad* was still called *Los Pensadores*. The work is considered to be a literary representation of the dispute between Lunacharsky and Korolenko. The latter had been a tireless human rights activist and denounced any violence, even if it was for a good cause.²³⁹ This position can be seen in his article "En Siberia" ("In Siberia,")²⁴⁰ also published in *Los Pensadores* which exposed the suffering and violence of those sent to Siberia. Lunacharsky in his turn, saw this non-violent

²³⁷ "Nunca llegué a descifrar ese enigma: porque se movían precisamente los bucles de la viejecita y no otros adminículos... Mas, dejemos los bucles" (*Claridad*, no. 1).

²³⁸ The only edition of the book does not indicate the year of its publication. The catalog of CeDInCI (Centro de Documentación e Investigación de la Cultura de Izquierdas) indicates [1930?] as a possible year of publication.

²³⁹ There is a long note on Korolenko's human rights work and relations with Lenin and Lunacharsky in Michael Henry Heim and Simon Karlinsky, *Anton Chekhov's Life and Thought: Selected Letters and Commentary*: 318-319.

²⁴⁰ The original Russian title was *Сибирские рассказы и очерки (The Siberian Tales and Essays)*.

position as idealistic and quixotic. For him, the good from achieving the ultimate goal not only legitimizes any violence, but makes it indispensable. Lunacharsky, along with many others, strongly believed that violence was needed to put an end to any future violence. Unfortunately, the events of 1929-1931, 1937-1938 and 1948-1949 proved the futility of attempts to fight fire with fire.

In his letters to Lunacharsky, which were supposed to be published with Lunacharsky's commentary, but were not until three years²⁴¹ before the disintegration of

²⁴¹ A year before Korolenko's letters to Lunacharsky were published for the first time in the Soviet Union in 1988, Kurchevsky made a cartoon called "Освобожденный Дон Кихот" (*Liberated Don Quixote*). In it, the director clearly takes the side of Don Quixote and laments that such people have to necessarily leave our society in order for it to work, following its century-old habits and structures. Kruchevsky calls it "a sad story about a noble knight Don Quixote and his loyal squire Sancho Panza." Just by the way he presents the court members – "the evil duke and sly courtiers" – it is evident whose side he is on. Don Quixote liberates those who represent the masses: just as the court members are incarcerated, he liberates them as well. Although the masses save him from being killed by the order of the court, it is also the people that he saves at the beginning that send him out of the kingdom. We can read the cartoon as the trap that Russian intelligentsia found itself in. They supported the Revolution to liberate the people from Tsarist oppression, but started to be persecuted by those who used them to get to power and by the people who had to play by the rules of those in power in order to survive. We have to remember that Don Quixote had a prominent place in Russian literature and culture in general. In his essay "Metternichs and Don Quixotes," Dostoevsky compares Russia to Don Quixote, but a new one, who has understood that he had been laughed at and will not fight against windmills anymore. For Russia, like for Don Quixote, preserving moral values and staying a knight, is beyond any other benefit, unlike for Europe: "Let it be noted that Europe has unquestionably reached the point where she treasures most current gain, the gain of the actual moment – even at any price, – since over there, they are living merely from day to day, and the present minute only, and they even do not know themselves what is going to happen to them tomorrow. However, we – Russia – we still believe in something lasting, which molds itself in Russia, and therefore we seek permanent and essential gains. It is also for this reason that we, as a political organism, have always believed in eternal morality, and not in a relative one, good but for a few days.

Believe me, Don Quixote, too, knows his gains and knows how to calculate: he knows that he will gain in his dignity and in the cognizance of it if only, as heretofore, he remains a knight. Besides, he is convinced that, by following thus road, he will not deprive himself of the sincerity in the quest of the good and truth, and that his knowledge will fortify him in his further career. Finally, he is convinced that such a policy is also the best school for the nation" (*The Diary of a Writer* 608).

This way of seeing Don Quixote is very similar to Turgeneff's description of him in his "Hamlet and Don Quixote": "Повторяем: что выражает собою Дон-Кихот? Веру прежде всего; веру в нечто вечное, незабываемое, в истину, одним словом, в истину, находящуюся *вне* отдельного человека, но легко ему дающуюся, требующую служения и жертв, но доступную постоянству служения и силе жертвы. Дон-Кихот проникнут весь преданностью к идеалу, для которого он готов подвергаться всевозможным лишениям, жертвовать жизнью; самую жизнь свою он ценит настолько, насколько она может служить средством к воплощению идеала, к водворению истины, справедливости на земле" [We repeat again: what is it that Don Quixote represents? Before anything else, faith; the faith in the eternal, the unshakeable, the the faith in truth, in the truth located outside of an individual, but that is easily accessible

the Soviet Union,²⁴² Korolenko declares that even during the Tsarist times, impunity did not proliferate to such an extent. He gives an abundance of examples of violence and begs Lunacharsky to do something about it. All in all, he wrote six letters but did not receive a single answer except for *Don Quijote Libertado*, although by then it was too late, for by 1922 Korolenko had already passed away.

The part that was selected to be published in *Claridad* deals directly with the question of violence. Fighting for freedom, one can become a dictator is what can be read from a short fragment published separately from the rest in *Claridad*: “Yes, we are tyrants. Yes, we are dictators. Do you see this saber? It is identical to the one used by the noble. But that one kills in the name of the Slavery, and this one, in the name of Freedom. It will be difficult to change your cranium. You are a good man... .”²⁴³ The fragmentation of the text imposed by the editors of the journal presents the issue in a more violent way for it gets taken out of the context. Abramson’s original translation, as well as the original itself,

to him, the faith that requires devotion and sacrifice, but that is accessible to the constancy of devotion and power of sacrifice. Don Quixote is filled with loyalty to the ideal, for the sake of which he is ready to go endure all kinds of privations, sacrifice his life; his own life he values as far as it can serve him as an instrument to reach his ideals, to establish the reign of truth and justice on the Earth.] Going back to the old question of West versus East, Dostoevsky in this essay appeals to his readers to look to the East, “[s]omewhere at least this truth must be preserved; some nation at least must radiate. Otherwise what would happen? Everything would be dimmed, distorted and would be drowned in cynicism. Otherwise you would be unable to restrain the morality of individual citizens, too, and in this event how is the entire organism of the people going to live? Authority is needed. It is necessary that the sun shine. The sun appeared in the East, and it is from the East that the new day begins for mankind. When the sun is shining in its full glory, then it will be understood what the real “interests of civilization” are. Otherwise the banner bearing the inscription “*Après nous le déluge*” will be hoisted” (*The Diary of a Writer* 609).

²⁴² It was published in Paris in 1922 in Russian by the Zadryga [Задруга] Publishing house. It was reprinted in 1977 in Milan: Korolenko, Vladimir G, and Anatoly V. Lunacharsky. *Pis'ma K Lunacharskomu*. Milano: Edizioni dello Scorpione, 1977.

²⁴³ “Sí, somos tiranos. Sí, somos dictadores. ¿Véis este sable? Es idéntico al que usa el noble. Mas aquél mata en nombre de la Esclavitud, y éste, en nombre de la Libertad. Será difícil transformar vuestro viejo cráneo. Sois un hombre bueno...” (*Claridad*, no. 1).

had a continuation: “and a good man, strives to help the oppressed. Transiently we are the oppressors. Fight against us, and we’ll fight against you, for if we oppress, it is to sweep all the violence from the face of the world.”²⁴⁴ Taking this idea out of the context helps one see that any violence is violence no matter the cause.

It seems that the translation in *Claridad* was additionally adjusted by the editors to serve their particular goal. If we compare the full version in the book with the fragment in the journal, it is clear that the vocabulary was simplified and the style lowered, or using Antoine Berman’s terminology, popularization was applied. For example, “doquier” is changed to “por todas partes.” Both mean everywhere. However, the first one is much more elevated, even archaic. The old form “he de” in Don Quixote’s words: “He de advertiros que mucho he meditado” (“I have to warn you that I have thought it through very well”) is changed to “debo”; Don Quijote’s “Por ventura” is changed to “quizás”. All of the presented examples demonstrate the adjustment of style.

Going back to the question of violence, several pages earlier *Claridad* published a short essay by Luis Ricardo Visconti, called “La Literatura y la Guerra” (“Literature and War”) that also justifies war against the state as the only war that is just and legitimate (*Claridad*, no. 1). It does call for violence: “It is high time that a new literature comes, militant and rebellious, that through its words made of blood, incites people to the Revolution and to the only war that is fair and legitimate: the anti-State war.”²⁴⁵ Thus,

²⁴⁴ “y un hombre bueno, esfuérase en ayudar a los oprimidos. Transitoriamente, somos opresores. Luchad contra nosotros, y nosotros lucharemos contra vos, pues si oprimimos, es para barrer toda violencia de la faz de la tierra” (*Don Quijote Libertado* 63-64).

²⁴⁵ “Que venga, pues, en buena hora una nueva literatura, agitadora y rebelde, que con letras de sangre incite al pueblo a la Revolución y a la única guerra justa y legítima: la guerra antiestadual” (*Claridad*, no. 1).

Lunacharsky's *Don Quijote Libertado* can be seen as belonging to such new literature, responding to Visconti's call: "For that, we need a legion of young and disobedient artists that will have to carry out the real sociological function of literature, crying out its truths, stepping into action in the dreamed of hour of freedom."²⁴⁶ The only difference is the fact that the violence that Visconti calls forth is literary, artistic, one that will not leave the margins of a page or canvas, while Lunacharsky approved of the real executions of those who did not seem to support the Revolution. The same way there is no room for Don Quixote in Lunacharsky's play, there is no place for those Russian philosophers and writers who could not submit to the bolshevik rule.

After moving from Argentina to Moscow in August of 1932, Benjamin Abramson and Adelina started to work in the Co-operative Publishing Society of Foreign Workers in the USSR (Издательство Товарищества иностранных рабочих в СССР), that later on was converted to the Progress Publishers. He worked as a translator, and she as a typist. It was there that Abramson translated works by Lenin and Stalin. In 1939, the publishing house started to be called the Foreign Languages Publishing House (Издательство литературы на иностранных языках). It published both Russian translations of foreign literature books and translations of Russian literature and books on politics into a wide variety of languages. Expanding the proposed earlier metaphor of a Latin American translator as a cultural contrabandist, Stalin's establishment of an organ aspiring to oversee any translation to and from Russian *from inside the confines of the Soviet Union* can be

²⁴⁶ "Necesitamos, para ello, una legión de artistas jóvenes y discolos que han de realizar la verdadera función sociológica de la literatura, gritando sus verdades, yendo a la acción en la soñada hora libertaria" (*Claridad*, no. 1).

compared to legalizing an illegal product, but with the sole goal of gaining control over its movement and users. Abramson thus became an infiltrator in what was supposed to be an insular group formed to import and export the meticulously carved images of the inside and outside world. Being an outsider locked and isolated on the inside he was placed in the position of power to continue his cultural contraband from the inside. He translated *Compendio de Historia del Partido Comunista (bolshévique) de la URSS* and was considered a first-class translator.

However, he did not seem to fully comprehend the power he was suddenly given. He described his work to César Tiempo in his letter²⁴⁷ from January 29, 1933: “You will want to know what my work consists of, what is it that I do, etc. Well, I work in a Spanish editorial..., as an editor-translator. From time to time, this or that prolog, some little article without putting my name on it. I am very sorry for not getting off in Spain.”²⁴⁸

The last statement can be attributed to the hardships of adaptation to life in the Soviet Union, the place he had needed to flee some twenty years earlier. As we can see both from Adelina and Paulina’s account and from Abramson’s letters to César Tiempo, the time of adaptation was not easy. Adelina remembers: “Snowflakes, cold sun, greyish sky. How difficult it was for me to get used to these *meteorological calamities* that I cannot forget because of their physical sensations: fainting in the street and cramps in the legs

²⁴⁷ César Tiempo’s correspondence is forthcoming under the title *Querido Zeitlin: epistolario de César Tiempo*, edited by Solana Schvartzman, Ediciones Biblioteca Nacional. Solana Schvartzman has been generously sharing her research findings with me and kindly provided me with the most recent edition of *Versos de una...* (2016) edited by her. All the letters quoted from SCT (Subfondo César Tiempo) constitute part of the Departamento de Archivos y Colecciones Particulares de la Biblioteca Nacional de Argentina.

²⁴⁸ “Querrá Vd. saber en qué trabajo, qué es lo que hago etc. Y bien. Trabajo en una editorial... española, de redactor-traductor. De vez en vez, uno que otro prefacio, algún articulito sin firma. Lamento mucho de no haber bajado en España” (SCT).

caused by the cold.”²⁴⁹ Later on, she exclaims: “How I would miss the wonderful central market in Buenos Aires where at the end of the day we would buy very cheap fruit at a low price for low-income people!”²⁵⁰ Abramson himself writes to his “dear and unforgettable Tiempo”²⁵¹ in 1933: “walking down the street, I am scrutinizing the faces of the “foreignjis” that parade around [...] down “their” specific streets: Kysnetsky Most, Petrovka, Tverskaia etc., to see if I come across somebody black from my land (it is difficult to explain this “nostalgia” of the second motherland, but I have to admit it with all the courage and selflessness.)”²⁵²

The most soulful account of his isolation comes in a letter that does not have an exact date, some time at the end of May of 1933 and titled “S.O.S”:

Yes, my dearest friend, SOS! For, how can my state... my literary state be catalogued, since the moment one sees the annihilation of one’s own language, cooking in its own juices, without any external sap, not rejuvenating through some new contribution and losing anything acquired before?; what do you call the distressed mood plied between the burning pincers of the pining to know what is going on in the far-away second motherland.²⁵³

²⁴⁹ “Copos de nieve, frío sol, grisáceo cielo. ¡Cuán difícil era ambientarme a estas *calamidades meteorológicas* que no puedo olvidar por sus sensaciones físicas: desmayos en la calle y calambres en las piernas provocados por el frío” (11).

²⁵⁰ “¡Cómo añoraba el estupendo mercado central de Buenos Aires donde al final del día comprábamos fruta bien madura a bajo precio para la gente de pocos ingresos!” (Abramson 12).

²⁵¹ “querido e inolvidable Tiempo” (SCT).

²⁵² “yendo por la calle, voy escrutando los rostros de los “extranjis” que se pavonean [...] por “sus” calles específicas: Kuznietzky Most, Petrovka, Tverskaia etc., para ver si doy con algun [sic] negro de mi tierra (es difícil [sic] explicar esa “nostalgia” de la segunda patria, pero he de confesarlo con toda la valentía y desinterés)” (SCT).

²⁵³ “Sí, “queridísimo ¡SOS! Pues, ¿cómo se puede rubricar mi estado... literario, desde el momento que uno ve aniquilándose su lenguaje, cocinándose como está en su propio jugo, sin savia del exterior, sin remozarse con algún nuevo aporte y perdiendo lo adquirido?; ¿cómo se podría titular un estado de ánimo angustiado,

It is possible that psychological pressure exerted on a foreigner or a Russian coming from abroad had its affect as well. From what Adelina tells her reader, we know that upon arriving to the Soviet Union, their family was treated with suspicion. She says that any foreigner was considered as a potential spy and hence was always spied on. They were forced to break all the family and friendship ties that connected them to Buenos Aires. Her father had to cut down correspondence with his friends and colleagues which caused worries and curiosity and more letters from César Tiempo, Castelnuovo and Satanovsky (Abramson 12). That explains why Llinás Vilanova in a letter to César Tiempo dated November 9, 1933, wonders if Tiempo has heard anything from Abramson: “Have you heard anything of Abramson? I have sent him journals and books several times, and also letters. From his hands, some books and journals reached my hands, but no letters.”²⁵⁴ At the time when she was writing her book, in 1991, the KGB still had not returned her father’s correspondence that was confiscated during his arrest in March of 1951²⁵⁵ for being Trotskyist.

Abramson’s participation in the fight against epistemological colonialism did not stop when he left Argentina. From there, he continued his literary correspondence with César Tiempo, Elias Castelnuovo, etc. In his letters to Tiempo, he asked him to send literary materials if he has any. In his turn, he sent his own “harvest”²⁵⁶ from Moscow to Buenos

tenaceado entre las candentes pinzas del ansia de saber lo que va acaeciendo en la lejana segunda patria” (SCT).

²⁵⁴ “¿Qué noticias tiene de Abramson? Yo le he mandado varias veces revistas y libros, también cartas. De sus manos han llegado a poder mío libros y revistas, pero no cartas” (SCT).

²⁵⁵ Before that crucial moment, the whole family went to Spain in 1937 in order to participate in the fight against fascism. Adelina became an interpreter and translator in the Air Force, in el Estado Mayor de la Fuerza Aérea de la República.

²⁵⁶ He opens one of the letters to César Tiempo with the following words: “Ahí va la n[ueva] edición y algo

Aires. For example, in one of his letters written when Zoshchenko still had not been published in Latin America, he was able to discern his talent and humor: “Zoshchenko is one of the most talented Soviet humorists. He has a unique language that distinguishes him among his fellow writers. Too bad that it is so difficult to translate all the shades of his rich palette.”²⁵⁷ In another letter to *Tiempo*, written from Moscow in 1933, he recommends for *Tiempo* to read Leonov: “If there goes around the book by the great Leonov (the one who wrote “Badgers,” “The Robber,” “Construction” etc.) “Skutarevsky,” I recommend that you read it. It has a lot of artistic and thematic defects, but it is very good, even in its confusion.”²⁵⁸ He also published articles for *Claridad* “sobre algunas novedades literarias” in Russia.

In a letter to César Tiempo on January 29, 1933, he remarks about the Russian literature of the time:

There are some very prominent works. The latest one by Sholokhov, the author of *The Quiet Don*, *Virgin Soil Uplifted*, the work that reflects all the difficulties of the transformation of Russia of small peasants to the LARGE-SCALE INDUSTRIAL AND AGRICULTURAL USSR. Types of characters, atmosphere, vast setting, play of interests, amplitude. A real masterpiece, superior, in my opinion, to *Bruski*. And what is most remarkable is that when you’re reading it, sometimes it seems like the author is talking in the first person. Colossal! A painting in Balzac-style.²⁵⁹

de cosecha propia” (SCT; my emphasis).

²⁵⁷ “Zostchenko es uno de los humoristas soviéticos más dotados. Posee un lenguaje singular que lo distingue entre sus congéneros. Lástima que sea tan difícil la traducción de todos los matices de su rica paleta” (SCT).

²⁵⁸ “Si anda por ahí la traducción del libro del gran Leonov (el de los “Tejones”, “El ladrón”, “Edificación” etc.) “Skutarevsky”, te recomiendo leerlo. Adolece de muchos defectos, artísticos y temáticos, pero es muy bueno, aun en su confusión” (SCT).

²⁵⁹ “Hay obras notabilísimas. La última de Scholovov, el autor del “Don Apacible”, “La Tierra Virgen, roturada”, obra que refleja todas las dificultades de la transformación de la Rusia de pequeños campesinos en la URSS INDUSTRIAL Y AGRÍCOLA EN GRAN ESCALA. Tipos, ambiente, vasto escenario, juego de intereses, amplitud. Una verdadera obra de arte, superior, a mi parecer, a “Bruski”. Y lo más notable es que al leerla, se tiene a veces la impresión de que el autor habla en primera persona. ¡Gigantesco! Una tela a lo Balzac” (SCT).

Abramson's letters to *Tiempo* from Moscow²⁶⁰ can be seen as an example of an anthropophagic translation of a foreign reality. Although they are full of foreignizing (he says "kvarтира" for an apartment, "ugol" for a corner, "piatidnevka" for a five-day work week), being both Russian and Argentine at the same time, he can understand and express himself through both cultures, giving his reader a taste of Russian culture while constantly taking himself out of it and into a more familiar world. Here is a fragment of a letter dated January 29, 1933, that beautifully illustrates that:²⁶¹

¡Por fin, una carta suya! Acabo de recibir la del 21 de Sept. "primer día de la primavera". Es que "don Simón no tiene suerte": su carta llegó bien a Moscú, pero el dichoso de la "kvarтира" (pese a los millones y millones de metros cuadrados de viviendas para obreros y empleados que se construyen en esta ciudad de las ex-"40 veces 40 iglesias", y ahora tantas y tantas veces facultades para obreros y campesinos, uno tendría que ser un dichoso detentador de centenares de dólares para obtener un tugurio), ya le digo el feliz "pudiente" con kvartira a donde me parecía factible enfilar mi intercambio epistolar, resultó un perfecto "mascalzone". Su carta, ¡tan luego la suya!, se "le había metido en un ignoto "ugol" (rincón, pues (sic) la decantada "kvarтира" consta de una sola pieza con muchos rincones), sin que él pueda dar con ella. Y yo, impotente, pese a mi ira olímpica, volvía un día y otro en busca "de la amada", intuyendo que ha de ser algo "tiemponiano". Y nada... Aquella, o, mejor dicho, aquel "sobre con membrete de reclame de modas", según el susodicho feliz dueño de la "kvarтира", no aparecía. Pero, hoy, día 29 de este invierno moscovita, que hasta ahora nos mimaba con temperaturas de unos 8-14 bajo cero, comenzando recién (sic) ahora a tomar revancha (y digo 29, pues (sic) aquí ignoramos en absoluto el nombre del día, ya que el calendario marca: "1-er día de la 'piatidnevka', 2º día etc.", habiendo desaparecido para siempre jamás aquello de "domingo, lunes", en vísperas del último día de la última 'piatidnevka' (los cinco días de trabajo, en oposición a los designios del "tata Jenová" que tuvo que yugar 6 días (sic) para crear este valle de lágrimas... para el capitalismo agonizante) me empilcho y, desafiando los pocos grados de bajo cero y los 'bondis' (esto es un capítulo aparte: ah, si Vd. viera los 'bondis'! Parece que le he escrito algo acerca de esas 'carrozas de tutti'. Yo los he llamado aquí en un pequeño artículo 'sandwicheras'. Y bien se merecen este apodo (a despecho de una larga dola (sic)

²⁶⁰ See Appendix B (II).

²⁶¹ I left the letter in Spanish to better illustrate its artistic originality and the anthropophagic character. For the sake of room, I placed its English translation in a footnote.

cabe el No A, que ahora, después de la reforma de corta data, corre... veloz, me enfilo de nuevo a la casa 'internazionalnaia', y joh, milagro!, al ir a buscar un tomo de la enciclopedia, se asoma el sobre... Toda la familia ha leído y releído la carta de "los pagos queridos". Imagínese lo ansiosos que andábamos todos con motivo de las noticias propaladas por aquí sobre la intentona "liguista", malbaratada. Aquí se decía que hubo muertos y heridos en cantidad. Pero, gracias a Allah, aquello terminó en aguas de borraja.²⁶²

He starts by interposing time and space: although he receives the letter in Russia, in the Northern Hemisphere, September 21 does not stop carrying with it the Southern Hemisphere and does not stop being the "first day of spring." The phrase "don Simon no tiene suerte" is a reference to José María Gutiérrez de Alba's *Un Infierno o La Casa de Huéspedes (A Hell or The Guest House)* (1853). The city of ex-"40 veces 40 iglesias" takes us back to Friedrich von Hellwald's *Earth and its Peoples*, where, in the chapter devoted

²⁶² "Finally, a letter from you! I have just received the one from Sept. 21 "first day of spring." It is just that "don Simon has bad luck": your letter got to Moscow with no problems, but the damned guy from the "kvartira" (in spite of the millions and millions of square meters of housing for the workers and employees that are built in this city of the ex-"40 times 40 churches," and so many and many times schools for the workers and peasants, one would have to be a lucky illegal possessor of thousands of dollars to get a shack,) I tell you the happy "rich guy" with kvartira where it seemed to me would be viable to direct my epistolary exchange, ended up being a perfect "mazcalzone." Your letter, nothing less than your letter!, "has gotten lost in an unknown "ugol" (corner, for the minute "kvartira" consists of only one room with many corners,) and he can't find it anywhere. And I, helpless, despite of Olympian anger, would come back day after day in search "of the loved one," sensing that it should be something "Tiemponiano." And nothing... That letter, or, better said, that "envelope with a letterhead of a fashion ad," according to the aforementioned happy owner of the "kvartira," would not appear. But today, the 29 of this Moscovian winter that up to now was spoiling us with temperatures with some 8-14 below zero, starting just now to take revenge (and I say 29 because here we totally ignore the name of the day, since the calendar reads: "1st day of the "piatidnevka," 2nd day etc.,' having disappeared forever that thing of "Sunday, Monday," on the eve of the last day of the last "piatidnevka" (the five work days, in the opposition to the plans of "tata Jenová" that had to slog away 6 days to create this valley of tears... for the fading capitalism), I dress up and, challenging the few degrees below zero and the "trams" (this needs a separate chapter: ah, if only you saw the trams! I think I have written you something about those "carrozas de tutti." I called them here in one short article "sandwicheras." And they really deserve to be called so) in spite of a long line, the No A fits, which now, after the recent reform, runs... fast, I again head to the house "internazionalnaia," and, what a miracle!, when I go to look for an encyclopedia, there appears the envelope... The entire family has read and re-read the letter from my "dear homeland." Imagine how anxious we all were because of the news spread here about the squandered "ligista" attempt. Here they were saying that many were heard and injured. But thank to Allah, it ended up being nothing" (SCT).

to the European part of Russia, in the Spanish translation, the author explains: “Por regla general, toda iglesia tiene una cúpula principal y cuatro secundarias y además un campanario, lo cual ha dado origen á [sic] la fábula de que en Moscou [sic] hay 40 veces 40 iglesias” [“As a general rule, every church has one main dome and four secondary ones, as well as a bell tower, which gave an origin to the myth that in Moscow there are forty times 40 churches”] (227). After, Abramson gives his text an Italian flavor, calling the resulting from the situation chaos “mascalzone” and then bringing Italian Edmundo de Amicis to Moscow’s ‘bondis’ calling it “carrozas de tutti.” At the end, he praises Allah for helping to put everything in order.

Through such anthropophagic appropriation of both Russian and Argentine realities, cultures and literatures, Abramson and Abutcov were creating the space in-between, thus contributing to the propitious creative field that Russian literature translations were constructing.

VI Other Direct Translators and Writers of the Russian Literature in Spanish

Margarita Arsamasseva is another translator whose work deserves a closer look. She came to Argentina in 1912, at the age of 19. In addition to translating from Russian, English and German, just five years after her arrival to Argentina, she had already published her first novel *El Brazalete de Zafiros* (*The Sapphire Bracelet*), in Spanish, a language that was still foreign to her. Then followed *Clarisa* (1925), *Lobos* (*Wolves*) (1926), *Sugestión* (*Suggestion*) (1927), *Yeremey el Bolchevique* (*Yeremey the Bolshevic*) (1929), *Yenia* (1930) and *El Nieto* (*The Grandson*) (1931), among others. She was one of

the founders of the Sociedad Argentina de Escritores (The Argentine Society of Writers). She also collaborated in *La Nación*. César Tiempo in his 1929 end of the year review of publications, “Instalación y crónica del año literario,” names her in the prose section and praises her “Jeremey el Bolshevik,” a novel of “ambiente ruso” [with Russian air] and says about Margarita that “it has all the conditions to give us a great book.”²⁶³ David Vigodsky in his article “Советская литература в странах Латинской Америки” (“Soviet Literature in Latin American Countries”) published in *Звезда (Star)*, no. 10, 1931, talks about her as one of the representatives of writers who immigrated from tsarist Russia, raised with Russian literature, but writing in Spanish. In the work of Arsamasseva he sees a strong influence of Tolstoy in regards of style and of Dostoyevsky in what concerns characters. According to him, such Russian streams that flow directly from the very spring get mixed with American literature and although they do not become a decisive influence, they stay in it as a foreign additive.²⁶⁴

Another woman who served as a direct bridge between Russia and Argentina is Ida Bondareff de Kantor. According to Paulina, Benjamin Abramson’s daughter, her parents developed a close friendship with her (21). Ida had her own dentist’s office. Her husband

²⁶³ “no le faltan condiciones para darnos un gran libro”.

²⁶⁴ «Любопытно отметить еще одного рода влияние русской литературы на южноамериканскую, идущее из самых недр местной литературы. Это произведения, написанные русскими эмигрантами, эмигрировавшими еще при царизме, воспитанными на русской литературе, но выступающими в испанской. В этом смысле очень интересна романистка Маргарита Арсамасева (Арзамасьева?), страницы которой явно обнаруживают сильнейшее влияние Толстого в области стиля и Достоевского в трактовке характеров. Эти русские струи, которые идут из непосредственных источников, также попадают в общий поток американской литературы и, не сказываясь в ней сколько-нибудь заметно, все же растворяются в не какой-то чужеродной примесью» (taken from Gomide’s unpublished manuscript).

was a professor at the University of La Plata. They had a son who nowadays is a famous professor of Philosophy in Moscow. Ida had a daughter from her previous marriage, a well-known translator, Lilia Guerrero, who became crucial for the Brazilian concrete poets, admirers of Mayakovsky. The work that Abramson together with Ida and his wife performed in Buenos Aires served as a direct bridge between Russia and Argentina in terms of political questions. She was head of the Comité Central Femenino (Central Women's Committee), which also included the participation of Alfonsina Storni and Berta Singerman. There she also taught a weekly course on Marxism in 1925. Before then, in 1918, she was already one of the organizers of the first and, at that time, most numerous manifestations of Buenos Aires to celebrate the first anniversary of the Russian Revolution (*Todo es historia* 25). She would "address [...] crowds in Russian, Yiddish, and Spanish in the early 1920s" (Deutsch 164). Ida Bondareff became a substitute member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Argentina, "continuing during her stay in Buenos Aires, and by Lenin's request, her work as a correspondent on the political and economic situation in the country. Perhaps and it is very possible that Lenin's quotations about Argentina included in *Imperialism, Last Stage of Capitalism* belong to this source of information."²⁶⁵ Although she herself was not a translator, the fact that she provided information on the political situation to Lenin that was later used in his book turns her into the translator of the political reality of Argentina into Russian.

²⁶⁵ "Ida Bondareff llegó a ser suplente del Comité Central del Partido Comunista argentino, continuando durante su permanencia en Buenos Aires, y a pedido de Lenin, con su corresponsalía sobre la situación política, económica y social del país. Tal vez y es muy posible que las citas de Lenin sobre la Argentina contenidas en 'El imperialismo, última etapa del capitalismo', pertenezcan a esta fuente de información" (*Todo es historia* 25).

The list of the direct translators of Russian literature in Argentina also includes León Rudnitzky, a journalist in *Crítica*, a Russian who lived in Argentina after being exiled from Russia after a 1905 failed revolutionary attempt. He translated *Abejas proletarias* (*Proletarian Bees*) by Alexandra Kollantai, who was Lenin's first ambassador (Saitta 32). Also, in 1927, he was sent to Moscow as part of a delegation organized by Kraevski, the director of *Yuzhamtorg*, motivated by the celebration of the tenth anniversary of the Russian Revolution. During the four months he spent in Moscow, he wrote his impressions about Russia to be published in *Crítica* under the title "Rusia: la verdad de la situación actual del Soviet. Impresiones recogidas por un enviado especial de *Crítica* a la tierra de Lenin" ("Russia: The Truth about the Present Situation in the Soviet. Impressions Collected by *Crítica's* Special Correspondent in Lenin's Land.") This was considered an attempt to establish a direct link with Russia not distorted by foreign views, according to the journal's introductory note:

We had to carry out another attempt, sending one of our editors to the Soviet Union, so that he could palpate the situation of that experimentation center that both its admirers and enemies are passionate about. Somebody else's observation and commentary – many times deformed by party interests, if not falsified by the interpretation and lack of knowledge of the Russian soul, -- were not enough for us.²⁶⁶

²⁶⁶ "Un esfuerzo más hemos tenido que realizar, enviando a uno de nuestros redactores a la Unión Soviética, para que palpara la situación de aquel foco de experimentación que apasiona tanto a sus admiradores como a sus adversarios. No nos hemos conformado con la observación y el comentario ajenos, muchas veces deformados por los intereses de partido, cuando no falseados por la interpretación y el desconocimiento del alma rusa" (Saitta 32).

The ultimate goal of uncovering these literary and cultural contraband and short, in spite of the distance, and direct bridges, built by means of translation, is to combat the prevalent myth of the lack of direct translations of Russian literature into Spanish in Latin America until very recently. Additionally, this serves to demonstrate that mediated translation can still be a very malleable material to transform colonizing knowledge into a subtle weapon against colonialism. It was mediated translations that fabricated the molds for the reader's perception of Russian literature.

CHAPTER THREE: RUSSIAN LITERATURE TRANSLATION AND ARGENTINE AVANT-GARDE

I Translation and the Perception of Russian Literature

Walter Benjamin claims that translation is a form. Derrida adds: “and the law of this form has its first place in the original” (205). By passing through several languages and cultures,²⁶⁷ Russian texts lost most of their content that was originally expressed through form. Obolenskaia calls their final product “el reflejo del reflejo” (the reflection of the reflection).²⁶⁸ González compares the way those translations were made with a “telephone” game. Using Emily Apter’s translation terminology, the process can also be called “cloning from code” (221), or even “cloning from code of the code” if we consider the fact that in Italy, translations were “re-translations of French *adaptations*” (Adamo 74). For Apter, the language of a resulting text is “a language-in-a-state-of-translation”: “In such cases of “lunatic linguistics” we discover an order of language that is not pure babble, but something between a discrete or standard language and a translation, a language-in-a-state-of-translation,” (211) which is very similar to the way Obolenskaia describes it:

²⁶⁷ Except for the few examples that I presented in the previous chapter, direct translations were very rare before 1920s, the time of the first wave of Russian immigrants that fled to Spain after the first World War. But according to Obolenskaia, the direct translations were not any better, and were even worse than the indirect ones made by the professional translators or writers (“La historia de las traducciones” 171). This is very similar to what Boris Schnaiderman says about some direct translations of Russian literature into Portuguese: “contradicting in some sense the expectation, I know of some indirect translations from Russian that show great quality, considerably surpassing other direct translations of the same work” [contrariando em certa medida a expectativa, sei de traduções indiretas do russo que apresentam grandes qualidades, superando consideravelmente outras diretas de mesma obra] (“Dilemas de uma tradução”).

²⁶⁸ Octávio Tarquinio de Sousa describes his mediated translation of Omar Kháyyám’s poem as an “eco de um eco, a sombra de uma sombra, para ficar neste lugar-comum, menos comum que o da dupla traição” (qtd. in “Tradução, ideologia e história” 241). Walter Benjamin in his “The Task of the Translator” also uses a metaphor of an echo to describe a translation in relation to the original: “The task of the translator consists in finding that intended effect [*Intention*] upon the language into which he is translating which produces in it the echo of the original” (76).

borrowing of the borrowed forms and images that inevitably takes place in the process of indirect translation, lead to the creation of a special kind of national literary language – the language of translation [...] This stylistically neutral language, with a clear scarcity of vocabulary, full of borrowed words and calques, in spite of the translators’ desire to follow the grammar norms of their language, was different from the living language of literature. (57)

Translating from translations, thus, cuts off the access road to the original form and in Benjaminian terms, to the very possibility of translation. Even a brief analysis of the Spanish translations, that is to follow, evinces the major changes introduced in the process of translation that provoke the generally accepted idea of the low quality of Spanish translations of Russian literature. However, these translations – “mirrors’ mirrors’,” ‘clones from codes,’ or ‘products of a telephone game’ – contributed to a formation of a certain image of the Russian authors that should be acknowledged in order to restore not justice, but a picture of the Russian literature in a Spanish and Latin American frame that, in turn, participated in the formation of their national literatures. Russian literature in its translated form in some sense both provoked and bolstered the development of the avant-garde movement – in its rethinking of realism and development of parody.

Since it was short works published in journals, periodicals, and magazines that played a central role in the diffusion of Russian literature and in the formation of the readers’ perception of it in Argentina, a thorough analysis²⁶⁹ of three examples of such

²⁶⁹ I utilize the vocabulary provided by Antoine Berman for this analysis. Although I do not consider them as “deforming tendencies,” they nonetheless provide me with the terms necessary to talk about the processes that transpire in the translations I analyze. The twelve tendencies Berman enumerates are:

works should reveal some general mechanisms and tendencies that underlie the process of translation of Russian literature. All three short works appeared in *Claridad*: Lev Tolstoy's "El sol y el viento" ("The Sun and the Wind"); two translations of Maksim Gorky's poem titled "El águila marina" ("The White-Tailed Eagle") in its translation from German (by Llinás Vilanova) and "La canción del Albatros" ("The Song of the Albatross")²⁷⁰ in a later translation which, given to its closeness to the original, seems to be direct; and Vladimir Mayakovsky's poem "La guerra y la paz."

Lev Tolstoy's "El sol y el viento"²⁷¹ was published on July 10th, 1927. The original text belongs to *Azbuka*, which Tolstoy wrote in 1872. It was a reader for students of the school he founded in Yasnaya Polyana in 1859. "This he started on entirely independent lines, – that is, on purely anarchistic principles, totally free from the artificial methods of education which had been worked out by German pedagogists, and were then greatly admired in Russia. There was no sort of discipline in his school. Instead of working out

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1. rationalization
 2. clarification
 3. expansion
 4. ennoblement and popularization
 5. qualitative impoverishment
 6. quantitative impoverishment
 7. the destruction of rhythms
 8. the destruction of underlying networks of signification
 9. the destruction of linguistic patternings
 10. the destruction of vernacular networks or their exoticization
 11. the destruction of expressions and idioms
 12. the effacement of the superimposition of languages ("Translation and the Trials of Foreign" 244).

²⁷⁰ Neither of the names used in the titles of the Spanish versions seem to reflect the actual bird from Gorky's poem. His is *буревестник* ("stormy-petrel.") In this particular case, it is not about the exactitude of the bird species, but the "destruction of underlying networks of signification" resulted from the inexactitude. Both in Russian and in English the name of the bird includes a word "storm" that is an almost explicit reference to the Revolution. The two Spanish versions, the Russian original, and an English translation can be found in Appendix A (VI, VII, VIII, IX).

²⁷¹ The Russian original and my literal English translation can be found in the Appendix A (IV, V).

programs according to which the children are to be taught, the teacher, Tolstoy said, must learn from the children themselves what to teach them, and must adapt his teaching to the individual tastes and capacities of each child” (Kropotkin, *Ideals and Realities* 120). *Azbuka*, or the *ABC's*, included fairy tales, fables, *byliny* (Russian epic poems), and tongue-twisters. Though written for children, they were far from being simple. Both the form and the content of the material he included do not aim to moralize, but to teach children to think critically. The situations he chose seem very simple and quotidian; they could happen on a day like any other. Yet, just as in life, any simple situation has several levels of interconnected issues that complicate the traditional fairy-tale dichotomies of good and bad.

In the short story presented here, in the Russian original, Tolstoy simply tells a story of the Sun and the wind trying to see who could strip a man of his clothes faster. There are no dialogs, no morals at the end. There is not even a title. All of these elements were added in the Spanish translation. The absence of the three elements in the Russian version is not accidental. Quite the opposite: it is didactic, but, again, not moralizing. It develops children’s imagination. The absence of the moral at the end was supposed to make students think about the actions of each character and what can be learned from them. There is no good and bad – precisely what the Spanish translation inserts: “con el bien se obtiene más que con el mal,” cancelling some grey areas of the original. The Sun cannot be seen as absolutely good, since it doesn’t simply do good to the man, but enters into a competition with the wind. But as we saw earlier in Boedo Group “no se admiten medias tintas: educar es ir de lo simple a lo complejo y estar convencido de que el otro nada sabe. Este afán

didáctico en los textos de los veristas se realiza a través de las moralejas y la explicitación de todo aquello que se quiere decir” (Montaldo 330).

Tolstoy wanted to develop love for art together with moral education in his students. Thus, form becomes as important as content. The text is very concise and the sentences are short, with frequent ellipses and inversions. It is rhythmic and contains structural repetitions. The tension of the wind is expressed through syntactic structures: there is a repetition of “and” that shows the effort and the insistence of the wind. Meanwhile, ellipses appear when it is the Sun’s turn, accelerating the rhythm and reflecting how little it took the Sun to win. The lack of the form as an element of the content expression forces the translator to add a tension through verbal expression, resulting in expansions, clarifications, the destruction of rhythms and the destruction of linguistic patternings (Berman). For example, the wind’s tension and anger is expressed directly with words: “El viento encolerizado, descargó sobre el viajero lluvia y nieve.” The Sun’s calmness is also expressed with words: “Sonrió el sol.” Neither of these emotions was in the original text. Although there is no information available on the source of the translation, it is clear that there is a strong emphasis on the content and moral, and no work with stylistic devices, due, probably, to its loss in the intermediary translation. Although this is a very short example, it clearly illustrates the usual mechanisms that took place in the process of translation of the Russian literature into Spanish.

Maksim Gorky’s poem “Песня о буревестнике,” or “Song of the Stormy Petrel,” as mentioned above, was translated into Spanish twice. The first Spanish translation is abundant with content inaccuracies, or qualitative impoverishment (Berman). For instance,

“the wind is gathering the storm-clouds” (“ветер тучи собирает”) is changed into “el viento furioso azota las olas.” In the original the stormy petrel looks like a black lightning that turns into “un rayo nuevo” in the translation. If it is a thirst for the tempest that we hear in the petrel’s cry, in the Spanish version it turns into “un reto a la tempestad” which through the destruction of underlying networks of signification (Berman) radically alters the meaning of the poem, since the storm is a metaphor for the Revolution, and thus, the petrel and the poet’s common goal, not a challenge or fear. The phrase “Силу гнева, пламя страсти и уверенность в победе слышат тучи в этом крике” (“The storm-clouds hear the power of his rage, the flame of his passion, and the confidence in triumph in this sound”) was changed to “Las nubes oyen en este grito el retumbar del trueno, el resplandor del relámpago y la invitación a la fiesta.” In the original, the gulls are moaning in the translation “vuelan silenciosas.” The petrel flying bravely and freely turns into “salvaje y alegre.” The key phrase of the poem: “Буря! Скоро грянет буря!” (“It’s the storm! The storm is breaking!”) — from a premonition of revolution (the insistence on the word “storm” is significant here) turns into a mere admiration with the storm: “¡El huracán! ¡Ah, cómo rugel!”). There is no repetition or inversion, due to the destruction of linguistic patternings.

As in the previous example, the lack of poetic expression through form leads to expansion on the verbal level. If in the original, the wind’s fury is shown through rhythm, in the translation, an adjective “furioso” is inserted to characterize the wind. If in the original the stormy petrel simply cries out as it flies up, in the translation he cries “con todas sus fuerzas.” The gulls’ fear of the storm is expressed in a succinct phrase in Russian:

“Чайки стонут перед бурей, — стонут, мечутся над морем и на дно его готовы спрятать ужас свой пред бурей” (“The gulls are moaning in their terror–moaning, darting o’er the waters, and would gladly hide their horror in the inky depths of ocean.”) What adds tension to the phrase is the choice of precise words, such as “мечутся” (“darting”), for example. Instead of that, Spanish translation becomes wordy (expansion [Berman]): “vuelan [...] de aquí para allá, y desean con ansia poder enterrar su invencible miedo en las profundidades del mar,” with a number of emotionally-colored adjectives: the Russian “готовы” (“they are ready”) turns into “desean con ansia,” “ужас” (“horror”) becomes “invencible miedo.”

In the second version of the Spanish translations, many factual mistakes are corrected. For example, in the opening line, the wind does not “azota las olas.” Rather, it “amontona las nubes.” The climax of the poem is very similar to the original’s climax, both in content and in form: “¡La tempestad! ¡Pronto tronará la tempestad!” But some elements, absent in the original, add a subjective characterization and sentimentality instead of dynamism. For instance, the translator says “El Albatros, más hermoso todavía” or at the end of the poem adds: “Y así, más orgulloso todavía, el orgulloso Albatros vuela soberano y atrevido” when the original only says that the valiant petrel proudly wheels. The two translations illustrate well of how lack of form altered the content, and the subsequent perception of the Russian authors by the Argentine readers.

The Spanish translation of Vladimir Mayakovsky's²⁷² "La guerra y la paz,"²⁷³ written in 1915-1916, was published in *Claridad* on June 13, 1931. The poem shows Mayakovsky's idea of the apocalyptic end of our history. The Spanish translation presents a case of manipulation of the original through fragmentation. Nevertheless, poetry is not what gets lost in this translation, as Robert Frost would have it. Although the translation is very close to the original and was probably done directly from Russian into Spanish, the poem was significantly reduced (from 1056 to 60 lines) (quantitative impoverishment [Berman]). The material that was simply removed holds importance in this analysis.

Mayakovsky was one of the major innovators of the poetic language and the leader of the Russian futurists. In this, one of his most deeply philosophic poems, which touches upon very broad universal themes, Mayakovsky continues his experiments with form, introducing musical score (even including Argentine tango) between stanzas.²⁷⁴ However,

²⁷² In his article "Владимир Маяковский в Испании и Испанской Америке" ("Vladimir Maiakovsky in Spain and in Hispanic America") published in *Звезда (Star)*, no. 4, 1931, pp. 205-207 (part of Bruno Gomide's unpublished manuscript), David Vygódski mentions the popularity of Maiakovsky in Latin America because of his visit to Mexico in 1925 and his friendship with Diego Rivera. Later in the same article, Vygódski quoted Cuban literary critic Fernando de Castro, who interviewed Diego Rivera about Maiakovsky, who, in turn, described him as a man at least six feet tall, who looked more like a boxer than a poet. Diego said that Maiakovsky wrote several poems about Cuba that combined the power of tropics, the glimmering colors of Havana, with the grief of the people, condemned to die between the jaws of rapacious economic imperialism" ["Больше шести футов ростом. Вид боксера скорее, нежели поэта. [...] "Диэго упомянул, что этот русский написал несколько замечательных стихов о Кубе, в которых вся сила тропиков, все сверкающие краски Абаны, но также и вся скорбь народа, осужденного на смерть между челюстей хищного экономического империализма".]

David Vygódski says the first mention of the poet in the Hispanic-American press was because of his visit to Mexico. Many publications dedicated to the big event appeared. Vygódski says that it also served as a catalyst for translations of Maiakovsky's poetry in Argentina, which Cesar Tiempo published in *Claridad*. He mentions as well that magazine *Nosotros [We]* dedicated two pages in its June issue to the Soviet poet. One of the main questions that the authors of the article ask themselves is why Maiakovsky committed a suicide. They find an answer in the fact that Russia is still far away from the paradise on Earth. It is a country with new economics, new art and new society, and that is why life is hard there.

²⁷³ The Spanish translation of the poem and the Russian original can be found in the Appendix A (X, XI).

²⁷⁴ See Appendix A (X).

no trace of that is left in the Spanish translation. Although the content does fit *Claridad's* general line – the exposure of the horrors of human existence, the misery of war and poverty – the form in which Mayakovsky does it is more reminiscent of the techniques of *martinferristas*. Here is one example:

Рты,	Mouths,
как электрический ток,	like an electric current,
скрючило "браво".	have been twisted into a "bravo."
Браво!	Bravo!
Бра-аво!	Brav-vo!
Бра-а-аво!	Bra-a-vo!
Бра-а-а-аво!	Bra-a-a-vo!
Б-р-а-а-а-а-в-о!	Bra-a-a-a-a-v-o!
Кто это,	Who is that,
кто?	who?
Эта массомясая	This mass-fleshy
быкомордая орава?	Bull-muzzled crowd?

It is no surprise that this fragment was also removed from *Claridad's* translation. In fact, an article examining the differences between Russian and Italian futurism and Mayakovsky's role as a revolutionary poet, was published in the Argentine daily paper *Vanguardia*, on May 11, 1930. Along with the article, there also appear some fragments from Mayakovsky's work translated by Llinás Vilanova and Abramson.²⁷⁵

No wonder writers from Boedo would not fully accept him on their side of the

²⁷⁵ "Деловую статью, выясняющую отличие русского футуризма от итальянского и роль Маяковского как революционного поэта, печатает ежедневная газета "Vanguardia" ("Авангард", 11 мая 1930 г.) Рядом со статьей, автором которой является уже упомянутый Льянас-Виланова, приведено несколько сатирических отрывков из Маяковского в переводах автора статьи и все того же Абрамсона" (taken from Gomide's unpublished manuscript).

avant-garde. Alvaro Yunque, for example, in his *Literatura social en la Argentina* says “parece que existen dos revolucionarismos: uno artístico (en el que se enrolan casi todos los artífices católicos y buergueses) y otro social (contra el que aquellos artífices detonan). Me apoyaré en Lenin, mente clara: ‘A Pushkin – opinaba el ‘reaccionario’ Lenin – lo comprendo y lo acepto; a Nekrasov también lo acepto; pero a Maiakovski, dispensadme, no lo entiendo” (291). And then continues,

Esta poesía comunizante sin ritmo y oscurecida por la retórica, proviene de Maiakovski y de Essenin, dos poetas bolcheviques que a su vez provenían del futurismo italiano, es decir, de una expresión literaria burguesa que en la primera proclama futurista de Marinetti ya está en germen el fascismo de Mussolini. ¿Por qué creer que los rusos nos puedan dar lecciones en todo? Si Lenin marcó la ruta política con videncia genial, no ocurrió lo mismo a los otros. Los tambaleos de un Trotzky en política, pudieron tenerlos Maiakovsky y Essenin en literatura. ¿Por qué seguirlos? ¿Por qué creerles maestros? ¿Sólo por haber nacido en Rusia? El hombre es un animal fetichista al que le place adormecerse en la adoración. Contra esta pereza primitiva es necesario estar en guardia. Y negar a los que van a nuestro lado, en la misma fila o en la de adelante, es más provechoso a veces que negar a los del bando opuesto. (291-292)

In his poem, Mayakovsky not only plays with formal structures, he also invents new compound words made of elements belonging to a colloquial and very low register, which is absent in the translation (the destruction of vernacular networks [Berman]).

If the Boedo Group believed that they could change the society, educating all, even the lowest classes, through their writing, Mayakovsky openly rejects this idea, saying that “With poems one can’t squeeze a cry of anger / into petty mum volumes of books” and adding later on:

No!
No poems!
I’d rather
tie my tongue in a knot,
than talk.

This can't be said in poems.
Why lick the burning braziers
with a poet's dapper tongue!

This!
In my hands!
Look!
That's not your lyre!
Ripped open with repentance,
I tore out my own heart –
tearing aortas!

Nevertheless, through fragmentation – “quantitative impoverishment” (Berman) – *Claridad* and the Boedo Group were able to have the major Russian avant-garde innovator on their side.

To sum it all up, in Spanish translation of Russian literature, complex syntactic structures get simplified (qualitative impoverishment and the destruction of linguistic patternings [Berman]). The broad range of the lexicon is reduced (ennoblement or popularization, the destruction of expressions and idioms). Concision gives way to wordiness and explanations (rationalization, clarification and expansion). The parts where language seemed too disjointed (though originally used to express an internal state of confusion or doubt) would undergo a process of “literary smoothing out” (ennoblement). It was inevitable, then, that the effected changes in the translation of Russian literature affected the way Russian style was perceived. Miguel Gorengerb, in his article titled “El apóstol de Yasnaia Poliana,” addresses this issue:

Se ha repetido hasta incurrir en redundancia que los escritores rusos son extraños. Gorki, verbigracia, del que ya hemos hablado en otra oportunidad desde estas mismas columnas, hace pensar a sus personajes en forma tan extraña, que, para muchos, tales tipos nunca existieron ni existirán. Esto, claro está, en su faz exclusivamente artística, porque las ideas sociales de todos los escritores del mundo coinciden en su fundamento. Nos referimos a la forma y al fondo. Con todo,

nosotros agregaríamos que, efectivamente, los escritores rusos son difícilmente comprendidos; pero por los de raza latina. (*Claridad*, no.167, 26-27)

Also, for Guido Paci, Dostoevsky's novels are an "extraña construcción intelectual, punto desigual de aquellas moles ciclópeas, desconcertantes y a veces tenebrosas" (*Claridad*, no. 194). For Rafael Alberti, Dostoevsky was a strange writer. In his *La arboleda perdida*, he confesses that "Los endemoniados, de Dostoyevski, más que admiración, me causaron, entonces, extrañeza. Todo aquel mundo de chiflados que actuaba tan naturalmente, y en el que lo anormal aparecía como lo más correcto, me dejó perplejo y pensativo" (Alberti 161). Similarly, he appeared "raro y pálido" to Rubén Darío, who, according to Schanzer, also participated in the process of diffusion of Russian literature in Latin America, by having translated one of Gorky's short stories ("Rubén Darío, Traductor de Gorki" 315). A "Spanish-speaking" Dostoevsky also turned into "a philosopher or simply a popular writer rather than a novelist *tout court*" (Sergia Adamo 74).

This perception of Dostoevsky as a philosopher and not a writer is mainly due to how the rationalization, clarification, expansion, qualitative impoverishment, destruction of underlying networks of signification, and destruction of linguistic patternings, which turn a literary work into a verbal account, that is, a mere delivery of information. In other words, Dostoevsky's novels were perceived as purely informative, with no artistic work with the form. For Mikhail Bakhtin,²⁷⁶ however, Dostoevsky was one of the greatest innovators where artistic forms²⁷⁷ are concerned (Bakhtin 3). In "Dostoyevsky's novels,"

²⁷⁶ The citations are taken from the English translation by Caryl Emerson.

²⁷⁷ See also Jacques Catteau, *Dostoyevsky and the process of literary creation*; and Robert Louis Jackson, *Dostoevsky's quest for form*.

Bakhtin assures, “the ordinary pragmatics of the plot play a secondary role and perform special and unusual functions. The ultimate clamps that hold the novelistic world together are a different sort entirely; the fundamental event revealed through his novel does not lend itself to an ordinary pragmatic interpretation at the level of the plot” (Bakhtin 7). Leonid Grossman considers Dostoevsky

the creator of a new, absolutely original type of novel. [...] It seems that upon looking at his literary activity in its entirety and all the diverse aspirations of his spirit, we have to admit that Dostoyevsky’s role is most significant not so much in philosophy, psychology or mysticism, but rather in opening a new, truly great page in the history of European novel.²⁷⁸ (*Dostoyevsky’s Poetics*)

Leonid Grossman addresses what concerned Dostoevsky himself: “The problem of form was his first artistic task that he faced at the dawn of his literary career. Solid framework of the external composition, safeguarding the internal life of ideas, became the central subject of his investigations even during his school age” (“Поэтика Достоевского” (*Dostoyevsky’s Poetics*)). His letters and writer’s diaries from very early on showed the primordial role he was assigning to questions of form. Grossman gives some telling

²⁷⁸ «It is precisely here where his talent of innovation has fully expressed itself, and the forged by him form of the novel has never stopped being a phenomenon, in the evolution of the genre, of a unique force and significance for its novelty, audacity and a singularity. As a result of the analysis of his extensive creative work and the different spiritual aspirations, one seems to have to admit that the main significance of Dostoevsky is not so much in philosophy, psychology or mystics, but rather in the creation of new, truly genial page in the history on the European novel». [Здесь именно проявился во всей полноте его новаторский дар, и выкованная им романическая форма осталась во всей эволюции жанра явлением исключительной силы и значения по своей новизне, смелости и неповторимому своеобразию. И думается, что в результате обзора его обширной творческой активности и всех разнообразных устремлений его духа, приходится признать, что главное значение Достоевского не столько в философии, психологии или мистике, сколько в создании новой, поистине гениальной страницы в истории европейского романа.]

examples when discussing the writer's diaries:

Here, on the margins of a broad, meticulously elaborated plan, absorbing in its course a great number of people and situations, events and catastrophes, dramatic collisions, confessions and philosophical theories, one finds characteristic remarks: "All this force into four pages *maximum*." Or for example: "Squeeze the thoughts in artistically and succinctly"... "Form the plan of the short story in the briefest way possible"... "The short story... although told by the author, however succinctly, without frowning at explications, but also imagining in scenes. Here I need harmony... in the dramatic and theatrical scenes – as if there is no reason to cherish it."²⁷⁹

Schopenhauer's and Benjamin's voices reverberate in Boris Schnaiderman's words that compare Dostoevsky's prose to poetry:

seu "rompimento do determinismo causal do século XIX resulta numa prosa estranhamente próxima da poesia, rica de contrastes e de saltos, onde o elevado se mistura com o baixo, as idéias mais elevadas, com o cotidiano mais trivial, [...] em que o real é a máscara de outro real, em que nada é definitivo ou estratificado, conforme tem sido apontado por alguns dos estudiosos mais sérios da obra de Dostoiévski. (286)

By concentrating on the content, explaining that which was expressed by the form, the very art is lost in translation, since no room is left for imagination and, for Schopenhauer, imagination is what makes art art:

²⁷⁹ «В этом отношении особенно показательны 'записные книжки' писателя. Здесь часто на полях обширного, детально разработанного плана, вбирающего в свое русло огромное количество лиц и ситуаций, происшествий и катастроф, драматических столкновений, исповедей и философских теорий, имеются характерные пометы: 'Все это втиснуть в четыре листа *maximum*.' Или же: 'Втиснуть мысли художественно и сжато'... 'Сформировать как можно сокращенное план рассказа'... 'Рассказ... хоть и от автора, но сжато, не супясь на изъяснения, но и представляя сценами. Тут надо гармонию... на эффектных и сценических местах -- как бы вовсе этим нечего дорожить'».

From the fundamental aesthetic law we are considering, it can also be explained why *wax figures* can never produce an aesthetic effect and are therefore not real works of fine art, although it is precisely in them that the imitation of nature can reach the highest degree. For they have nothing over the imagination. Thus sculpture gives the mere form without the colour; painting gives the colour, but the mere appearance of the form; therefore both appeal to the imagination of the beholder. The wax figure, on the contrary, gives everything, form and colour at the same time; from this arises the appearance of reality, and the imagination is left out of account. On the other hand, *poetry* appeals indeed to the imagination alone, and makes it active by means of mere words. (408)

Schopenhauer thus brings us back to Benjamin, who also sees poetry as an essential part of a literary work that makes it a work of art and not an act of “imparting of information” (69). Translation is not *what* the original says – “it says nothing,” Benjamin insists – but the mode, the form, the *how* of what it says. Without a chance of “hearing” the *how* of the original, the second translator is left with the *what*. The content-oriented translations with simplified sentence structures and vocabulary prompted the propagation of the idea that Russian writers did not know how to write (“escribían mal.”) If Dostoevsky is perceived as a philosopher, Tolstoy – as an author without style, “el pensador y genio bárbaro²⁸⁰ que como estilista es más bien un discípulo mediocre que no conocía las leyes de composición y no consiguió encarnar el gran contenido de su obra en una forma adecuada” (Obolenskaia, “La historia de las traducciones” 177). According to Monforte, Tolstoy’s literary style was considered “poco elaborado, cargante y excesivamente extenso.”²⁸¹ (314)

²⁸⁰ The words that Portnoff utilizes in his *La literatura rusa en España* to characterize Russian authors.

²⁸¹ The very “bad writing” is what puts his work into the category of masterworks of prose, according to Antoine Berman: “Literary prose collects, reassembles, and intermingles the polylingual space of a community. It mobilizes and activates the totality of “languages” that coexist in any language. This can be seen in Balzac, Proust, Joyce, Faulkner, Augusto Rosa Bastos, Joao Guimarães Rosa, Carlo Emilio Gadda, etc. Hence, from a *formal* point of view, the language-based cosmos that is prose, especially the novel, is characterized by a certain *shapelessness*, which results from the enormous brew of languages and linguistic systems that operate in the work. This is also characteristic of canonical works, *la grande prose*. [...]

This characterization of Tolstoy's style can be traced all the way back to Emilia Pardo Bazan's comment made in her 1910 article "Count Tolstoy (the writer)" about Tolstoy's lack of the "sentimiento de la belleza artística" (qtd. In Obolenskaia 231). But Kropotkin in his *Ideals and Reality in Russian Literature* says about Tolstoy's *Resurrection*:

His greatest production of the latest period is, however, *Resurrection*. It is not enough to say that the energy and youthfulness of the septuagenarian author which appear in this novel are simply marvelous. Its absolute artistic qualities are so high that if Tolstoy had written nothing else but *Resurrection* he would have been recognised as one of the great writers. (146)

Because translations most often turned Russian literature into works that seemed purely descriptive and focused solely on plot line, some Argentine authors even came to doubt its status as literature. For example, Eduardo González Lanuza says that Russian writers' realism belong more to anthropology than literature: "Creo que tanto el cuento como la novela sicológica [sic], que personalmente me entusiasman cuando el autor es un Jack London o un Goncharov, caen más bien dentro de la monografía científica, del documento antropológico, que en el campo puramente literario" (qtd. in Prieto 13).

Even today, we still find such comments about Russian authors. For example, Laura

In effect, the masterworks of prose are characterized by a kind of "bad writing," a certain "lack of control" in their texture. This can be seen in Rabelais, Cervantes, Montaigne, Saint-Simon, Sterne, Jean Paul Richter, Balzac, Zola, Tolstoy, Dostoevsky.

The lack of control derives from the enormous linguistic mass that the prose writer must squeeze into the work – at the risk of making it formally explode. The more totalizing the writer's aim, the more obvious the loss of control, whether in the proliferation, the swelling of the text, or in works where the most scrupulous attention is paid to form, as in Joyce, Broch, or Proust. Prose, in its multiplicity and rhythmic flow, can never be entirely mastered. And this "bad writing" is rich. This is the consequence of its polylingualism." ("Translation and the Trials of the Foreign" 243)

Estrin,²⁸² in her *Literatura rusa*, talks about Gorky's work in this way:

En estos relatos de vagabundos rebeldes y vagos románticos, esos condenados de la tierra en su crudo naturalismo y su sabor sentimental de protesta, aparece una nueva clase y tipo social en los textos, pese a sus dudosas cualidades literarias. [...] Tenía defectos de estructura y de gusto, personajes muy esquemáticos, como en *La madre*, con un modo de hablar que pasa de lo sublime a lo ridículo y a lo moral sin solución de continuidad. (33)

And later she adds: “Los personajes de Gorki son brutales, agudos, vigorosos y románticamente exagerados, *demasiado rusos*, robustos. [...] Sus defectos evidentes fueron: falta de caracteres convincentes, excesivamente retóricos y grotescos, incluso hasta librescos. [...] Quizá pueda repetirse que *Bajos fondos* es una obra *sincera*, creíble aunque llana, con muy pocos juegos de sentido y ninguno de forma (valga la diferencia y la distancia...) (34-35).

That, however, did not matter to the writers of the Boedo Group. “En realidad, para ellos que están dispuestos ante todo a los *mensajes*, resulta convincente la indiferencia por las traducciones así como el mencionado desprecio por los aspectos ‘formales’” (Vázquez Paz qtd. in Montaldo 338n212). It is the image of a copy of reality, of the literature concerned with the content and not the form that Russian literature acquired in translation, that legitimized Boedo's way of writing “sin gusto,” (Sarlo 201) with Elías Castelnuovo²⁸³

²⁸² Laura Estrin is the author of *Literatura rusa. Acerca de Biéli, Blok, Gorki, Babel, Shklovski, Tsvietáieva, Jlébnikov, Platónov y Dovlátov* (2013). Also, in collaboration with Irina Bogdashevski she wrote and edited such books as *Simbolistas rusos* (2006), *Mi Pushkin* (2003), *Tres poemas* and *Cazador de ratas* by Tsvietáieva (2006), *Cartas de Chéjov* (2009) and Shklovski's *La tercera fábrica* (2012). She taught a course on Chekhov's short stories at the Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes in the summer of 2015.

²⁸³ César Tiempo in his book *Mi tío Scholem Aleijem y otros parientes* describes him as “un escritor que

as its principal representative:

Castelnuovo es alguien que sus contemporáneos de las corrientes renovadoras consideraban un escritor “sin gusto”. Allí donde un narrador realista podía hacer un corte, trabajar el relato con una elipsis, un silencio, el pasaje a otro momento u otro lugar de la acción, Castelnuovo, invariablemente, continúa escribiendo. Tiene una noción plebeya de la sintaxis narrativa y siempre dice lo que un escritor de mejor oficio elude. (Sarlo 201)

His is the writing of exaggeration: “No hay en *Larvas* vicio, defecto o problema que no sea exacerbado y llevado a la apoteosis, lo que resulta en un permanente clímax de tragedia que fácilmente acaba por provocar la incredulidad del lector” (Herrera 74). It is what Herrera calls “el tremendismo narrativo” (75) and for him, Castelnuovo’s tremendism gets to such a point that it “acaba filtrando la realidad descrita en un grado no menor que lo podría hacer el esteticismo vanguardista” (75).

According to Juan Pablo Echague’s letter prologue to Manuel Gálvez’ *Desgraciados*, it is precisely “un realismo descarnado” developed by “ciertos autores nórdicos” that contributed to such texts that

[n]o se caracterizan [...] ni por la originalidad, ni por la creación imaginativa, ni por el análisis. Su fuerza, es decir, su mérito [...] reside en la notación seca y directa de cosas vistas y sentidas. Esto y un estilo que por su sobriedad (iba a decir por su

tuvo el don de escrutar el alma de los humildes y ofendidos, de los desposeídos y postgradados por una sociedad despiadada” (282), alluding in this way to Dostoevsky. In his “Instalación y crónica del año literario”, published in *Claridad* in December of 1929, Tiempo also describes him as a narrator with a “predilección por los tonos sombríos, con una veta subterránea de piedad por las almas atormentadas” (Dec. 1929).

aridez), corresponde al espíritu de las narraciones, constituye un valor netamente original entre los escritores nuestros; se piensa un poco en ciertos autores nórdicos que cultivan un realismo descarnado. (qtd. in Sarlo 192)

Russian writers' "bad writing" thus lead to the Argentine writers' "bad writing" "endorsed" by the big classics.

On the other hand, the effacement of superimposition of languages and the destruction of networks of signification led to a loss of humor in the translations of Russian literature. Russian authors were adscribed "una particular gravedad o solemnidad. No hay un crítico literario que no haya intentado parcialmente llenar con palabras suntuosas, del tipo "la profundidad de Dostoievski", "la aguda mirada de Chéjov", "la plasticidad de Turguéniev", "la vastedad de Tolstói", los vacíos vinculados al desconocimiento de la historia de Rusia" (Alejandro Ariel González "Introducción" to *Memorias del subsuelo X*). And it is precisely the dramatic expression that, according to Manuela Fingueret, the Boedo writers take from the Russian literature:

Durante bastante tiempo, los de Florida acusaron a los de Boedo de tener una gran influencia de la literatura rusa, cosa que no era del todo errada, ya que de esa corriente y de sus mejores escritores asimilaron un modo de expresión dramática y un estilo expresivo sin subterfugios, al modo de Gogol, Gorki y de los expresionistas rusos pre y post revolucionarios. (62)

The loss of humor is produced in part by the lack of understanding of the complex polysemy that characterizes Russian literature and culture that leads to "literality in explanation of phenomena, taking figurative speech for literal, erasure of irony and of

ambivalence of situations” (Lotman qtd. in Obolenskaia 112), which Berman calls “the destruction of underlying networks of signification” (244). In his trip to the Soviet Union, Castelnovo understands that just the word “thank you” in itself does not mean anything: “Existen, por ejemplo, dos maneras de dar las gracias. Y es a saber: *gracias, sí y gracias, no*. En su defecto, las gracias carecen de significado” (qtd. in Saïtta 94). Thus, the same word can have several interpretations depending on the implied intonation. Also, for Antoine Berman, all masterworks of prose are characterized poly-lingualism: “Don Quixote, for example, gathers into itself the plurality of Spanish "languages" during its epoch, from popular proverbial speech (Sancho) to the conventions of chivalric and pastoral romances. Here the languages are intertwined and mutually ironized” (287). He then continues saying that such “Babelian proliferation of languages in novels pose specific difficulties for translation. If one of the principal problems of poetic translation is to respect the polysemy of the poem (cf. Shakespeare's *Sonnets*), then the principal problem of translating the novel is to respect its shapeless polylogic and avoid an arbitrary homogenization” (287).

Alejandro Ariel González explains the reason for such misreading of Russian writers: “al no conocer las condiciones de creación del texto, al ignorar la historia y el desarrollo espiritual de Rusia, los escritores rusos han sido poco menos que fetichizados” (Alejandro Ariel González, “Introducción” to *Memorias del subsuelo* XI). That is why he emphasizes the importance of locating the work within its context²⁸⁴: “suele recurrirse a la

²⁸⁴ He started his talk “Reconstructing the Original: Translating Trotsky’s *Literature and Revolution*,” organized by the New England Translators Association, with a quote from Bordieu that emphasizes the absolute need of the context in which any work was written.

biografía del escritor para dar cuenta de los rasgos de su obra” (Alejandro Ariel González “Introducción” to *Memorias del subsuelo* XI). Then, talking about *Memorias del subsuelo*, Alejandro Ariel González says:

Si uno recorre la historia de la crítica de este texto, nota de inmediato que ya desde el comienzo se produjo un error de percepción causado por lo que venimos diciendo: su lectura fuera de contexto. Y este error consiste básicamente en que *Memorias del subsuelo*, o mejor dicho “el hombre del subsuelo”, fue tomado *demasiado* en serio. Quizás sugestionados por la idea de la “profundidad” y la gravedad de Dostoievski, los críticos occidentales no contemplaron hasta hace relativamente poco tiempo la posibilidad de que esta obra fuera, antes que nada, una *parodia*. [...] Anteriormente, las *Memorias* eran más bien leídas como un tratado filológico, religioso o psicológico. (Alejandro Ariel González “Introducción” to *Memorias del subsuelo* XII)

As González correctly notes and as was mentioned earlier, parody was one of the fundamental elements of Dostoevsky’s writing. Humor, in general, was an essential part of many Russian classics. In *Viaje sentimental*, Shklovsky says about Gorky: “Iba a menudo a casa de Gorki, sé bromear, me gustan las bromas de los demás y en casa de Gorki se reía mucho. Reinaba un humor particular, como una actitud condicional hacia la vida, un irónico no reconocerla... El bolchevismo de Gorki es un bolchevismo irónico, sin ninguna fe en el hombre” (qtd. in Estrin 29).

Kropotkin also confirms that that sense of tragedy was not originally present in Gorky’s short stories: “That eternal complaint about poverty and bad luck, that helplessness and hopelessness which were the dominant notes with the early folk-novelists, are totally absent from Górkij’s stories. His tramps do not complain. [...] His tramps are miserably poor, but they ‘don’t care’ (*Ideals and Reality* 252).

It is not just that Gorky doesn’t imply this tragic sense; he cannot stand it; “he cannot bear that self-castigation in which other Russian writers so much delight” (253).

David Vigodsky sees a light form of Chekhov's stories not weighed down by the tragic sense either on the side of the author or the characters:

You read Chekhov's short stories one after another – filled with perverse, petty, and dirty things, little people, repulsive acts, in spite of all that you do not rebuff the books, and more so, read more and more, laughing vehemently and gleefully. Why is it? Why do we read merrily and avidly all these little stories about little people?

This is one of Chekhov's greatest tasks. He managed to give his short stories about dirty and perverse life such a balmy shape, such sweet charm, that we put ourselves at a loss.²⁸⁵

The two major imprints of the perception of Russian literature as overly tragic are the exaggeration of tragedy in the work of some Argentine writers or parody as a response to both the Russian translations and the Argentine writers' imitation of them. One of the most undeniable "tragic" marks can be found in Elías Castelnuovo's work, about which Laura Estrin says: "Lo novedoso de esa puesta fue la fusión entre los detalles naturalistas téticos con el halo romántico, lo que la obra de Elías Castelnuovo produjo en la literatura argentina al leer esta traducción del XIX ruso: mezcla de aspereza, horror y sentimentalismo" (34).

²⁸⁵ From David Vigodsky's article "О Чехове (из дневника читателя)" ("About Chekhov (from the reader's diary)" published in *Гомельская копейка (Kopeika de Gomel)*, № 460, 5-VII-1914:

One after another, you read Chekhov's short stories – platitude, pettiness, filth, small people, low actions are everywhere. In spite of all that, you do not discard the books, and more so, you are reading and reading, laughing impetuously and brightly.

Why is it? Why do we read joyfully and insatiably all these little stories of little people?

That is where the greatest task of Chekhov's art. Chekhov was able to give his stories about filthy and vulgar life such a balmy form, such a sweet charm, that we perplex ourselves. [Один за другим вы читаете чеховские рассказы – всюду пошлость, мелочность, грязь, маленькие людишки, ничтожные поступки, несмотря на это, вы не отбрасываете книжки, а еще и еще читаете, смеетесь безудержно и светло.

Почему же это так? Почему мы читаем радостно и жадно все эти маленькие истории маленьких людей?

В этом величайшая задача творчества Чехова. Чехов смог придать своим рассказам о грязной и пошлой жизни такую благоуханную форму, такую милую очаровательность, что мы сами перед собой становимся в тупик.]

Castelnuovo's style had been ridiculed²⁸⁶ and parodied by the Florida group, which, as I argue later on in this chapter, played its role in the development of parody in the Argentine literature. Roberto Arlt's work also exhibits parodic mechanisms dialoguing with Dostoevsky's work, or to be more exact, with the translations of Dostoevsky's work.²⁸⁷

Though flawed, fragmented, adulterated, or mutilated, the early versions of Russian literature, nevertheless, lived and still live a full life dialoging with the new literature and environment. And it is the very flaws of translations that formed a fertile soil for renovation of Argentine literature.

II Rethinking Realism

The first half of the 20th century is characterized by the redefinition of the relationship between art and reality. With the development of photography, art is freed from the responsibility of imitating reality and gains the right to build its own. The relativity of reality and the subjectivity of perception uncovered by advances in physics and technology undermined the presumed solidity of reality. Consequently, realism as a literary movement and the novel as its principal genre are interrogated.²⁸⁸ Defined as an

²⁸⁶ Elías Castelnuovo was one of the editors of *Extrema Izquierda* that after their first issue was saluted by *Martín Fierro*: "Apareció *Extrema Izquierda*. ¡Salutte! Muy realista, muy, muy humana. Sobre todo esto: hay en sus páginas un realismo exhuberante; el léxico que zarandean sus redactores es de un extremado realismo: masturbación, prostitución, placas safilíticas [*sic*], piojos, pelandrunas, que lo parió, etc., etc... ¡Muy, muy realista!" (qtd. in Lafleur, Provenzano, Alonso 110).

²⁸⁷ See second part of Chapter 4.

²⁸⁸ See Л.Н. Полубояринова. «Понятие реализма в истории литературы ("The definition of realism in the Literary History"). *Вестник Санкт-Петербургского Университета*. 6:3 (2007).

“artistic trend [that] aims at conveying reality as closely as possible and strives for maximum verisimilitude” (Jakobson, “On Realism in Art” 20), realism was besieged by scores of “avant-gardisms” (futurism, cubism, creationism, etc.) for its inability to either reflect reality in its constant flux, or to accept the inherent plurality and subjectivity of perception. Although Argentine literature was undoubtedly taking part in the creation and boosting of the impetus of the avant-garde movements in Europe,²⁸⁹ its own avant-garde did not take a form of one of the “-isms,” but rather turned directly to negotiation of the terms “realism” and “reality” from within the movement. This negotiation, the role of translation in it, and its impact on the development of Argentine narrative becomes my focus here.

In 1921 Roman Jakobson, in his “On Realism in Art,” criticized the uncritical use of the term “realism,” knowing that the way the writer perceived reality depends on an infinite number of internal and external factors, and that the way the reader will receive it, is contingent upon a multiplicity of factors as well. On the other hand, the pursuit of verisimilitude in a verbal expression is, for Jakobson, futile and pointless. He points to the term’s extreme relativity and the subsequent need of its redefinition in each historical, political, cultural and social context. Borrowing the frame of Jakobson’s argument, I analyze how translation of Russian nineteenth-century realism brought, at the beginning of the last century, the need to redefine Argentine narrative realism into sharp relief.

In order to understand how that happened, one needs to position oneself at the center of the Boedo-Florida polemics. Both groups considered themselves part of the avant-

²⁸⁹ For example, Jorge Luis Borges was one of the authors of the Ultraist manifesto.

garde movement; however, one – for its attempts at revolutionizing literature by making it more accessible to the masses; the other – for renewing language and literature themselves. If the first one, constructed its realism by imitating Russian realism, the translation of the Russian one, the Florida group took the resulted from this imitation incongruity as the living proof of the incongruity and the dangers that any realism harbors under its presumed “reality.”

As we can see from the way Russian works were perceived by Argentine writers, translation not only turned some Russian works into anthropology and writers into philosophers who were unable to write well; it also changed Russian realism into a way of writing that simply registers the surrounding reality. Russian realism however, as Andreyeva notes, did not have the power of reconstructing life on paper, but rather gave the reader an illusion of creating life at the moment of writing/ reading (379). Kropotkin makes a sharp distinction between French and Russian realism, when he looks at Gogol as one of the earliest Russian realist writers, underlining the Russian realism’s broadest focus:

We, Russians, who had had Gogol, and knew realism in its best form, could not fall in with the views of the French realists. We saw in Zola a tremendous amount of the same romanticism which he combated; and in his realism, such as it appeared in his writings of the first period, we saw a step backwards from the realism of Balzac. For us, realism could not be limited to a mere anatomy of society: it had to have a higher background; the realistic description had to be made subservient to an idealistic aim. Still less could we understand realism as a description only of the lowest aspects of life, because, to limit one’s observations to the lowest aspects only, is *not* to be a realist. [...] Degeneracy is not the sole nor dominant feature of modern society, if we look at it as a whole. Consequently, the artist who limits his observations to the lowest and most degenerate aspects only [...] does not conceive life *as it is*: he knows but one aspect of it, and this is not the most interesting one. [...] Our great realist, Gogol, had already shown to his followers how realism can be put to the services of higher aims, without losing anything of its penetration or ceasing to be a true reproduction of life. (86)

In the Boedo group's rendering of it, Russian realism seems to be standing on two pillars: an exact copy of reality and tragedy as content. Because Dostoevsky was chosen by the Boedo group as their literary idolon, examining his realism against the two pillars reveals the incongruence between Boedo's realism and Argentine reality.

Dostoevsky not only didn't conceive of realism as a tool for copying reality, but more so, he considered reality as existing in precisely that zone which many considered fantastic or extraordinary, in which one could not but try to apprehend the irrational. As Omar Lobos says in the introduction to his translation of *Crimen y castigo* (*Crime and Punishment*): "el realismo dostoevskiano es 'poco canónico', si se quiere, y raya en el expresionismo" (Lobos XVIII). He continues quoting Dostoevsky's words: "¿qué puede haber para mí de más fantástico e inesperado que la realidad? ¿Qué puede resultar incluso más inverosímil que la realidad?" (Dostoevsky qtd. in Lobos XVIII). Although he was seen as *raro* in the Spanish-speaking world, this description does not fully correspond to the way in which his work and his realism were perceived through translation.

Leonid Grossman, the author of "Поэтика Достоевского (*The Poetics of Dostoevsky*)," notes that two significant circumstances in Dostoevsky's life – epilepsy and death penalty²⁹⁰ – informed his realist literary school, endowing it with the mystic and

²⁹⁰ In 1849 Dostoevsky was arrested and condemned to death because of his involvement in the Petrashevsky's circle ("Petrashevsky was a dedicated follower of the utopian socialist Fourier, and he had a large library with many forbidden books" (Breger 128)). Afterwards, he was taken to the place where he was supposed to be executed, together with a group of other condemned men. Minutes before the execution, the death penalty was changed to four years of hard labor in Siberia and two years of service in the border army. More on this episode in Louis Breger, *Dostoevsky: The Author as Psychoanalyst*. New York: New York University Press, 1989: 128; Carr, Edward H. *Dostoevsky, 1921-1881*. New York: Barnes & Noble, 1963. Print; Dostoyevsky, Fyodor, and Liza Knapp. *Dostoevsky as Reformer: The Petrashevsky Case*, 1987; Joseph Frank. *Dostoevsky, The years of Ordeal*, 1983. Lloyd, John A. T. *Fyodor Dostoevsky*, 1976; Berdiaiev, Nikolai. *Mirosozercanie Dostoevskogo* (Мирозерцание Достоевского), 1923 (English

fantastic,²⁹¹ that often eclipse the elements of an attentive observation of life and of meticulous collecting of its minutiae. Grossman also notes that Dostoevsky's writing reflects his

avid interest [...] in dreams, hallucinations, delirious apparitions, hysteric and epileptic attacks, hypnotic states, narcosis and inebriation. He was always drawn to the complex phenomena of the hazy intermediate states between dream and reality [...] This is the place of origin of his constant inclination to depict mad dreamers or dreaming madmen, his inclination to record with exactitude a vague state between dreaming and wakefulness, when nightly forms are still glimpsing in front of one's eyes, and the events taken from the reality belong to the departed dream.²⁹²

His writing is realist²⁹³ the way music is,²⁹⁴ says Grossman, for the two do not try to copy reality, but with their own means provoke similar feelings in us, that real life foments. It is with a range of often non-realist tropes that Dostoevsky managed to recreate life in the world of his novels:

With the help of a whole range of the most unusual, oftentimes even openly unreal devices, Dostoevsky managed to create that special world, transformed by an artistic imagination, that is able to provoke in us the emotions of the same force, as life itself. All the mystics, all the symbolism and fantasy of his work ultimately aim at this highest intensity of the perception of the world. In spite of his inclination of using the facts of reality as the starting point, he knew very well that the true realism lies not in the naive attempts to copy the world, but rather in a voluntary

translation: Berdiaiev, Nikolaï, and Donald Attwater. *Dostoevsky*, Sheed & Ward, 1934.)

²⁹¹ Dostoevsky's artistic interest in nonmaterial dimensions of being is explored in Roger Anderson, *Dostoevsky. Myths of Duality*. Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1986.

²⁹² “жадный интерес [...] к снам, галлюцинациям, бредовым видениям, истерическим и эпилептическим припадкам, гипнотическим состояниям, наркозам и опьянениям. Его постоянно привлекали все сложные явления смутных промежуточных состояний между сном и явью – раздвоение сознания в сновидениях, когда собственные мысли и беспокойства сообщаются фантастическим образам, прояснение во сне многого, еле осознанного на яву, пророческие предчувствия вещей снов и угрожающих кошмаров. Отсюда его постоянное влечение к изображению больных сновидцев или грезящих безумцев, его стремления точно фиксировать смутное состояние просонков, когда ночные образы еще мелькают перед раскрытыми глазами, а явления действительности относятся к отлетевшему сну”.

²⁹³ More on Dostoevsky's realism in Donald Fanger, *Dostoevsky and Romantic Realism*, 1967. The book studies Dostoevsky's work in relation with the work of Balzac, Dickens and Gogol.

²⁹⁴ See also Kuniyuki Nishimura, “E. H. Carr, Dostoevsky, and the Problem of Irrationality in Modern Europe.” *International Relations*. 25:1 (2011): 45-64.

transformation of all its elements with the purpose of, in this artificial way, provoking in us the emotions equally powerful as the ones provoked by real life.²⁹⁵

As Dina Odnopozova correctly notes, Dostoevsky described his narrative methods as “fantastic realism,”²⁹⁶ and they are actually very similar to the methods Borges employed in his own writing.²⁹⁷

Borges argued that fantastic texts sustains [sic] more plausible cause-and-effect relationships than realistic writing [...] Unlike realism, which establishes the credibility of the narrated events by mimicking the outside world, fantastic literature relies on the laws circumscribed within the text itself to certify the integrity of fictional exploits. (Odnopozova 104)

Both Borges and Dostoevsky recognized the porosity of the frontier between fantasy and reality and turned to the amphibious instruments apt for the task of articulating both without destroying one or the other. Odnopozova then quotes Dostoevsky’s words from his letter to A. Maikov from December 1868:

My understanding of realism is completely different from that of our realists and critics. My idealism is more real than theirs. If we were to comprehensively tell about what we, the Russians, have lived through in the last ten years of our spiritual development – would not the realists shout that it has been a fantasy? And yet, it is

²⁹⁵ “Целым рядом самых необычных, часто даже явно нереальных приемов Достоевский сумел создать тот особенный преобразенный творческой фантазией мир, который способен вызывать в нас волнения той же силы, что и непосредственная жизнь. Вся мистика, вся символика и фантастика его творчества имеют своей конечной целью эту высшую интенсивность мироощущения. При всем стремлении его исходить в своем творчестве из данных действительности, он прекрасно понимал, что настоящей реализм заключается не в наивных попытках точно копировать мир, а в произвольном преобразении всех его элементов с целью вызвать в нас этим искусственным путем впечатления той же силы, какие создает в нас непосредственная жизнь”.

²⁹⁶ See also Jones Malcolm, *Dostoyevsky After Bakhtin: Readings in Dostoyevsky's Fantastic Realism*. Cambridge University Press, 1990.

²⁹⁷ Although Odnopozova is right in pointing out the paradox of Borges’ missing in Russian authors the methods of narration he himself employs in his writings, she does not try to understand the possible causes of such a gap between the perception of Dostoevsky’s work and his view of his own writing, which for us is clearly lies in translation.

the true, genuine realism. It is precisely this one that *is* realism, but a deeper one, theirs swims on the surface [...] With their realism one can't explain even a morsel of authentic facts that really occurred. And with our idealism we even predicted²⁹⁸ facts. (Dostoevsky qtd. in Odnopozova 105)

Dostoevsky's own abhorrence of the kind of realism that pedantically copies reality, clearly manifests itself in the following comment by the narrator of "Bobok" in a humorous fashion: "I think that the painter made my portrait not for literature's sake, but for the sake of the two symmetrical warts on my forehead [...] So, how do my warts look in his portrait, — real! That's what they call realism."²⁹⁹

Thus, the Boedo's group perception of the Russian realism exposed in the previous chapter was carved out of translations. Boedo's copy of a *translation* of the alien reality to represent their own, brought into a sharp relief the incongruity between Boedo's realism and the reality that it presumably expressed.

The Boedo Group's opposite could be found in the Florida Group,³⁰⁰ inspired by European avant-garde movements of the time and determined to attain "pure" literature, free from political or social weight.³⁰¹ Although many,³⁰² including Borges, affirm that the apparent conflict between the two groups was created artificially to attract the public's attention and stir its interest and participation, it also played a fundamental role in shaping

²⁹⁸ Dostoevsky's writing's prophetic quality is discussed in more detail in the last chapter, in the section devoted to Roberto Arlt.

²⁹⁹ "Думаю, что живописец списал меня не литературы ради, а ради двух моих симметрических бородавок на лбу: феномен, дескать. Идеи-то нет, так они теперь на феноменах выезжают. Ну и как же у него на портрете удались мои бородавки, — живые! Это они реализмом зовут".

³⁰⁰ See "Florida versus Boedo" in Eduardo González Lanuza's *Los martinfierristas*: 100-103.

³⁰¹ Lafleur, Provenzano and Alonso distinguish the two as "arte por el arte" versus "El arte en función social" (77-78). More on the division and the polemics in the chapter "La nueva generación (1915-1939)" in *Las revistas literarias argentinas (1893-1967)*.

³⁰² Florencia Ferreira de Cassone in her article "Boedo y Florida en las páginas de *Los Pensadores*" says: "En efecto, existieron en Buenos Aires, entre los años 1920 y 1930, grupos literarios que motivaron más leyendas que vanguardias: los mencionados Florida y Boedo" (20).

Argentine literature, including the so-called “new narrative.” The flawed translations and their clear influence on the works of writers from the Boedo group, helped the group of Florida to question “the real,” the root of the difference between the two groups, which, as Florencia Ferreira de Cassone rightly points out, expresses the very essence of the epoch. For the Florida group, the writers of the Boedo “[u]saron todavía del viejo realismo crítico para denunciar los aspectos sombríos del mundo, y un lirismo tolstoiano para exaltar la virtud de los humildes y de los sumergidos; deformaban con gusto la realidad para forjar de contra-golpe la imagen de una vida y de un mundo mejor” (Adolfo Prieto 23). The criticism of a blind copying of Russian realism expands onto mimesis as a literary trope in general. In Florida’s manifesto in *Martin Fierro* they do not shy away from demonstrating their total repudiation of mimesis:

Frente [...] a la afición al ANACRONISMO y al MIMETISMO [...]
Frente a la ridícula necesidad de fundamentar nuestro nacionalismo intelectual, hinchando valores falsos que al primer pinchazo se desinflan como chanchitos.
Frente a la incapacidad de contemplar la vida sin escalar las estanterías de las bibliotecas. [...]
“Martín Fierro” siente la necesidad imprescindible de definirse y de llamar a cuantos sean capaces de percibir que nos hallamos en presencia de una NUEVA sensibilidad y de una NUEVA comprensión, que, al ponernos de acuerdo con nosotros mismos, nos descubre panoramas insospechados y nuevos medios y formas de expresión. (XVI)

The impossibility of seeing the surrounding world, their own reality without climbing up the library shelves, in particular the Russian authors section, indicates that it is not just Boedo’s yearning to copy reality, but the reality copied from library books, that Florida denounces. Noé Jitrik in his “A la sombra de Boedo,” calls the reality the Boedo group presents “a distorted image”:

por el lado de la exageración se produce un efecto que tuerce una voluntad

denuncialista, o de literatura “social”, y lleva algunos textos a una región que reduce el naturalismo a una mínima expresión; tal el caso de las narraciones de Elías Castelnuovo, de evidente impronta tolstoiana: el pietismo que impregna el discurso del narrador de sus relatos deja paso a imágenes tan estridentes que si hubo intención de describir un estado social calamitoso, que victimiza a seres humanos que serían, según lo preconiza el anarquismo, víctimas, y a quienes espera un futuro libre y luminoso según el comunismo, lo que resulta es un cuadro distorsionado pero poético, semejante a las imágenes de miserables atormentados por la explotación. (38-39)

For the writers and artists of Florida, the literature produced by the Group of Boedo exposed the main danger that realism implies: fiction that supposedly copies reality and longs to pass for reality puts a mirror in front of the readers’ eyes, thus, obstructing their view of the real. For Florida group, Macedonio Fernández played the role of “compañero, mentor reconocido y, sobre todo, el de una suerte de filósofo y humorista ejemplar” (*Humorística, novelística y la obra abierta* 41).³⁰³ And it is in his writing that I find the origin of the criticism of the literary mechanisms that Boedo group’s writings in combination with Russian literature translations exposed.

Although Macedonio does not explicitly criticize the Boedo group, some of his comments lead one directly and unequivocally to that camp. One such comment cannot but refer to Castelnuovo’s writings: “llamo ‘mal gusto’ al falsete y falsete lo no sentido: nada fuera de lo no sentido es mal gusto” (*Epistolario* 46). Thus, a writer’s admission to writing “sin gusto” is tantamount to falsification, to lying, which goes not too far away from

³⁰³ See Alicia Borinsky’s “Correspondencia de Macedonio Fernández a Gómez De La Serna”, *Revista Iberoamericana*, vol. 36, no. 70, 1970: pp. 101-123; *Humorística, novelística y obra abierta en Macedonio Fernández*, 1971; “La novelística de Macedonio Fernández. Entre la teoría y el chiste”, *Historia crítica de la literatura argentina: Volumen 8*, edited by Noé Jitrik, Roberto Ferro, Emecé, 2007; *Macedonio Fernández y la teoría crítica: Una evaluación*, Corregidor, 1987; “Macedonio: Su proyecto novelístico”, *Hispanérica*, vol. 1, no. 1, 1972: pp. 3-48; *Macedonio Fernández y la teoría crítica: Una evaluación*. Buenos Aires: Corregidor, 1987.

pretending that realism is capable of reflecting the reality and that that reflection in the mirror *is* art:

[t]odo el realismo en arte parece nacido de la casualidad de que en el mundo hay materias espejantes; entonces a los dependientes de tiendas se les ocurrió la literatura, es decir confeccionar copias, y lo que se llama Arte parece la obra de un vendedor de espejos llegado a la obsesión, que se introduce en las casas presionando a todos para que pongan su misión en espejos, no en cosas. En cuántos momentos de nuestra vida hay escenas, tramas, caracteres; la obra de arte-espejo se dice realista e intercepta nuestra mirada a la realidad interponiendo una copia. (MNE 270)

This idea clearly echoes the one that we read in Schopenhauer: “Realism, which commends itself to the crude understanding by appearing to be founded on fact, starts precisely from an arbitrary assumption, and is in consequence an empty castle in the air, since it sips or denies the first fact of all, namely that all that we know lies within consciousness” (5). Macedonio, instead of creating this “empty castle in the air,” prefers to create the very “nothingness” that is real. To the realism, he opposes “la nada”³⁰⁴:

La nada por imperativo de su concepto es tan opuesta de lo grosero del realismo³⁰⁵ que ofrece la dificultad, luchando con la cual me verá el lector actual si llega a lector siguiente o posprefacial, de que quien la trabaja tiene muchos momentos en que no sólo no sabe si está escribiendo la segunda o la primera parte, sino aún de si ha acertado con la nada, y si certeramente es de ella que está tratando. Y eso que quien con ella mucho trato tenga le notará hasta insolencia en su catadura Existencial. (*Papeles de reciénvenido* 105-106)

He insists on the approximation to “la nada” because for him, as Borinsky says, “sólo se puede conocer el ser a través de no-ser, su opuesto” (*Macedonio Fernández y la teoría crítica* 30). We can say that he tries to get to the object without subject, which according

³⁰⁴ More on “la nada” in Macedonio’s writings in “Macedonio Fernández y su humorismo de la nada” in Ana María Barrenechea, *Textos hispanoamericanos: De Sarmiento a Sarduy*: 105-123 and “La Nada como expresión” in *Museo de la novela de la Eterna*: 64-65.

³⁰⁵ This can be also seen in one of Octavio Paz’ poems:

to Schopenhauer is the “aim of the realism,” (12) but, as he says “it is impossible even to conceive such an object clearly” (12). In doing that, Macedonio sees his own novels as more real than the realist ones: “si en la vida no existe algo que pueda llamarse “yo” o “identidad” – afirma –, los escritores realistas son poco realistas. En ese sentido, su novela sería mucho más “realista” que las que se postulan como tales” (*Diccionario de la novela* 88).

Macedonio, contrary to the common idea, sees a common root in so-called “realism” and hallucination³⁰⁶: “para Macedonio Fernández la alucinación³⁰⁷ está emparentada con el denostado ‘realismo,’ puesto que alucinar implica ‘creer’ o, como él bien denomina, estar ‘viendo un vivir’ [...] Si la alucinación es como estar en presencia de una imagen, de un cuerpo, para percibirlo – aunque sólo sea por unos instantes – como si fuera real”³⁰⁸ (*Diccionario de la novela* 12). Alicia Borinsky calls it a change of masks for

³⁰⁶ Later on Ronald Barthes would call it “the reality effect” – it is the “absence of the signified, to the advantage of the referent alone, [that] becomes the very signifier of realism: the *reality effect* is produced, the basis of that unavowed verisimilitude which forms the aesthetic of all the standard works of modernity” (*The Rustle of Language* 148).

³⁰⁷ He talks about it in more detail in a letter to Tiempo on December 16, 1937: “Problemas de la teoría de una única Belarte, la concienical, por un único órgano, la Palabra Pura, que es sólo la escrita y de mera acepción, llamando acepción únicamente el sentido convenido o concepcional de un signo elegido sin cualidad inflexiva ni imitativa (onomatopeya) ni buscada riqueza ni finura de sonoridad. Esta palabra pura, seleccionada también bajo una preferencia por las palabras de menores asociaciones o impregnaciones afectivas, no debe emplearse sino en una prosa a personajes, un Relato (asunto), el cual a su vez debe ser elegido entre los que se benefician menos con adulaciones o comedimientos con los intereses o gustos pueriles, fútiles del Lector hasta una Solución. El personaje no tendría que representar a nadie, a un hombre de treinta años, alto, moreno, comerciante, casado, cubano, católico, valiente, irascible y que vive en tal lugar, tal época; esto sería lo que se representa con la palabra Luis, el que hace tal y cual hecho. No debe representar así porque entonces nos encaminamos a la alucinación. Y nuestro arte repudia el plan de las alucinaciones; sólo en un cierto momento de cesación, cesura del personaje en el momento en que se remueve por deslizarse a la Vida, quizá no sea evitable un choque de Alucinación” (*Epistolario* 193).

³⁰⁸ This is akin to Schopenhauer’s idea that “the world must be recognized, from one aspect at least, as akin to a dream, indeed as capable of being put in the same class with a dream. For the same brain-function that conjures up during sleep a perfectly objective, perceptible, and indeed palpable world must have just as large a share in the presentation of the presentation of the objective world of wakefulness. Though different as regards their matter, the two worlds are nevertheless obviously molded from one form. This form is the intellect, the brain-function” (4).

a reader: “El realismo en el Arte (rehusa hablar de ‘arte realista’) produce una ‘Alucinación’³⁰⁹ en el lector, le hace pensar que él es otro, distinto de sí mismo, pero igual a sí [...] Sigue creyendo en el mismo mundo, leyes, limitaciones, sólo ha cambiado una máscara. No se ha conmocionado su consciencia; está alucinado” (*Macedonio Fernández y la teoría crítica* 32).

To avoid the dangers of realism, Macedonio wants his reader to always remember that what he has unfolding in front of him is a novel, not life. For Macedonio, falling into believing the “reality” of realism, is tantamount to hallucinating, says Raquel Poblet in the *Diccionario de la novela de Macedonio Fernández*: “La alucinación pierde al lector que alucina, que cree ver. [...] Un lector debe siempre mantener la conciencia de estar leyendo sin abandonarse a la alucinación. ‘En el momento en que el lector caiga en la Alucinación, ignominia del Arte, yo he perdido, no ganado a un lector. Lo que yo quiero es muy otra cosa, es ganarlo a él de personaje’” (12). And what concerns his characters, he wants to make sure that they do not long to be real people, but rather real characters³¹⁰:

Ser personaje es soñar ser real. Y lo mágico de ellos, lo que nos posee y encanta de ellos, lo que tienen sólo ellos y forma su ser, no es el sueño del autor, lo que éste les hace ejecutar y sentir, sino el sueño de ser, en que ávidamente se ponen. Sólo el arte realista que no es belarte, el arte de Ana Karenina, Madame Bovary, Quijote, Mignon, carece de “personajes”, es decir, éstos no sueñan ser, porque creen ser

³⁰⁹ See also section “Personajes y Alucinación” (50-51) in Alicia Borinsky’s *Macedonio Fernández y la teoría crítica* and her article “Macedonio: Su proyecto novelístico.”

³¹⁰ See section “Persona de Vida y Personaje” in Alicia Borinsky’s *Macedonio Fernández y la teoría crítica* (52-61).

copias. (MNE 176)

That is why the character of *Viajero* in his *Museo de la novela de la Eterna* has a particular importance, since he is real through his absence, like *la nada* that is real, and he appears only to remind us that he does not exist and to prevent the reader's hallucination:

-Y entonces, ¿por dónde erra y anda nuestro viajero?

-Mi viajero vive allí enfrente. Y no sale de su casa sino a la hora de fin de capítulo en la novela. Funciona únicamente como extinguidor de la alucinación que llegue a amenazar de realismo el relato. (MNE 178)

For Macedonio “Quijote,³¹¹ Sancho, Hamlet, son personajes confesadamente enfermos, como el idiota de Dostoievsky”³¹² (MNE 208) because they want to live a real life, not the reality of fiction. That is why instead of presenting “personajes locos, doy la lectura loca y precisamente con el fin de convencer por arte, no por verdad,” dice Macedonio (MNE 209). This reminds us of one of *martinfierrista*' epitaphs for González Tuñón who “dies” of an imaginary indigestion while painting an exaggerated copy of Russian realism.³¹³ The incapacity of choosing between fiction and reality is precisely the

³¹¹ Macedonio does, however, accept Quijote as an example that comes closer to his own project against Realism: “La tensión entre ser y no ser en la vida real que existe en el Quijote, hace que Macedonio Fernández lo admire y proponga como semi-ejemplo de la literatura que quiere crear. Quijote es héroe de aventuras que trascurren en el universo a la vez real y novelesco. Es personaje consciente de sí mismo porque lee las propias aventuras. Quiere a la vez, ser personaje al imitar otras que ha leído en libros. Esa es la ambigüedad de existencia que Macedonio ve en el Quijote y también en *Madame Bovary*. Por ello le parecen un paso hacia la adquisición de un universo del lenguaje consciente de sí, radicalmente opuesto a la vida real” (*Macedonio Fernández y la teoría crítica* 52).

³¹² The same criticism would later on appear in Fellini's *8 ½* where an actress says that she is the same like her character.

³¹³ It was quoted earlier in the dissertation:
Grabén este epitafio sobre su sepultura:
Yace aquí Castelnuovo y es feliz porque ya
lejos de prejuicios de esta tierra maldita,
no tendrá que bañarse ni fingir humildad

criterion that determines Macedonio's decision to expel two characters – Pedro Corto y Nicolasa Moreno – from his novel:

¿Por qué desechar los dos últimos personajes? ¿Y, si serán desechados, qué sentido tiene incluirlos en una clasificación de admitidos? Es que, suponemos, trata de destacar, con esta lista, la idea de que un escritor debe tomar una decisión: o novela o realidad. Las alternativas de su estética lo obligan a elegir lo opuesto a la realidad, o sea, lo exclusivamente literarios. Sus objeciones a los personajes desechados son: “Pedro Corto que quería leerla [la novela] primero para figurar en ella” y “ni pasea tampoco Nicolasa Moreno, que aceptaba figurar con mucho gusto si su papel le permitiría salirse de la novela a ratos para ir a ver si no se le volcaba la leche que dejó hervir.” (Borinsky 278-279)

The novel's structure is another way by which Macedonio attempts to protect the reader from hallucination. According to Borinsky, the number of the prologs before the novel has several functions, among which are educating the reader and the “creación de una nueva lucidez”³¹⁴ (*Macedonio Fernández y la teoría crítica* 67). The latter, as Borinsky explains, is when the reader “toma la responsabilidad y conocimiento de cada uno de los pasos en el desarrollo de la futura novela. Las consecuencias estéticas son medidas y discutidas. Surge la lucidez y la inteligencia de un plan como características comunes al lector y al autor” (*Macedonio Fernández y la teoría crítica* 67). Borinsky also says in her *Theoretical Fables*: “According to Macedonio, the power of antirealistic literature is

[...]

Bajo esta loza precaria
Yace E. González Tuñón,
Lo mató una indigestión
Imaginaria (110)

³¹⁴ Borinsky says in her *Humorística, novelística y la obra abierta* en Macedonio Fernández: “La cantidad de prólogos, a la espera de una obra que se presentará con tardanza, asume varios papeles de interés.

Destacamos, por ahora, los siguientes:

1. Educación de los lectores: Por medio del descarte de ciertos principios estéticos, se establece la necesidad de una nueva novelística.
2. La creación de una nueva lucidez: El lector toma responsabilidad y conocimiento de cada uno de los pasos en el desarrollo de la futura novela. Las consecuencias estéticas son medidas y discutidas. Surge lucidez y la inteligencia de un plan como características comunes al lector y al autor” (82).

such that in denying readers the possibility of projecting themselves into other characters and by instead focusing intensely on the unreality of literature – on writing itself, which Macedonio calls ‘el Pensar,’ the act of thinking – it would allow them to experience the dismantling of their very selves” (11). According to the *Diccionario de la novela de Macedonio Fernández*, that is called the “efecto de desidentificación” (36): “marear al lector en su certidumbre de ser, desacomodarlo, conmoverle su mismidad, producirle una conmoción concienical, un sofocón en su continuidad personal, para devolverle luego la certeza de ser, enriquecida y liberada del temor de no ser”³¹⁵ (36). This left a huge imprint on Argentine literature as “[a]mong the reader-writers invited by *Museum of the Novel of the Eternal*, Borges is no doubt the one who has attempted the most to induce a dizziness of the absolute, the productive vertigo that takes both readers and writer away from the belief in their individual selves so that they may realize how they are contingent and only fleetingly identical to their own names” (14).

At the end, we can also call Macedonio’s work didactic that reaches its goal not through teaching how to act in each situation, but through a total re-thinking of self and the world: “no olvidemos que la impresa de Macedonio es didáctica y artística al mismo tiempo. [...] Macedonio quiere efectivamente cambiar a sus lectores. Sus ambiciones no se limitan al campo artístico o a la salvación personal. Es un artesano del lenguaje que

³¹⁵ That for Macedonio can be reached only through “intellectual nothingness” or “Illogic of Art” and through the moment of “nothingness of being”: “Yo creo haber encontrado que sin doctrinas, explicaciones, y principalmente sin racionios, pueden crearse dos momentos, únicos genuinamente artísticos, en la psique del lector: el momento de la nada intelectual por la Humorística Conceptual, mejor llamada Ilógica de Arte, y el momento de la nada del ser concienical, usando de los personajes (Novelística) para el único uso artístico a que deberían siempre destinarse, no para hacer creer en un carácter, un relato, sino para hacer al lector, por un instante, creerse él mismo personaje, arrebatado de la vida” (*Papeles de reciénvenido* 186).

pretende organizar un medio para que los otros aprendan y se salven” (*Macedonio Fernández y la teoría crítica* 101-102). In it, Macedonio’s work is even tangentially comparable to Tolstoy’s *ABC*, before it gets translated into Spanish.

Although the work of Macedonio and his followers does not pretend to have any social or political implications,³¹⁶ it allows them to create a novel that can produce a

³¹⁶ For the discussion of the political implications of Macedonio’s writings, see the part titled “Artista, novela argentina, política” in Miguel Dalmarani’s “Incidencias y silencios. Narradores del fin del siglo XX” (101-102). Also, Gonzalo Aguilar in his “Macedonio Fernández: Modos de aparición y ausencia” tells about Macedonio’s candidacy for being the President of Argentina: “En los mismos años en los que se hace visible por acción de las vanguardias, Macedonio se postula a presidente de la Nación y proyecta una novela colectiva (*El hombre que será Presidente*) [...]. Según el testimonio de su amigo Enrique Fernández Latour, Macedonio se tomó bastante en serio su candidatura a la presidencia e imaginó una serie de estrategias propagandísticas tales como dejar papelitos con leyendas en los bares y en otros lugares públicos. “Macedonio, aviador del piso” o “Macedonio, un misterio político de la próxima Presidencia” eran algunas de las consignas. En ese momento de visibilidad, de propaganda de su persona, tan en contraste con su posición habitual de retiro o enclaustramiento anterior y posterior a la acción vanguardista, Macedonio inventa un dispositivo (el personaje del Presidente) en el que se anudan la ficción, el poder y la creencia. Es como si Macedonio comprendiera que la intervención de las vanguardias no sólo tendría un propósito estético sino que su puesta en cuestión debería alcanzar también la política” (129). Jo Anne Engelbert in her *Macedonio Fernández and the Spanish American New Novel* also does not give a definite answer on whether the campaign was a hoax or a serious attempting of running for the country’s highest administrative position: “Is it conceivable that shy, obscure Macedonio could possibly have been in earnest in contending for his country’s highest office? Or was it all a hoax, an ingenious exercise in avant-garde humor, the ultimate absurdity being electoral victory for a nonexistent candidate? It is tempting to dismiss the whole affair as *martinfierista* high jinks, but his friends insist that, all things considered, Macedonio seemed to take the whole matter very seriously for a joke, if joke it were. Whether hoax or giant metaphor, the campaign waged by Macedonio Fernández in 1927 is certainly the strangest in the history of democratic institutions” (41).

In the first chapter of her book, Engelbert also mentions that the house of Macedonio’s mother, Rosa del Mazo, at one point became “a meeting place for young intellectuals [...]. Juan B. Justo, José Ingenieros, Cosme Mariño, Leopoldo Lugones, Julio Molina y Vedia, Carlos Muscari, Jorge Borges, and Ignacio and Marcelo del Mazo were frequent guests. [...] Macedonio’s relationship to socialism is problematical. His admiration of Juan B. Justo, his participation in the experiment in Paraguay [in establishing a Utopian colony], and his contributing to the inflammatory socialist organ *La Montana* [sic] have led some commentators to hastily equate Macedonio’s early interest in socialism with that of his brother Adolfo, or with that of Lugones or Ingenieros. In fact, in political science as in other realms, Macedonio’s opinions were heterodox and utterly his own, never following expected, official lines” (10). She later on added: “Though Macedonio rarely treated political themes in his work, politics interested him, and he was not hesitant to air his views in conversation and in letters to his friends. His maxim was: “maximum of individual, minimum of state” (12).

For more on the relation between avant-garde and politics also see Chapter 4 “Literatura y Poder” in Bernal Herrera’s *Arlt, Borges y Cia.: Narrativa rioplatense de vanguardia*: 181-234. His main idea is summarized in one sentence: “El rechazo vanguardista del mimetismo realista hace de la literatura un hueco negro que ficcionaliza cuanto entra en ella, y si de un lado la vanguardia repolitiza la retórica literaria, del otro ficcionaliza la política” (185).

“conmoción total de la conciencia del lector, y no la de ocupación trivial de la conciencia en un tópico particular, efímero” (*MNE* 152). That is why Macedonio would say “No digamos más las Belartes, digamos las Dudas-artes” (qtd. in *Diccionario de la novela* 18). According to Borinsky, “[l]a escritura de Macedonio vive en constante asombro e interrogación de sí misma. El humor acerca del acto de escribir y de lo escrito son un aspecto en el cual se realiza esta autointerrogación. [...] El propósito de conmover toda fe en la lógica pasa por el de hacer dudar de lo visto, de aquello en estado de escribirse” (*Macedonio Fernández y la teoría crítica* 112).

Watching the mechanism of creation of the *reality* of fiction, the reader is capable of discerning the *fictionality* of reality and of his or her own being.³¹⁷ Gonzalo Aguilar asserts that Macedonio’s political action is realized in his theory of fiction and in the necessity to suspend belief: “‘Creer menos. Hay que crear un fanatismo del no creer’. Retirarse del acontecimiento para volver a inventarlo: ésa es la utopia que realiza Macedonio” (134). Mónica Bueno notes that it is the notion of autonomy that is “tematizada al punto de convertirse en un modo político” (*Diccionario de la novela* 16). Instead of contemplating a copy of the reality, *martinfierristas* want to teach the reader to

³¹⁷ But the ultimate goal of giving this feeling of inexistence to the reader is to save him from death, as Ramón Gómez de la Serna puts it: “[Macedonio] [q]uiere dar al lector ‘el susto de la inexistencia’ – de él y de su personaje – y eso le salvará del susto de la muerte que sólo atenaza duramente a los que se creyeron más existentes y personajes” (Prologue to *Papeles de reciénvenido* 30). Later on he says: “‘si con actitudes o dichos de un personaje de novela consigo por un momento que el lector sintiente, vivo, se crea ‘personaje’ vacío de existencia, sentirá por lo mismo la liberación de la muerte, es decir que su noción de que ha de morir es poco consistente puesto que cabe en su experiencia, en su vida en suma, que ocurra el hecho mental de creerse muerto, en lo que el *creerse* es un vivir. Asimismo, en la que yo llamo Ilógica de Arte o Humorística Conceptual, el desbaratamiento de todos los guardianes intelectivos en la mente del lector por la creencia en lo absurdo que ella obtiene por un momento, lo liberta definitivamente de la fe en la lógica, como se libró William James, y yo, gracias a él, quizá, de esa lógica que nos dice todos los días: ‘puesto que todos mueren, tú has de morir’, o ‘no hay efecto sin causa’” (251).

see the reality itself, proclaiming that in their manifesto: “Martín Fierro artista, se refriega los ojos a cada instante para arrancar las telarañas que tejen de continuo: el hábito y las costumbres. ¡Entregar a cada nuevo amor una nueva virginidad y que los excesos de cada día sean distintos a los excesos de ayer y de mañana! ¡Esta es para él la verdadera santidad del creador!... ¡Hay pocos santos!” (RMF XVI).

As the beginning of this section suggested, the question of redefinition of realism³¹⁸ was on the mind of many writers, artists and philosophers of the time. In his prologue to the *Índice de la nueva poesía americana*, Vicente Huidobro³¹⁹ draws a line between realism and reality: his poems are not realist, but makers of their own reality:

El poema, tal como aquí se presenta no es realista sino humano.

No es realista, pero se vuelve realidad. Realidad cósmica, con una atmósfera propia, y que tiene seguramente tierra y agua; como agua y tierra tienen todos los mundos que se respetan. No busquéis jamás en estos poemas el recuerdo de cosas vistas, no la posibilidad de ver otras. Un poema es un poema como una naranja es una naranja y no una manzana. (quoted in *Macedonio Fernández y la teoría crítica* 37)

This is a fundamental part of Huidobro’s *creacionismo*. In general, Macedonio’s ideas,

³¹⁸ More on the development of realism in Argentina, see *Historia crítica de la literatura argentina: El imperio realista*, Emecé, 2002.

³¹⁹ In *Macedonio Fernández y la teoría crítica*, Borinsky points to the similarities of Vicente Huidobro’s theories and Macedonio’s, but she does insist on their differences as well: “El ansia de una literatura basada en la pureza de la palabra lo [a Macedonio Fernández] ubica muy cerca de Vicente Huidobro. Pero esa cercanía es solo aparente a partir de la lectura de los manifiestos creacionistas y ciertos párrafos polémicos de Macedonio Fernández. Las obras de ambos escritores difieren enormemente en características y técnicas” (38). Later on, she notes that Macedonio’s objections to Realism are similar to Huidobro’s (42). In her *Humóristica, novelística y obra abierta en Macedonio Fernández*, Borinsky also says: “Macedonio Fernández coincide con el aspecto del vanguardismo representado por Huidobro en la crítica que hace al realismo y en la formulación de la necesidad de crear una literatura no referida al mundo extraliterario” (34).

search for a pure literature and a desire to construct a purely literary space (*Macedonio Fernández y la teoría crítica* 46), put him in line with other avant-garde writers in Latin America and Europe. Engelbert confirms Macedonio's ideas' affinity with Ultraism: "Though its origins are different, Macedonio's theory of Belarte coincides with certain tenets of Ultraism. The Ultraists pursued an elusive ideal: poetry reduced to its purest form, independent of any extrinsic force or influence" (103).

Nevertheless, Macedonio's "dissatisfaction is much more radical than the nearly universal reaction of men of his generation against the sterility of the prevailing positivist theory" (61). It comes from Macedonio's profound metaphysics, rather than curiosity-and innovation-sparked experimentations of the avant-garde. And "what ultimately comes into crisis in Macedonio's 'novel' is nothing less than the Western concept of the 'work' of art, the solid, static, well-defined product of an individual author" (Engelbert 98). Instead of a fixed novel, Macedonio produces, as Noé Jitrik calls it, "text-in-the-making". "The 'open' structure of this text, the permutability of its elements, and its infinite digressions operate to prevent the 'novel' from 'crystallizing,' as Jitrik puts it, from developing into a novel, a 'work' of literature" (99). Thus, we can say that Macedonio arrives in his text at something that translation exposed any text to be: a text-in-the-making. It is not only realist literature that Macedonio rejects, but the very possibility of representation.³²⁰ As Engelbert says, "*Realismo* comes to signify for Macedonio the characteristic literary expression of the Western world" (110).

Macedonio was the first one in Latin America to question the novel and its elements

³²⁰ Ana María Paruolo, "Irrupción de Macedonio Fernández en la teoría y la crítica de los años sesenta."

and to do it through the very practice of writing a novel (*Macedonio Fernández y la teoría crítica* 42). “Macedonio,” says Borinsky, “was the most extreme and explicit – as well as the first – Latin American author to call the bluff of traditional novelistic discourse through a practice bent on overcoming and correcting its nearsightedness, but later developments proved that he would not be alone in his notion that the literary by itself was to be dismissed as the *merely* literary” (*Theoretical Fables* X). According to Ricardo Piglia, Macedonio was the one who “reescribe y renueva la tradición de los escritos de los novelistas sobre el género: nadie como él ha definido entre nosotros (con tanta claridad y bajo la forma de una intriga) una nueva poética de la novela. Su voz, casi inaudible y siempre secreta, resuena y se multiplica en las novelas futuras y en las ficciones del porvenir” (*Diccionario de la novela de Macedonio Fernández* 8). In fact, Macedonio himself wrote to Ramón Gómez de la Serna: “Tanteando en el vacío estoy ensayando sin embargo la técnica de una nueva novela. Para construirla no quiero especular con estas ‘imágenes vividas’ o ‘fuertemente pensadas’ que constituyen el natural acervo romántico del lector y que invariablemente usufructúa el novelista” (*Papeles de reciénvenido* 17). Mónica Bueno calls him “emergencia en un pensamiento teórico que redefine lugares, géneros y marcos” (18). For Ramón Gómez de la Serna Macedonio “encontró [...] el estilo de lo argentino” (qtd. in Sofovich 15), projecting his writing into the future and establishing “un diálogo temprano con ciertas formas y modos de la modernidad que muchos pensadores en la segunda mitad del siglo XX: Macedonio es un futurista que formula preguntas que todavía su tiempo no hace”³²¹ (Bueno 18-19). For Jo Anne Engelbert, “the Spanish American new novelists have

³²¹ For Macedonio, in his turn, Ramón was “el mayor autor de autores de hoy y el mayor autor de la Prosa o

created a Macedonio who is simultaneously their splendid precursor³²² and logical successor. Because of them, we can read Macedonio with a special delight and with a heightened awareness of what his assault on Western literature really signifies” (XI).

It is not only from the temporal and geographical distance that Macedonio’s crucial role as a precursor can be discerned. As Engelbert says, already in 1925, Evar Méndez, “provided the documentation necessary for claiming Macedonio a literary as well as spiritual precursor of the new generation when he published in *Martín Fierro* in 1925 Macedonio’s “Soft Enchantment” (1904). His note [...] refers to “Soft Enchantment” as “a possible anticipation of Borges, González Lanuza, Nora Lange, Francisco Piñero, our Ultraists” (28).

In her article “Irrupción de Macedonio Fernández en la teoría y la crítica de los años sesenta”, Ana María Paruolo puts Macedonio at the origin of the Boom literature: “Es muy posible [...] que en fundamento específico de todo este proceso [un giro en los modos de escribir en los sesenta] esté la figura solitaria de Macedonio Fernández, cuyos textos extravagantes contienen la mayor parte de los asuntos teóricos que empezaron a tomar forma discursiva décadas después de haber sido pensados, intuitos y escritos” (70). Miguel

Belarte de la Palabra o Literatura (excluyo al verso, negrito zapateante, primitivismo intolerable de sonido y compás situado en el orden culinario y por tanto in-artístico, pues la sensorialidad es lo opuesto del arte de todo tiempo” (*Epistolario* 57). The intense correspondence between the two is a testimonial of their deep literary and personal connection.

³²² Macedonio’s name reappears several times in Cortázar’s *La vuelta al día en ochenta mundos*. He finishes his introduction for example with “usted ya tiene una idea de lo que se le viene, y entonces digamos como el gran Macedonio: “Huyo de asisitir al final de mis escritos, por lo que antes de ello los termino” (10). Later on he says: “en esa novela ya se verá que he suprimido tantas cosas que, como diría Macedonio, si suprimo una más no cabe” (14).

Dalmaroni, in turn, traces connections between Macedonio and some writers of the last two decades of the XX century, such as Juan José Saer and Ricardo Piglia.³²³

One of the best-known followers of Macedonio is Borges, whose work exhibits many signs of Macedonian legacy, open and hidden. His prologue to *La invención de Morel* lets us fastforward from Macedonio's first rethinking of realism all the way to the 40s where interrogating the term is still a pertinent activity:

The Russians and their disciples have demonstrated, tediously, that no one is impossible. A person may kill himself because he is so happy, for example, or commit a murder as an act of benevolence. Lovers may separate forever as a consequence of their love. And one man can inform on another out of fervor or humility. [...] But the psychological novel would also be a "realistic" novel, and have us forget that it is a verbal artifice, for it uses each vain precision (or each languid obscurity) as a new proof of verisimilitude. There are pages, there are chapters in Marcel Proust that are unacceptable as inventions, and we unwittingly resign ourselves to them as we resign ourselves to the insipidity and the emptiness of each day. The adventure story, on the other hand, does not propose to be a transcription of reality: it is an artificial object, no part of which lacks justification.³²⁴ (5-6)

At the end of the Prologue, he defines the novel as a founder of a new genre: "La invención de Morel (cuyo título alude filialmente a otro inventor isleño, a Moreau) traslada a nuestras tierras y a nuestro idioma un género nuevo" since in it Bioy Casares manages to resolve a difficult dilemma: "Despliega una Odisea de prodigios que no parecen admitir otra clave que

³²³ Dalmaroni also traces some echoes of Macedonio's work in such contemporary writers as Chejfec, Marcelo Cohen and Alberto Laiseca.

³²⁴ "Los rusos y los discípulos de los rusos han demostrado hasta el hastío que nadie es imposible: suicidas por felicidad, asesinos por benevolencia, personas que se adoran hasta el punto de separarse para siempre, delatores por fervor o por humildad... Esa libertad plena acaba por equivaler al pleno desorden. Por otra parte, la novela "psicológica" quiere ser también novela "realista": prefiere que olvidemos su carácter de artificio verbal y hace de toda vana precisión (o de toda lánguida vaguedad) un nuevo toque verosímil. Hay páginas, hay capítulos de Marcel Proust que son inaceptables como invenciones: a los que, sin saberlo, nos resignamos como a lo insípido y ocioso de cada día. La novela de aventuras, en cambio, no se propone como una transcripción de la realidad: es un objeto artificial que no sufre ninguna parte injustificada".

la alucinación o que el símbolo, y plenamente los descifra mediante un solo postulado fantástico pero no sobrenatural.” Here we hear echoes of not only Macedonio’s philosophy, but also of the same process that we have seen with the development of a new poetics in the 1920s, when the Florida group writers and poets justified their writing by criticizing “a los rusos y los discípulos de los rusos.”

Borges criticized Russian cinema³²⁵ for the same reasons he criticized Russian classics, for their “failed attempt to imitate reality” (Odnopozova 98), which he announces in an interview with Richard Burgin:

I liked that film about the battleship *Potemkin*. And then I saw it after several years and I thought it quite bad. I thought it was to be a realistic film. I suppose it is. And yet the whole thing is quite unreal. [...] That would be good in a fantastic film, but in a real film I suppose that if there’s a battleship within some hundred yards of us and it fires, it should kill somebody, but of course it can’t kill anybody or it would ruin the sympathy of the audience, so they merely kill a stone lion. I don’t think the Russians are good at realism [...] Melodrama and perhaps a kind of hallucination. But somehow, one never feels anything in a Russian novel to be true because the characters are always explaining themselves to each other [...] in Dostoevsky, for example, the characters are bound to loud explanations. I don’t think people do that kind of thing, but perhaps they do in Russia. (qtd. in Odnopozova 98)

However, as Odnopozova notes, that was not necessarily Borges’ personal position, but rather a message that he wanted to send to the Argentine writers and “cultural producers” (Odnopozova 100) in general. “It seems that here Russian literature served him as an antagonist for the way of writing he sought to promote in Argentina” (Odnopozova 100).

Russian literature translations and the Boedo group’s copying of them, is one of the constructive elements of Macedonio’s theory of humoristics³²⁶ that will become an

³²⁵ For more on Borges and cinema, see Edgardo Cozarinsky’s *Borges y el cine*.

³²⁶ See Alicia Borinsky’s *Humorística, novelística y obra abierta en Macedonio Fernández*: “Su instrumento más importante es el humor, con el cual pretende construir una novelística creadora de un

essential constituent of Macedonio's writings and the Argentine literature. Macedonio's humor is "desrealizador" (*Humorística...* 19). To explain in what manner, we need to start with Schopenhauer's idea that

the origin of the ludicrous is always the paradoxical, and thus unexpected, subsumption of an object under a concept that is in other respects heterogeneous to it. Accordingly, the phenomenon of laughter always signifies the sudden apprehension of an *incongruity* between such a concept and the real object thought through it, and hence between what is abstract and what is perceptive. (91; my emphasis)

Russian had to go through translation that did make Russian literature more serious and the more serious something appears, the easier it is to show the incongruity of the seriousness and the reality:

The opposite of laughter and joking is *seriousness*. This, accordingly, consists in the consciousness of the perfect agreement and congruity of the concept, or the idea, with what is perceptive, with reality. The serious person is convinced that he conceives things as they are, and that they are as he conceives them. This is just why the transition from profound seriousness to laughter is particularly easy, and can be brought about by trifles. For the more perfect that agreement, assumed by seriousness, appears to be, the more easily is it abolished, even by a trifling incongruity unexpectedly coming to light. (Schopenhauer 99)

Boedo's copying of Russian literature translations to represent Argentine reality produced this sense of incongruity and led to parody. As Schopenhauer explains in Chapter VIII of his *The World as Will and Representation*, "On the Theory of the Ludicrous," the deliberate exaggeration of "the incongruity between the conceived and the perceived [...] [is] in some

espacio literario referido a sí mismo" (17).

respects akin to the parody” (95):

The method of this consists in substituting for the incidents and words of a serious poem or drama insignificant, inferior persons, or petty motives and actions. It therefore subsumes the plain realities it sets forth under the lofty concepts given in the theme, under which in a certain respect they must now fit, whereas in other respects they are very incongruous therewith. In this way the contrast between the perceived and the conceived appears very glaring. (95)

Even Castelnuovo himself, in his introduction to *Vidas proletarias*, recognizes that their realism did not refer to reality, but rather was a pure exaggeration, revealing the absolute incongruity between their realism and their reality:

eran tan agudas, que, a menudo, se degollaba, filosóficamente, a sí mismo. Presentaba, por ejemplo, a la clase trabajadora, virtualmente derrotada, sumida en un estercolero, apestada por la mugre y embrutecida por el alcohol, sin encontrarle nunca una salida revolucionaria a su situación y sin determinar jamás el motivo material de su desgracia. Del sufrimiento de los pobres no captaba otra cosa que sus llagas fisiológicas, ni percibía de su ideación, otra cosa que sus maldiciones y alaridos, omitiendo la raíz misma del problema. (*Vidas proletarias* 8)

Even many years later, Cortázar, in *La vuelta al día en ochenta mundos* (1967) still perceives and complains about the incongruity, the unnaturality of the Argentine writers’ expression and their lack of humor³²⁷ which was the beacon marking their underdevelopment: “Una de las pruebas del subdesarrollo de nuestros países es la falta de *naturalidad* de sus escritores; la otra es la falta de humor, pues éste no nace sin *naturalidad*. La suma de *naturalidad* y de humor es lo que en otras sociedades da al escritor su *personería*” (13). Nevertheless, on the next page he exults about his own freedom from the

³²⁷ See Alicia Borinsky, “Macedonio y el humor de Julio Cortázar.” *Revista Iberoamericana*.

obligation to write seriously:

Qué suerte excepcional la de ser un sudamericano y especialmente un argentino que no se cree obligado a escribir en serio, a ser serio, a sentarse ante la máquina con los zapatos lustrados y una sepulcral noción de la gravedad-del-instante. Entre las frases que más amé premonitoriamente en la infancia figura la de un condiscípulo: ¡Qué risa, todos lloraban!” Nada más cómico que la seriedad entendida como valor previo a toda literatura importante (otra noción infinitamente cómica cuando es presupuesta), esa seriedad del que escribe como quien va a un velorio por obligación o le da una friega a un cura. (14)

Cortázar says that with humor they can achieve much more than with “Dostoevskian tremendism”:

¿Quién nos rescatará de la seriedad?, pregunto parafraseando un verso de Ricardo Molinari. La madurez nacional, supongo, que nos llevará a comprender por fin que el humor no tiene por qué seguir siendo el privilegio de anglosajones y de Adolfo Bioy Casares. Cito exprofeso a Bioy, primero porque su humor es de los que empiezan por admitir honestamente los límites de su literatura mientras que la seriedad se cree omnimoda desde el soneto hasta la novela, y segundo porque logra esa liviana eficacia que puede ir mucho más lejos (cuando la usa un Leopoldo Marechal, por ejemplo) que tanto tremendismo dostoevskiano al cuete que prolifera en nuestras playas. (32)

He then arrives to a conclusion: “¿Y Buster Keaton? Ése debería ser nuestro ejemplo, mucho más que los Flaubert, los Dostoievski y los Faulkner en los que sólo reverenciamos la carga de profundidad mientras olvidamos a Bouvard y Pécuchet, olvidamos a Foma Fomich” (33). Cortázar draws a thick line between seriousness and solemnity:

Estos ñatos creen que la seriedad tiene que ser solemne o no ser; como si Cervantes hubiera sido solemne, carajo. Descuentan que la seriedad deberá basarse en lo negativo, lo tremendo, lo trágico, lo Stavrogin, y que sólo desde ahí nuestro escritor accederá (en los dos sentidos del término) a los signos positivos, a un posible happy end, a algo que se asemeje un poco más a esta confusa vida donde no hay maniqueo que llegue a nada. (34)

And it is Macedonio that he puts at the front of those who did manage to escape the spell: “Asomarse al gran misterio con la actitud de un Macedonio se les ocurre a muy pocos; a los humoristas les pegan de entrada la etiqueta para distinguirlos higiénicamente de los escritores serios” (34).

The story that Cortázar retells from one of Alejandro Gancedo’s stories under the title “De la seriedad en los velorios” can be taken as a metaphor of what happens with the copying of an exaggerated seriousness that covers an uncontrollable laugh. In the story Lucas Solano and Copitas went to a funeral of their colleague. When Copitas saw the body of the deceased, he exclaimed: “He looks identical” which produced in Solano “un tal ataque de hilaridad” (31) which he could disguise only by hugging Copitas as hard as he could. Copitas in his turn “lloraba de risa, y así se quedaron tres minutos, sacudidos los hombros por terribles estremecimientos” (31). Then one of the brothers of the deceased approached them to console them and said that he could have never imagined that they loved his brother so much at work, since he was never there. The copied exaggeration of the *tremendismo* concealed the similar laugh.

According to Macedonio, a mechanic repetition of a life phenomenon is also a catalyst for laugh. In his *Papeles de reciénvenido*, in the part called “Para una teoría de la humorística,” Macedonio remembers Pascal’s words:

la vida no debería nunca repetirse en toda su plenitud circunstanciada – dice – y vuelve a su idea de que dondequiera que hay repetición, dondequiera que hay semejanza completa, vislumbramos en seguida lo mecánico funcionando tras lo vivo; pensamos en dos impresiones del mismo sello, en suma: en un procedimiento

industrial. “Tal desviación de la vida en el sentido de lo mecánico es en este caso la verdadera causa de la risa.” (*Papeles de reciénvenido* 195)

Thus, we see the root of the humor in the “dead repetition” that the Boedo’s realism revealed. We can compare it to Borges’ mirrors in “La joven noche”: “Ya la sombra ha sellado / los espejos que copian la ficción de las cosas” (*Poesía completa* 593). Leónidas Lamborghini calls it “paródico espejo”:

¡Por un arte arteramente artero, pekineses!
¡Asimilar la distorsión y devolverla multiplicada!
[...]
¡Oídme pendejos,
yo soy vuestro paródico
espejo!

Using translations of Russian literature as a model for Argentine literature can also be seen as a “disfraz” that Macedonio talks about and that he finds comical: “todo disfraz, no sólo del hombre sino de la sociedad y aún de la naturaleza, es cómico: la idea de disfraz se remonta a la de un mecanismo superpuesto a la vida” (199).

According to Mónica Bueno, “Macedonio entra en la literatura y desde allí la socava. [...] Su estrategia es la parodia, la burla provoca el cuestionamiento de toda seguridad, de toda creencia” (34). What is parodied in his work is literature itself. Noé Jitrik sees parody as one of the two ways of breaking with the tradition by the avant-garde movements, with the first being the rediscovery of the original meanings blocked, covered by the centuries-old dust of the tradition. It is parody that allows for a creation of “una zona vacía, de no afirmación” (“Papeles de trabajo” 20).

The very fact that Macedonio’s first good novel had to be written as a response to the last bad novel, illustrates the way Russian literature translations were used to establish

Argentine avant-garde writing. M. Alejandra Alí describes the dialogue between the two novels in the *Diccionario de la novela de Macedonio Fernández*: “la novela “mala” – de la tradición – y la primera novela buena – que implica un cambio de las normas literarias. Por medio de la ironía desestabiliza un estilo de lector, pero el procedimiento opera sobre las formas de su novela en un sentido que afecta más la estructura que el estilo: la falta de completud, la dispersión, la discusión metafísica” (55).

But it is not only Macedonio, or *martinfierristas* that were re-making Russian realism. In his review of Roberto Arlt’s *Los lanzallamas*, Nicolás Olivari tells Arlt, the one who belonged to both or neither Boedo and Florida:

vos, como yo, con mis poemas retorcidos y rabiosos, te agarrás a la misma complacencia de lo dicho. Es nuestra satisfacción vengativa. No verán tu belleza, pero verán tu realismo, ¿realismo?, ni eso, no sé cómo definirlo. Sé que estás en la vanguardia, en la verdadera, porque tenés demasiado talento. [...]

Te diré que he visto a Erdosain tan visible como si lo tocara. Te diré que tu arte de novelar es perfecto. Esa antimonía, esa mezcla de lirismo infinito y de realidad absurda y absorta en su misma crudeza, define todo tu arte. (“Biografías”, *Claridad*, no. 239)

Olivari does not doubt here whether Arlt’s novel is a realist novel, he rather doubts the term realism in itself. It is realism, but of a different kind. There are traces of lyricism that the Argentine writers see in Russian literature, but it is taken to the level of the absurd. Reading Russian literature through the prism of translation and looking at their own everyday life with Naturalist and, oftentimes, violent eyes (“Boedo y Florida en las páginas de *Los Pensadores*” 28), writers from Boedo group were constructing their own type of realism.

In any case, it is with the help of this exaggerated realism that turns into parody that the writers from both the Florida and the Boedo groups start rethinking not only realism

but the concept of truth and knowledge. In a January issue of 1925, Ricardo Güiraldes proclaims:

No hay en el hombre un solo saber absoluto; hay una “actual” comprensión de un aspecto de verdad, dentro de ciertos factores inseparables de esa verdad relativa, sin los cuales no se hubiera presentado. Si admitimos este conocimiento como inmutable, desatendiendo las circunstancias especiales que nos lo trajeron, sólo habremos muerto nuestra capacidad de ver otro aspecto de verdad, en beneficio de una mentira. (RMF)

That is why if a crime that Dostoevsky’s Raskolnikov commits has a long and complicated process of thoughts and justifications that constitutes the material of which the novel is made, a thought process and circumstances that led the protagonist of Visconde de Lascano Tegui’s novel *De la elegancia mientras se duerme* to commit a crime, are impossible to reconstruct due to the novel’s collage-like structure,³²⁸ in which every bit seems to be both central and disposable, as if it ended up in the novel by mere chance:

el libro no es el registro de la gestación de un crimen [...] sino el registro de la irreversibilidad, la incapacidad última de recomponer las circunstancias que han dado lugar al acontecimiento central. Toda teleología queda cancelada. No hay redención ni castigo posible, sólo entropía, la pesadilla del tiempo incontable en fórmulas narrativas” (Cárdenas qtd. in Tegui 91).

³²⁸ “It is important to note here though that, according to Bakhtin, Dostoevsky had a “stubborn urge to see everything as coexisting, to perceive and show all things side by side and simultaneous, as if they existed in space and not in time. [...] Only such things as can conceivably be linked together at a single point in time are essential and are incorporated into Dostoevsky’s world; such things can be carried over into eternity, for in eternity, according to Dostoevsky, all is simultaneous, everything coexists” (28-29).

“La vida misma es una fotomorgana, un gran engaño, un fraude,” proclaims César Tiempo, another “amphibious” autor that cannot be easily placed in Boedo or Florida (*Clara Beter y otras fatamorganas* 24). To finish his story about Clara Beter, that I talk in detail in the next chapter, in his *Clara Beter y other fatamorganas*, the author of the literary hoax, Tiempo, tells us about his meeting with Tatiana Pavlova, the actress, who was the protagonist of Clara Beter’s first poem. He tells her about Clara Beter “y de los versos que yo le dedicara en aquel librejo escandaloso” (*Clara Beter y otras fatamorganas* 24). She laughed as loudly as never before, and told him in her dry and pathetic voice: “¡Muy bien hecho, muy bien hecho! El mundo tiene las imposturas que se merece. Simón Mago fue un impostor, Homero fue un impostor, Dante fue un impostor. Todos los novelistas, todos los poetas, todos los dramaturgos son impostores!” (*Clara Beter y otras fatamorganas* 24). Tiempo then adds: “Antes que ella el cardenal Carlo Carrafa, había dicho: *Mundus vult decipit ergo decipiatur!* (El mundo quiere ser engañado; ¡engañémoslo, pues!)” (*Clara Beter y otras fatamorganas* 24).

For Leónidas Lamborghini, it is parody that knows how to tell the truth – that we are no more than a parody: “la parodia / que es / lo verdaderamente serio, / reveladora / de nuestra verdadera / tragedia: / la de ser, / precisamente, eso, / parodias.” It is precisely parody’s trajectory, from Russian literature translations all the way to Lamborghini, that I trace in the section and to conclude this one, we can see that Russian literature translations participated in the development of both content – redefinition of realism (Macedonio, Borges) and form – language and style (Arlt). Arlt and Tiempo, for their intermediary place between Boedo and Florida and always running on a very fine line between admiration and

parody of Russian literature (in translation) become the protagonists of the last chapter.

III Russian Literature and Argentine Parody

“It’s hard to tell the truth when one has given up one’s mother tongue,”³²⁹ (*Artificial Respiration* 105) says Señor Tardewski in Ricardo Piglia’s *Respiración artificial*. What happens then with a literature that speaks a language of translations? It turns into a parody, singing a parallel song. What happens to a work of literature translated and isolated from its context? Something similar to what Piglia’s characters in *Respiración artificial* describe as a “bad quotation”:

Do you see how he walks? I ask Renzi; his way of walking is like a confused quotation of the manners that the French governesses taught the young people of the Russian nobility, even the natural children of the nobility, as the most appropriate for a gentleman at the moment he must cross a public place. The body erect – see? – his feet barely sliding along the ground. A quotation, then, of what a Russian nobleman ought to think it is to draw off with dignity. A quotation improperly used, I tell Renzi, but not a parody.³³⁰ (Piglia, *Artificial Respiration* 123)

It is not yet a parody, says Tardewski, but if afterwards it is imitated by a non-Russian, it becomes one. As Ricardo Piglia notes, the entire Argentine literature also starts with a “bad quotation” of a French phrase.³³¹ “On ne tue point les idées” reads the first page

³²⁹ “Es difícil decir la verdad cuando se ha abandonado la lengua materna” (Piglia, *Respiración artificial* 105).

³³⁰ “¿Lo ve usted caminar? le digo a Renzi; su modo de andar es como una cita mal empleada de las maneras que las institutrices francesas enseñaban a los jóvenes de la nobleza rusa, incluso a los hijos naturales de esa nobleza, como las más apropiadas a un caballero en el momento de atravesar un lugar público. El cuerpo erguido ¿no es verdad?, deslizando apenas los pies sobre la tierra. Una cita, entonces, de lo que un noble ruso debe pensar que es alejarse con dignidad. Una cita mal usada, le digo a Renzi, pero no una parodia” (Piglia, *Respiración artificial* 123).

³³¹ A similar misquote is part of the narrative of the protagonist and the narrator of *La invención de Morel*. When he tries to explain the existence of the two moons, he quotes Cicerón’s *De Natura Deorum*: “Estamos viviendo las primeras noches con dos lunas. Pero ya se vieron dos soles. Lo cuenta Cicerón en

of Sarmiento's *Civilización y barbarie*. He attributes it to Fourtol. Piglia reminds us that was corrected by Groussac: the words were "On ne tire pas de coups de fusils aux idées" and belonged to Volney. Others say that the individual who actually had the nerve to correct the father of Argentine literature was Paul Verdevoye and the saying was Diderot's. For Piglia the origin of the phrase is secondary – in the limelight is Sarmiento's barbarism:

Argentine literature begins with a phrase written in French, which is false, mistaken quotation. Sarmiento misquotes. At the moment he wants to show off, to call attention to his familiarity with European culture, everything collapses, undermined by savagery and a lack of culture. And from that moment we could see the proliferation, in Sarmiento but also in those who follow him [...] the proliferation of an ostentatious and fraudulent erudition, a forged bilingual encyclopedia. That is the first of the threads that constitutes the fiction of Borges: texts that are chains of forged, apocryphal, false, distorted quotations; an exasperating and *parodic* display of secondhand culture, constantly invaded by a pathetic pedantry; that's what Borges makes fun of. He – I mean Borges – exaggerates and carries to extremes, almost parodic extremes in fact, the line of cosmopolitan and fraudulent erudition that defines – even dominates – the greater part of the Argentine literature of the nineteenth century.³³² (Piglia, *Artificial Respiration* 128-129; my emphasis)

The very first phrase evinces an erudite barbarism³³³ of Latin American writers fluent in

De Natura Deorum:

"*Tum sole quod ut e patre audivi Tuditano et Aquilio consulibus e venerat.*

"No creo haber citado mal" (78-79). However, he does, according to el *editor* who again in his "N. del E." writes: "Se equivoca. Omite la palabra más importante: *geminato* (de *geminatus*, geminado, duplicado, repetido, reiterado). La frase es: ...; *tum sole gemianto, quod, ut e parte audivi, Tuditano et Aquilio consulibus e venerat; quo quidem anno P. Africanus sol alter extinctus est:*... Traducción de Menéndez y Pelayo: *Los dos soles que, según oí a mi padre, se vieron en el Consulado de Tuditano y Aquilio; en el mismo año que se extinguió aquel otro sol de Publio Africano* (183 a. de C.)" (79n1).

³³² "la literatura argentina se inicia con una frase escrita en francés, que es una cita falsa, equivocada.

Sarmiento cita mal. En el momento en que quiere exhibir y alardear con su manejo fluido de la cultura europea todo se le viene abajo, corroído por la incultura y la barbarie. A partir de ahí podríamos ver cómo proliferan en Sarmiento pero también en los que vienen después [...] cómo prolifera esa erudición ostentosa y fraudulenta, esa enciclopedia falsificada y bilingüe. Ahí está la primera de las líneas que constituyen la ficción de Borges: textos que son cadenas de citas fraguadas, apócrifas, falsas, desviadas; exhibición exasperada y *paródica* de una cultura de segunda mano, invadida toda ella por una pedertería patética: de eso se ríe Borges. Exaspera y lleva al límite, entonces, me refiero a Borges, dice Renzi, exaspera y lleva al límite, clausura por medio de la *parodia* la línea de la erudición cosmopolita y fraudulenta que define y domina gran parte de la literatura argentina del XIX" (Piglia, *Respiración artificial* 128; my emphasis).

³³³ Ramón Gómez de la Serna comes up with a flipped definition "el criollo civilizado" in the Prologue to

parody; the barbarie that being left with the scraps of the civilization creates a literature that is parodic at birth, that laughs at its own impossibility of being nothing but a parody.

Taking words out of context and inserting them in a new one, misinterpreting them, mistranslating, attributing them to somebody else, putting an essential word in, or taking an inessential word out, creating a new meaning in a resulting collision of words: all the possible destinies that a quote can promise to the words that stand out from the rest of the text as collectible. If we accept the fact that a literature that originated with a false quote or built on the blocks of quotes is immanently parodic, as Piglia's Renzi assures, we do have to accept the intrinsic affinity between parody and translation. In his *Mirror on mirror: Translation, Imitation, Parody*, Reuben Brower shows the similarities between a parodist and a translator: "In this slight or great overbalance of attention to another poem and its language and style, the translator, the maker of versions, and the parodist come together" (14). For Reuben Brower, parody is not necessarily born intentionally – many times, it is a result of a literal translation, or of "attending too closely to the author's words" (6). Célia Magalhães in her "Tradução e transculturação: A teoria monstruosa de Haroldo de Campos" reminds us that translations and parody share certain characteristics for Haroldo de Campos, who calls translation "'paramorfismo' para acentuar 'no vocábulo (do sufixo grego Para-, 'ao lado de', como em paródia, 'canto paralelo') o aspecto diferencial, dialógico, do processo" (qtd. in Magalhães 144). Thus, translation acquires a notion of "'mímica', ou repetição estranha que ameaça a possibilidade de estabilidade e definição de

Macedonio's *Papeles de reciénvenido*: "Hizo virar el párrafo y el concepto hacia sus fuentes de posibilidad primera y encontró el sensacional rodeo del criollo civilizado" (20).

identidade para o original” (Magalhães 145).

Precisely the threat to the original posed by both a parody and a translation that allow them to be used as a tool for renewal of a literature and a language, as well as an anthropophagic way of proclaiming and securing their independence. I started this thesis by revealing these covert powers of translation. Where parody is concerned, for André Lefevere, “parodies are immensely important in the evolution of a literature: they usually signal the awakening of a school, group, or individuals willing and able to attack the poetics and the ideology of the dominant school, group, or individuals” (Lefevere, *Translating Literature* 45). In the same way, according to Gerard Genette, “Parody does not actually subject the hypotext to a degrading stylistic treatment but only takes it as a model or template for the construction of a new text which, once produced, is no longer concerned with the model” (27). Dwight Macdonald calls a parody a kind of literary criticism: “PARODY, from the Greek *parodia* (“a beside- or against-song”), concentrates on the style and thought of the original. If burlesque is pouring new wine into old bottles, parody is making a new wine that tastes like the old but has a slightly lethal effect. At its best, it is a form of literary criticism” (559).

Parody, together with irony, sarcasm, and mockery, is a way of maintaining the sovereignty and legitimacy of literature, affirms Gusmán³³⁴ (87). Parody is an anthropophagic way of establishing a difference, of blazing a new, but palimpsestic trail

³³⁴ Gusmán talks about parody in relation to Gombrowitz and the privileged position of a “bufón,” quoting Gombrowitz himself: “Si mi forma es una parodia de la forma, entonces mi espíritu es una parodia del espíritu y mi persona una parodia de la persona. ¿No es cierto que a la forma no se la puede debilitar contraponiéndole otra forma, sino con una relajación de la misma actitud ante la forma” (87).

for a literature. As Yuri Tynianov explains,

Parody's main point lies in the mechanization of a certain method; this mechanization is tangible, of course, only in that case, when the method that is parodied is known to us; in this way parody realizes a double task: 1) mechanization of a certain method, 2) organization of the new material, while this new material will be that very mechanized old material.

The mechanization of the verbal method can be carried out by means of its repetition, not coinciding with the plan of the composition, by means of the rearrangement of its parts (a common parody is reading a poem from the bottom up), by means of the punning transposition of meaning (school parodies of classical works), by means of adding of ambiguous refrains [...]; finally, by means of detachment from the similar methods and connection with the contradictory ones.³³⁵

What connects parody and translation in this particular case is the fact that parody is fueled by the translations of Russian literature. As Macdonald says: "Exaggeration, the vice and the virtue of romanticism, is the meat that parody feeds on" (560). Parody becomes one of the ways in which *martinfierristas* criticize the pathetism,³³⁷ or what Borges calls "psychological excess in the works of Russian writers" (quoted in Odnopozova 79), that they feel in the Russian realism. It can be seen in Nale Roxlo's poem "Canto a

³³⁵ "Суть пародии – в механизации определенного приема; эта механизация ощутима, конечно, только в том случае, если известен прием, который механизуется; таким образом, пародия осуществляет двойную задачу: 1) механизацию определенного приема, 2) организацию нового материала, причем этим новым материалом и будет механизованный старый прием.

Механизация словесного приема может быть проведена через повторение его, не совпадающее с композиционным планом, через перестановку частей (обычная пародия – чтение стихотворения снизу вверх), через каламбурное смещение значения (школьные пародии классических стихотворений), через прибавку двусмысленных рефренов [...]; наконец, через оторванность от подобных и соединение с противоречащими приемами».

³³⁶ See "Martín Fierro y el humorismo" in Eduardo González Lanuza's *Los martinfierristas*: 72-79.

³³⁷ It wasn't only *martinfierristas* that sense this pathetism. Even Rafael Cansinos Assens notes in his introduction to César Tiempo's *Sabatión argentino* that Miranda Klix's "Cara de Cristo" is a book "muy influido por el patetismo ruso" (10).

Rusia”:

Por el camino claro
De sol, a cielo abierto,
Vienen los hombres trágicos.

Por la nieve pasaron y las piedras
Y sobre las espinas
Sus pies ensangrentaron.

Entraron en el río negro y ancho,
Y cada ola del río fue una mano
Que se aferró a sus miembros.
Y pasaron.

Entraron en el bosque,
Y cada árbol del bosque fue un obstáculo
Que a su marcha se opuso.
Y pasaron.

A la llanura entraron,
A la llanura de infinita tristeza e infinito cansancio.
Y pasaron.
(Fragment, *RMF*, segunda época, Año 1, no. 4, 1924)

The very first Russian work published in the first issue of *Claridad* was a satirical work that clearly parodied Tolstoy’s doctrines, which helped to create a critical field for a critical, and not blind, reception of Russian works.³³⁸ It was “La buena acción del anciano Vladímíro,” written by Nadezhda Aleksandrovna Teffi. In it, an old man upon seeing many shoes lined up at the entrance of a house and upon finding out that it was a way of asking for money during Christmas, instead of helping these poor people, decides to also put his own shoes out. By doing this, he supposedly gives a chance to others to perform a good deed and thus, increases the value of his own good deed. As he wakes up in the morning,

³³⁸ This is one of the examples that supports the idea that dividing line between the Boedo and the Florida groups was not as firm as it might seem (see page 187 of this dissertation).

instead of money, he finds that someone had spit into one of his shoes and thrown the other on top of a tree. Teffi's short story is a satirical and clearly parodic piece that enters into dialogue with Tolstoy's work on the question of good deeds, and it comes as no surprise that Tolstoy did not like Teffi's work. Parody was one of the elements of humor in Teffi's work. In a popular humor magazine *Satirikón* (1908-1918), Teffi together with the journal's director Averchenko in 1910 wrote a parodic version of *World History* accompanied by caricatures.³³⁹

³³⁹ Here I translate one of the fragments of the book called "The Discovery of America." I chose this fragment not only because of its connection with Latin America, but also because it connects this parodic writing of Russian writers to Macedonio. It exposes the fact that History is an adulterated art form, both in the Russian version and in Macedonio's version.

"Witnesses assure us that America was discovered by Christopher Columbus that was also famous for his power and wit: during one of his disputes with scientists, Columbus in order to prove that the Earth was round, smashed an egg in front of everyone with his bare hands. Everybody gasped and believed Columbus.

The permission to discover America, Columbus received conditionally, in other words, the contract between the government and Columbus, literally said: "We, Fernando de Aragon on one side and Christopher Columbus on the other, made an official agreement that I, Fernando, must give him, Columbus, the financial resources and the ships, and he, Columbus, must board those ships and sail in whatever direction. Moreover, the aforementioned Columbus, is obliged to stumble across the first land he sees and discover it, for which he will receive vicegerency and tenth part of the profit made from the discovered lands."

Treating the memory of the talented Columbus with high respect, we nevertheless feel obliged to show this persona in an absolutely new light, different from the one that would have been made by a historic routine. This is what we claim:

1. leaving the Palos Bay (Spain) for the first time, all Columbus thought of was finding the sea route to India, not even thinking about discovering some kind of America. Thus, he gets no credit for this;
2. secondly, there was no America to be "discovered" since it had been already discovered in the 10th century by the Scandinavian sailors;
3. and thirdly, even if the sailors had not gotten ahead, Columbus anyways did not discover any America. Let the readers look closely at his behavior in this business of "discovering America." He was sailing, sailing the ocean, until one of the sailors didn't yell at the top of his lungs: "Land!" That is who must be considered the true discoverer of America – this honest, inconspicuous laborer, this grey hero... But Columbus shoved him, stepped to the front, threw an admiral uniform, got out on the shore, wiped his forehead with a foulard handkerchief and sighed in relief:
-Phew! Finally I discovered America!

Many will not disagree with us here, many will reject our sailor... Be it so... But we've got yet another objection: during his first trip he did not discover any America. This is what he did: came across the Island of San Salvador (Guanahani), baffled the natives and left. On his way, stumbled across another island – Cuba, disembarked, baffled the natives and left. At once, he came across the third island, Haiti, and out of his, already deeply entrenched, habit, disembarked, baffled the natives and went home, to Spain. So we ask

The next Russian work that appears in *Claridad* is by “the King of *feuilleton*” Doroshevich, who also wrote parodying the style of Gogol, Shchedrin, Chekhov. In *Los Pensadores* we also find Arcadii Averchenko’s works. He was considered the “King of Laughter” in Russia. In spite of the fact that much of the humor of his short story “Baby-sitter” (changed to “Un drama sensacional” in Spanish, when published in *Los Pensadores*, no. 108) does not pass through the filter of translation,³⁴⁰ being originally woven into the style and vocabulary, the plot, in which Misha Samatoja, in an attempt to rob a house, has to play a game of an imaginary robbery with a little girl left by herself at home by a nanny, still makes readers laugh.

In the issue 167, dedicated to Tolstoy, there appears a short story called “Redención” from a series “A la manera de Tolstoy”, which was originally written in French and translated to Spanish. As the magazine itself explains,

“A la manera de...” es una serie de 4 volúmenes que aparecieron en Francia hace 15 años, y en que con gracia afortunada y un ingenio que delataba una profunda compenetración de los autores, se hacían caricaturas de cuanto literato y político brotaba en el mundo. La chispeante caricatura de las ideas y maneras tolstoyanas,

then, what kind of discovery of the new continent that is if the vain sailor flitted around the three islands, baffled the natives and left?”

We can relate this parodic retelling of Columbus’ journey and the so-called discovery to a chapter in Macedonio’s *Papeles de Recienvenido* called “La nada de un viaje de Colón”. It is what Macedonio calls “chiste mental”: “Discurro sin embargo, que tras descubrimientos tan difíciles como los de los modernos exploradores, no sería imposible que se hiciera el tan esperado y deseado de hallar en alguna parte el segundo viaje de Colón; el primero y el tercero, es de todos sabido que se produjeron: el segundo en cambio fue tan rápido y a oscuras que quizá no tuvo lugar; si este viaje se hubiera perdido, tendríamos el caso de un viaje que naufraga y si nunca fue efectuado debieran moderarse los historiadores y limitarse a registrar que Colón hizo un primer y un tercer viaje manteniéndose sin viajar en el intervalo, ocupado en fundar un colegio y un puente como todos los que vuelven de América” (127).

³⁴⁰ See the Conclusion of this dissertation for a more detailed analysis.

ocupan por ello un lugar también en este número dedicado al buen viejo de Yasnaia Poliana.

This short story is very similar to Teffi's "La buena acción del anciano Vladímíro". In the two short stories, a supposedly good action leads to an unexpected end or for the character or for the reader. In "Redención," the protagonist, Ivan Labibin Osuzoff, after witnessing the terrible end of his friend's, Nicolás Novodvowsky Mulagoff's, life who tragically dies on Christmas: "después de beber mucho, cantar mucho, fumar mucho, encontró agradable encerrarse en la heladera de un restaurant nocturno *fashionable*," decides to change his lifestyle. He first

[d]istribuyó entre los pobres todo lo que hacía el lujo y el confort de sus aposentos, [...] Se calzó con suecos de madera, pues se había hecho vegetariano [...]. Repartió las tierras entre sus campesinos. [...]. Quemó también su biblioteca, porque todos los libros son perniciosos, y contribuyen con el mal ejemplo a propagar las pasiones, las enfermedades sexuales, el empleo de alcohol y del tabaco.

This parodies not only Tolstoy's own life, but also all the reverent articles that precede the story that celebrated the quasi-saintly life and gigantesque work of the "Yasnaia Poliana Apostol." After cleaning himself from his own vices, Ivan Labibin Osuzoff turns to saving the Newsky Prospect prostitutes from their disgrace.³⁴¹ After bringing home one prostitute per day during three months, he ended up with ninety in his house. But one night a thought comes to his mind: "Las entusiastas teorías sociológicas de Henry George y de Spencer enseñan que los que se han entregado a algún vicio mundano, tales como la morfina, el vino, el amor y el tabaco, no pueden curarse de la noche a la mañana. Es preciso

³⁴¹ This is very similar to Ergueta's story in *Los siete locos* by Roberto Arlt: "¿Cómo no quieres que te tengan por loco? Vos fuiste, según tus propias palabras, un gran picador. Y de pronto te convertías, te casás con una prostituta porque eso está escrito en la Biblia; [...] Pero yo no creo que estés loco. No, no lo creo."

desacostumbrarles progresivamente.” He realized that caused a lot of suffering to those women. So, one by one he made “el acto de la carne” with six of them in one night, then with five the following night. Upon realizing that he could not do the task all by himself, he had to ask some friends to come to his house to help him out, each of them paying a rouble to help “en la obra de regeneración.” A very similar kind of humor will appear in Arlt’s *Los siete locos* when Ergueta comments on his decision to marry a prostitute: “Mirá la cara que pondrán los que dudaban de mi comunismo. He plantado a una cogotuda, a una virgen, para casarme con una prostituta. Pero el alma de Hipólita está por encima de todo. A ella también le gusta la aventura y los corazones nobles. Juntos haremos grandes cosas, porque los tiempos han llegado” (135).

Hence, when, in 1929, in Arlt’s *Los siete locos*, one of the characters, el Buscador de Oro, says: “A los intelectuales contagiados del *idiotismo* de Tolstoi los fusilaremos, y el resto a trabajar para nosotros” (122; my emphasis), we need to in part be thankful to translation for snatching away the ephemeral piece of literature and bringing it over together with the great boulder that was there to stay. And it is that ephemeral piece that still had the power to shake the eternal boulder and became that grain of salt, or I would say sugar, in the solemn feast of Russian literature.

A comic effect is produced not only in the parodic plot and the use of pseudo-Russian words, but also in the use of phrases with “Russian” words that clearly evoke a certain translation, but give an opposite meaning in the footnote.³⁴² For example, “Todas

³⁴² That is also a parody of the form in which some articles were written. For example, Abramson’s “Las nuevas costumbres y formas de vida en la Unión Soviética” [The new traditions and ways of life in the Soviet Union], he introduces new Russian words, many of which were soviet abbreviations and explains

esas mujeres resucitadas del error rivalizaban en celo, y su presencia santificaba la isla, en la que reinaba un perpetuo olor de ragudvo”. As the author explains in a footnote, “ragudvo” supposedly means “santidad” in Russian. Also, when the man starts to sleep with the women, the narrator says “Desde entonces, tolas [sic] las noches cumplía su misión como un verdadero khok” where “khok” should mean “Apóstol”. This will be later echoed in Arlt’s *Los siete locos*, when el Astrólogo says: “Conquistaremos la tierra, realizaremos nuestra “idea”... podemos instalar un prostíbulo en San Martín o en Ciudadela, y la Colonia de los Santos en la montaña. ¿Quién más apto para regentar el prostíbulo que el Rufián Melancólico? Le nombraremos Gran Patriarca Prostibulario” (96). Instead of translating Russian words or introducing them as they are, this parody of Tolstoy’s work parodies the Russian language itself, inventing words that only sound Russian and then at the end gives the explanation of each one: “krokno” is supposedly “[c]ostumbre, género de vida”, “michew” – “[a]gujero”, “brasskoi” – “[r]ubio”, “kanans” – “[p]año tártaro,” etc. This freedom had been licensed by translations. When we look at the Spanish translation of *Crime and Punishment*, there appears a word “chatchi” (39) that doesn’t exist in Russian and actually should be “shchi,” the cabbage soup: “Anastasia le pregunta a Raskolnikoff: “en lugar de salsicha, ¿no sería mejor que tomases un poco de *chatchi*? Se hizo ayer y está muy rico” (39). Which in reality was: “а не хошь ли вместо колбасы-то щей? Хорошие щи, вчерашние.” There are also many cases of misspellings. For example, in *Crime and Punishment*:

them in parenthesis. For instance: “stengaceta” (diario de pared), “rabselkori” (corresponsales obreros y campesinos), “likbes” (“puntos de liquidación del analfabetismo),” etc. (*LP* No.116).

“Después de haber recibido el dinero entró en un mal *taktir* (1) que encontró al paso” (81). The footnote is correct – “cafetucho”, but the spelling is wrong.³⁴³ It should be “traktir.” And another one: “artelchtchit” (146) according to a footnote is “Miembro de una sociedad de obreros o de empleados” (146). However, it should be spelled as “artel’shik” (артельщик). The same happens with the famous “mujik.” Since most of the translations were made from French, it was spelled the same way, but the pronunciation is of course different. The same happens with some other concepts due to some interesting choices of translators. This one, for example: “– И неужели в совершеннейшем бреду? Скажите пожалуйста! – с каким-то бабьим жестом покачал головою Порфирий” (121) becomes “¡Bah! ¿En estado completo de delirio? – dijo Petrovich con el movimiento de cabeza propio de los campesinos rusos.” (301) Those “campesinos rusos” are also then turned into the “barbarity” by the translation:

Original: “Да и куда ему бежать, хе-хе! За границу, что ли? За границу поляк убежит, а не он, тем паче, что я слежу, да и меры принял. В глубину отечества убежит, что ли? Да ведь там мужики живут, настоящие, посконные, русские; этак ведь современно-то развитый человек скорее острог предпочтет, чем с такими иностранцами, как мужики наши, жить, хе-хе!” (164)

³⁴³ Here, Vigodsky’s letter to César Tiempo written on July 27, 1932 comes to mind; it is dedicated almost exclusively to the correction of a mistake that César Tiempo makes in his “Cardo ruso,” part of his *Retazos de Pampa*, with the name of one of the characters. Vigodsky writes to him: “Permítame un pequeño reproche sobre su cuento “Cardo ruso”. Un nombre ruso Nicolavich no existe. Ha de escribirse Nicolas [sic], pués Nicolavich o más exacto Nicolaevich es un nombre patronímico que se usa solamente después del nombre personal. Por ejemplo, se dice Ivan Nicolaevich-Ivan es el nombre personal y Nicolaevich quiere decir que el padre de Ivan, se llama Nicolás. Lo digo, no para reprocharle a Vd. sino por amistad. Discúlpame” (SCT).

Translation: “Y, en efecto, ¿a dónde podría ir? ¿Al extranjero? Un polaco huiría al extranjero, pero él no; tanto más, que yo le vigilo, y tengo, por consiguiente, tomadas mis medidas. ¿Se retirará al interior del país? Allí habitan *mujiks* groseros, rusos primitivos, desprovistos de civilización; este hombre ilustrado querrá mejor estar preso que vivir en tal ambiente, ¡Je, je!” (70)

The authentic “mujiks” are turned into “rude and primitive.”

“Redención” can be considered a pseudo-Russian short story. As the authors, George O. Schanzer and Boris Gaidasz, of the article “Rubén Darío, Traductor de Gorki” note, there were a lot of stories “seudorrusos escritos por muchos españoles e hispanoamericanos antes y después de 1889” (315). Gideon Toury, the author of an article on the role of pseudotranslations “Enhancing Cultural Changes by Means of Fictitious Translations,” calls pseudotranslations fictitious translations. Their existence is based on the fact that “translations which deviate from sanctioned patterns [...] are often tolerated by a culture to a much higher extent than equally deviant original compositions” (4). For example, in order to incorporate the genre of Gothic novels into the Russian literature of the beginning of the 19th century, many so-called “translations” of the novels by Ann Radcliffe, that were considered the epitome of the genre, were written in Russia in the Russian language (Toury 8).

Examining parodies and pseudotranslations is crucial to understanding the development of a literature, since they are “often in a position to give a fairly good idea as to the notions shared by the members of a community, not only concerning the position of translated texts in the culture they entertain, but concerning the most conspicuous

characteristics of such texts as well; in terms of both textual-linguistic traits as well as putative target-source relationships” (Toury 7). In this, parodies and pseudotranslations are very similar to the role translations play, according to André Lefevere:

Translations share in the authority of the text they represent. One might say that translations usurp to some extent the authority of their source text. After all, if you have something to say, why not say it in your own right instead of translating it. The answer may be not that you lack inspiration or artistic ability but that you believe what you have to say may carry more weight if you say it in someone else’s name. (*Translating Literature* 122)

Thus, looking at parodies and pseudotranslations helps us to draw a picture of what Russian literature looked like not only to writers, but also readers, since parody writers and pseudotranslators had the reader’s expectations as their primary focus.

The parodic story of “Redención” reappears in Argentine literature quite frequently. In Roberto Arlt’s short story “Luba” that Ricardo Piglia found and published only in 1994, the protagonist also saves a prostitute, Luba, but for a revolutionary cause: to join the brave, young and caring women “who defy every danger, who carry proclamations calling for general strikes... hidden against their skin, between their breasts” (*Assumed Name* 153). Because for him, “who is going to make the social revolution if not the prostitutes, the swindlers, the wretched, the murderers, the frauds, all the bastards who suffer below without any hope? Or do you believe that the revolution will be made by the pen-pushers and the shopkeepers?” (*Assumed Name* 154). Just like the Russian Revolution is just a name, an idea that is taken from the Soviet Union, but the essence has to be adapted to the

Argentine reality, Luba – this name is a clear allusion to Russia – reveals her real name, an obviously Hispanic one, Beatriz Sánchez. Also, in Edgardo Cozarinsky's *El rufián moldavo*, Maxi, the son of a supposed *rufián*, “había intentado rescatar de la prostitución a una jovencita kosovar, con tanta imprudencia que apareció ante los ojos de la ley como mezclado en el tráfico de menores balcánicas” (144). These examples, together with “Redención” can be seen as parodies of Palacio's idea about prostitution:

Palacios, hombre de su época, a pesar de ser un incansable defensor de la dignidad de las mujeres, participaba de la creencia entonces generalizada de que la prostitución era un hecho social inevitable y lo único que correspondía hacer era proteger a las ramerías de la explotación, y a la sociedad de las enfermedades venéreas. “Suprimirás las meretrices y llenarás de confusión la República”, había dicho San Agustín muchos siglos atrás; este pensamiento seguía siendo rector en el tema. (*Historia de la Argentina* “La vida clandestina”)

Mirta Arlt, in her introduction to Roberto Arlt's *Los lanzallamas*, says: “Y aquí surge la revolución como sucedáneo de entrega, como parodia de heroicidad; la política como canalización catártica de las sobrecargas criminales del hombre” (4). If the Russian Revolution longed for victory, in its Latin American redefinition, it calls for failure. Carámbat in his “Meditaciones” in the first issue of *Martin Fierro* exclaims: “Sí, necesitamos algo, algo que nos sacuda, algo que nos flagele. Necesitamos que nos desgarre. [...] Necesitamos una guerra: pero una guerra perdida, sin gloria, sin héroes, sin triunfos. Necesitamos un gran luto nacional, una gran vergüenza nacional, que nos escalde las mejillas, que nos obseda, por años y más años” (2).

Noé Jitrik defines Arlt's rethinking of revolution as “la visión casi sarcástica de lo concreto” (Arlt & Jitrik 26), that goes alongside “la desbordada tendencia a la abstracción” (Arlt & Jitrik 26) that clash with each other:

Más o menos en el mismo ámbito dialéctico se puede ubicar el también fácilmente reconocible choque entre la desbordada tendencia a la abstracción y la visión casi sarcástica de lo concreto: la “revolución” sería un tópico representativo de la primera y la “academia revolucionaria”, con todas sus minúsculas y por lo general divertidas precisiones, de la segunda. En medio de lucubraciones de lógica filosófica y política impecable, el Astrólogo se preocupa, remedando a un Lenin monolítico, por saber cómo se abastece de agua una ciudad, quiénes recogen la basura, etc. (26)

His own words evince the need of rethinking of the revolution possible in Latin America:

“I believe that the fierce servility and the inexorable cruelty of men from this country will never be surpassed. I believe that we have been given the mission of attending the twilight of piety and that we are left without any solution other than to write furious outpourings so that we will not go out to the streets to throw bombs or install brothels” (*Assumed Name* 109). Noé Jitrik sees Arlt’s *Los siete locos* and *Los lanzallamas* as a parody as well:

aunque sin desvirtuar para nada su intrínseca cualidad de hecho literario, las dos novelas [...] aparecen como una parodia, con estructura policial, de un “tratado” de política en el que convergen tópicos políticos contemporáneos a Arlt y todavía actuales, desde las evocaciones y análisis de la revolución rusa hasta los zarpaños imperialistas en América Latina, Panamá, Nicaragua, etc. (27)

According to Correa, “el Astrólogo-Arlt toma de la sociedad fórmulas ya consagradas y ceremonias de poder ya ritualizadas. En este sentido el Astrólogo hace parodia: no crea un mundo políticamente nuevo, sino que por medio de la forma en que lo reproduce se limita a convertir en ridículo el mundo que le ha sido impuesto” (198).

Copying an alien reality and inserting it in their own, even the Boedo group writers perceived an air of parody in their own work and felt the need to adapt the received material to the reality that surrounded them. This is what we see in Leónidas Barletta’s short story

“La mesa”, in which the mother of the protagonist, of a young revolutionary who organizes communist meetings in his house, does not accept their invitation to sit down and join them in the elaboration of a strategy to make the world a better place. To explain the reason, the mother says: “Él es que tiene que hablar por mí y por él ahora...” (27) echoing, in this way, the great Russian mothers that acquired a protagonic role both in the Russian literature and cinema of the time. However, the narrator immediately follows with the real reason of her rejection to join them: “tampoco hubiera podido sentarse con ellos porque no alcanzaban las sillas” (27). Still today, Argentine heroes can be parodic, like the protagonist of Leónidas Lamborghini’s *Odiseo confinado*: “¡Que Cordero, el paródico, / -nuestro Héroe- / hable en espíritu / (con su voz, por mi voz), / de su jamás antes / concebida Odisea!”³⁴⁴

Going back to the link between Russian literature translations and parody, the way Russian words were translated (or not), created plenty of material from which to build parody. First, I must point out that any evocation of anything Russian became fashionable. “Tovarisch,” “balalaika,” “bolsheviques” – *Claridad* was impregnated with Russian words, such as Hernández de Rosario’s poem dedicated to Trotsky, called “Al Tovarisch”. It is not only Russian words, but the Russian Revolution itself, that became fashionable, says Armando Stiro in his article, published in the issue 203 of *Claridad*, under the title “El Apocalipsis de San Lenin”:

Pasado el miedo al bolchevismo, Rusia y su revolución están ahora de moda. Los cinematografistas yanquis hallaron en ellas un productivo filón. No pasa mes sin que tengamos una película de ambiente ruso. Sin que veamos los eternos príncipes

³⁴⁴ It is precisely in the question of parody and a parodic hero, where, according to Luis Gusmán, Lamborghini’s poetics overlap with Gombrowitz’s (86). Gombrowitz in his *Diario* says: “No, no es casualidad que el momento en el que surge la necesidad imperiosa de un héroe nace inesperadamente un bufón... un bufón consciente y por tanto serio” (87).

chauffeurs o mozos de café, o las infaltables princesas camareras. Para los literatos tampoco pasó desapercibida: no transcurre semana sin que aparezca en alguna revista o diario un cuento, una nota o un verso con algo de ruso.

[...]

Los cineastas yanquis fabrican sus “films” a base de un comité nihilista, o de princesas y príncipes camareras o chauffeurs. Los escritores dan “atmósfera” a sus perguños con cuatro o cinco palabras “Volga”, “vodka”, “cosaco”, “balalaika”, “troika”, etc. (*Claridad*, no. 203)

Then criticizing “El Apocalipsis de San Lenin,” he adds:

Tanto hubiera dado que tomase a San Martín, al gaucho Quiroga o a Irigoyen; pero se imponía Lenin porque Rusia está de moda y, además, porque la evocación de aquellas ciudades lejanas, ciudades de legenda, resulta más poética para los que no son poetas. [...] El estilo es falso. Logra un falso efecto, utilizando la forma del Apocalipsis de San Juan y llenándolo de nombres y apellidos rusos que repite hasta el cansancio. [...] Lo ruidoso, lo altisonante, las frases hinchadas dentro de dos signos de admiración, constiruyen el capdeviliano *leit-motiv* de “El Apocalipsis de San Lenin.”

Transcrebimos estos versículos trompetescos del capítulo XIII, hechos en un estilo que ya se está perdiendo hasta en los textos infantiles de nuestras escuelas. (*Claridad*, no. 203)

Although works impregnated with Russian words were not always parodic in themselves, they did produce a parodic echo in *Martín Fierro*. As is obvious in the epitaphs, published at the end of each issue or in the section of “Parnaso Satírico”. In the issue 14-15, in January 24, 1925 appears this one: “Fedor Elieff Castelnuoff³⁴⁵” / Este es “aquel que ayer no más decía” / Puras macanas en los sindicatos / Y hoy, en el Region de la Porquería, / Chamuya en ruso con algunos gatos”.

Parody was created not only out of “what” and “how” was translated, but also through the collision of a work, not necessarily parodic, with other works. Arlt describes *Claridad* as “mal escrita, peor compuesta y sin un método inteligente” (*Arlt en dos* 189).

³⁴⁵ Another Russian Elias is Leopoldo Lugones’ “el ruso Elías” from *Las Odas Seculares*.

For instance, the fact that Bernard Shaw's "Máximas para los revolucionarios" follow Tolstoy's work in the 39 issue of *Los Pensadores* creates a dialogue between the two writers in which Shaw contests Tolstoy's ideas in such a way that produces a comic effect. For example, Shaw writes "No améis a vosotros semejantes como a vosotros mismos. Si estáis bien con vosotros mismos, es una impertinencia; si mal, es una injuria"; "La compasión es la simpatía propia de la insania" (31); "Si injurias a tu vecino vale más que no lo hagas a medias"; "Si te sacrificaste por aquellos a quienes amas, acabarás por odiar a los que te sacrificaste por ellos".

As for parody produced by the collision of two works, Ivan Turguenev's *Faust*,³⁴⁶ written in 1856, published in Spanish in the issue number 18 of *Los Pensadores* in August of 1922 and followed by *Fausto* by Estanislao del Campo, is especially curious.³⁴⁷ The two can be seen as a difference of the difference, a phenomenon that lies at the base of Latin American literature, according to Haroldo de Campos.³⁴⁸ The Russian *Faust* itself is Turguenev's attempt at reenacting Goethe's idea on Russian land, while analyzing a possible influence of the German poet's work on the Russian soul and culture. Afterwards, the work goes back to Europe in the form of a French translation and then travels to the

³⁴⁶ It was not a coincidence that Goethe's *Faust* drew Turguenev's attention. As a student in Berlin University got interested in Goethe's work. For him, Goethe was a romanticist, that through his writing was fighting for each person's individual freedom. In 1844, Turguenev published in "Отечественные записки" (*Annals of the Fatherland*) a translation of the last scene of the first part of *Faust's*.

³⁴⁷ *Claridad* published his *Fausto* and *Gobierno gaucho* in the same volume together with *Milongas Clásicas de Almfuerte*, *La leyenda del mojón* by Pero López, *Santos Vega* by Rafael Obligado, *Versos para el pueblo* by Acosta García, *La guitarra roja* by Martín Castro.

³⁴⁸ The first time Turguenev's *Faust* was published, it was followed by Goethe's *Faust*, translated by Strugovshikov. Chernushevsky was worried that Turguenev would not like to see his *Faust* alongside Goethe's, while Nekrasov in his letter to Turguenev suggested that people might become interested in reading Goethe's *Faust* after reading Turguenev's version. Turguenev showed his concern in his letter to the editor of the journal, saying that he was afraid that Goethe's colossus might smash his little worm of a work. But then he adds that this is the destiny of the small and he has to accept it.

other side of the world, to Latin America as a Spanish translation, where literature also was and is still trying to define itself in opposition to the European literature and culture.

What concerns Estanislao del Campo's *Faust*, a process of appropriation of the central idea and its characters takes place through a verbal recreation of the opera based on Goethe's play. In it, del Campo moves from a universal theme of a theological background – of the human desire of power and of the pact with the Devil – to local motifs. Borges in his turn once said that “El *Fausto* de Estanislao del Campo es [...] la mejor que ha dicho nuestra América” (“El *Fausto* criollo” in *El tamaño de mi esperanza* 13). For him, del Campo's poetry is at the base of the modern Argentine poetry: “Estanislao del Campo, alsinista, amigo que eras de mis mayores ¡qué buen augurio para todo escribir porteño la versada de Buenos Aires que nos dejaste y que vive haciendo vivir, en la hermandá de las guitarras mañeras!” (“El *Fausto* criollo” 19).

If we compare the translation of the *Faust* of Turgenev, published in *Los Pensadores* in 1922, and the Russian original published in 1856, already in the first paragraph, we see a big difference of style: colloquialism in Russian and elevation in Spanish: “Hace cuarto días que he llegado a esta aldea, apreciado amigo, y cumpliendo mi promesa, tomo la pluma para escribirte. De la hora del amanecer cae una menuda lluvia, de modo que es imposible salir, y además hoy siento un singular deseo de desahogarme charlando contigo” (*LP*, no. 18). In Russian it sounds more natural and simple: “Четвертого дня прибыл я сюда, любезный друг, и, по обещанию, берусь за перо и пишу к тебе. Мелкий дождь сеет с утра: выйти невозможно; да и мне же хочется поболтать с тобой” [I got here four days ago, my dear friend, and, as promised, I am

taking up a pen and writing to you. It's been drizzling since morning: can't go outside; and, after all, I do want to chat with you]. Portnoff's version published in Argentina in 1940 is more colloquial as well: "Mi querido amigo: Hace cuatro días que me encuentro aquí y, conforme a lo prometido, tomo la pluma para escribirte. Está cayendo, desde esta mañana, una lluvia menuda que no me permite salir; quiero, además, charlar contigo" (91).

The colloquiality of Turgenev's writing is also reduced through an erasure of exclamative sentences. For example, an exclamation "Чего, чего не перебивало в эти девять лет!" ["All, all kinds of things happened during these nine years!"] is absent from the two Spanish versions. The same happens to "Странное дело! этот затхлый, немного кислый и вялый запах сильно действует на мое воображение: не скажу, чтобы он был мне неприятен, напротив; но он возбуждает во мне грусть, а наконец унылость." ["It's a strange thing! That musty, slightly sour and faded smell has a powerful effect on my imagination: I can't say that I find it unpleasant, on the contrary; but it makes me sad and, in the end, depressed"]. This in Spanish became: "Es raro, que este olor a humedad, a vetusto y a marehito, influya tanto en mi imaginación. No diré que me sea desagradable, pero, de todos modos, engendra en mi alma triteza y aun angustia" (2). Neither does the exclamation appear in Portnoff's version: "Es una cosa extraña; pero este olor a casa cerrada, un poco acre e insinuante, influye mucho en mi imaginación, y, lejos de serme desagradable, despierta en mí tristeza y languidez" (94). The same happens in the next phrase:

Я, так же как и ты, очень люблю старые пузатые комоды с медными бляхами, белые кресла с овальными спинками и кривыми ножками, засиженные мухами стеклянные люстры, с большим яйцом из лиловой фольги посередине,— словом, всякую дедовскую мебель; но постоянно видеть все это не могу: какая-

то тревожная скука (именно так!) овладеет мною.

[“Just like you, I am very fond of old, bow-fronted chests with brass finger-plates, white armchairs with oval backs and crooked legs, fly-blown glass chandeliers with a large egg-shaped piece of lilac in the middle – in short, all sorts of furniture from our grandfathers’ time; but I can’t bear seeing it all continually: a sort of uneasy dreariness (that’s it precisely!) will take hold of me” (II)].

In Spanish the exclamation phrase is substituted by “esta es la palabra” (*LP* 3) and “por decirlo así” (Portnoff’s version 94). Neither there is exclamation in the translation of “Вот каким грезам предавался твой почти сорокалетний друг, сидя, одинокий, в своем одиноком домишке!” [“This is the kind of dreams your forty-year old friend was indulging in, sitting, lonely, in his little house!].

Along with neutralizing of the colloquial language, there is also a clear elevation of style. For example, if in Russian, the old nanny, upon seeing the protagonist, “села в изнеможении на стул и замахала рукою” [sat down, exhausted, on a chair and began to wave her hand]. In the translation she “se desplomó, apesadumbrada, en una silla, agitando los brazos con aire perplejo” (1). In Portnoff’s version it is closer to the original: “se dejó caer sin fuerzas en una silla, agitando las manos” (92). Also the colloquial phrases like “помнишь” [“remember?”] are absent. A very colloquial phrase “бабья натура!” that can be translated into English as “effeminate nature,” is translated as “Has tomado demasiado a pecho mi última carta. Bien sabes cuán propenso he sido siempre a exagerar mis sensaciones. El proceso actual es involuntario en mí, ¡una naturaleza femenina!” (19).

There is also some humor that is lost in the translation of the phrase “для первого раза Шиллер гораздо бы лучше годился, уж коли дело пошло на немцев” [For a start, Schiller would have been much better, since, anyways, since it has come down to

Germans], translated into Spanish as “Para dar principio a la lectura, Schiller hubiera sido quizás más a propósito, ya que había de ser, de todos modos, un autor alemán” (11).

Even the content is elevated, and the lack of shame for his love for a married woman that the main character admits has to be turned into the opposite. The Russian “Что, если бы кто подсмотрел меня? Ну, так что ж? Я бы нисколько не устыдился.” [What if somebody spied on me? And what of it? I wouldn't feel a bit of shame] in the Spanish version becomes: “Si alguien me hubiera visto en aquel momento, creo que me hubiera avergonzado” (4). It does get corrected in Portnoff's version though: “¡Si alguien me viese! Pues bien, no me habría avergonzado en lo más mínimo” (97).

As stated earlier, the Russian *Faust* can be seen as the difference of the difference since it establishes a distance from the original Goethe's *Fausto*. First, the protagonist recognizes that it was a bad translation published in 1828: “С каким неизъяснимым чувством увидел я маленькую, слишком мне знакомую книжку (дурного издания 1828 года)” [With what an inexpressible feeling did I catch sight of the little book I knew all too well (a poor edition from 1828)!]. Moreover, reading the Goethe's work he remembers not the book, but the play he saw in Berlin and his youth years when he studied at Berlin University (1838-1841): “Я вспомнил все: и Берлин, и студенческое время, и фрейлейн Клару Штих, и Зейдельманна в роли Мефистофеля, и музыку Радзивилла и все и вся...” [I remembered everything: Berlin, my time as a student, Fräulein Clara Stich, and Seydelmann in the role of Mephistopheles, and Radziwill's music, and absolutely everything...]. It also establishes the difference of the Russian thought from the Western one. In Goethe's *Faust*, Turgeneff sees the tragedy of individualism. All that Faust does

and seeks revolves around himself, but according to Turguenev, the true human essence is not limited to one body, one individual. He also sees a self-reflection imposed on Vera Nikolaevna through reading Goethe's *Faust* as a Western phenomenon and shows its negative impact on a Russian person. The tragedy that concludes the short story is a metaphor for the impact a violent imposition of foreign traditions may produce in the Russian culture. As Turguenev says in his article in which he analyzes Vronchenko's translation (1844) of *Faust*, Mephistopheles is a devil that is born inside of us together with the birth of self-reflection: "[h]e is the embodiment of the denial that appears in the soul preoccupied with its doubts and concerns" and who engulfed by this internal torment can pass indifferently by a family dying of hunger.

This is the reason why *Faust*, although undoubtedly a masterpiece, is seen as a work that would be understood by Russians, but not fully accepted, since they look for works that are beautiful not only as art but also as a tool to help make this world better. Thus, Turguenev says that Russians would not blindly admire the work because they are Russians, but would understand it because they are Europeans. Hence, he simultaneously establishes a difference from and belonging to European traditions. In his conclusion, Turguenev says: "it's time he [Faust] stopped dealing with transcendental questions... But *Faust* cannot have such an influence on us, Russians: we, on the whole, are the people not well-known for our certainty and unmutability of our convictions."

Thus, Turguenev uses Goethe's *Faust* to establish and to write difference. To fill the remaining ten pages left after Turguenev's work in this issue of *Los Pensadores*, the editors add Estanislao de Campo's *Fausto* to establish a difference from the difference.

Impresiones del Gaucho Anastasio el Pollo en la representación de esta ópera that was written ten years after Turguenev’s short story and was first published in *Correo del domingo*. It is similar to Turguenev’s story in several ways. First, it represents art within art. If in Turguenev’s story we see the characters read Goethe’s *Fausto*, as well as Turguenev’s own memories about the opera that he saw in Berlin, in Del Campo’s the gaucho Anastasio el Pollo, retells³⁴⁹ don Laguna the opera *Fausto* that he saw in Teatro Colón. This work is a parody. Ludmer says: “El diálogo de las dos culturas se realiza en *Fausto* entre el género gauchesco y la poesía culta; las dos se encuentran y se parodian entre sí: la lectura produce risa por el contacto y biasociación de dos modelizaciones aparentemente incompatibles” (qtd. in Pasternac 115). “Un gaucho asistiendo a un acto culto (la ópera) conlleva el ‘mundo al revés’, la desacralización del carnaval, la excentricidad, la violación de lo normal y de lo acostumbrado, la vida desviada de su curso habitual” (Bajtín qtd. in Carreño-Rodríguez 19). According to Antonio Carreño-Rodríguez, “[l]a interpretación que hace el gaucho Anastasio el Pollo de la ópera de Gounod, y su consiguiente profanación, asocia el discurso sublime, culto, colonizador, con el bajo, popular, gauchesco” (19).

This “juego de perspectivas en forma de inversiones, desdoblamiento, reduplicaciones, imitaciones, y contrapuntos “hace que el *Fausto* [sea] el poema más

³⁴⁹ The work is structured in a very similar way a century later; Puig will build his *The Kiss of the Spider Woman*, in which Molina and Valentin, two cellmates, recall movies to pass the time. As Valentin starts begging Molina to continue, Don Laguna also says:

Aunque ando medio delgao
 Don Pollo, no le permito
 Que me merme ni un chiquito
 Del cuento que ha comenzado (30).

complejo de toda la literatura gauchesca” (Imbert qtd. in Carreño-Rodríguez 22-23). But the fact that it is published after Turguenev’s short story adds another level of complexity to this parody, by entering in a parodic relationship with the Russian work. Carreño-Rodríguez sees in it “el germen de un género cuyo ápice llegará casi cien años después en la pluma de Jorge Luis Borges” (23). According to Lamborghini,

[e]n el Fausto criollo se encara la tarea en el plano cultural, allí donde el Sistema maniobra con más ingenio y sutileza; con más maña y disímulo; con más delicados afeites y ropajes. El bufo gauchesco se pega al Modelo-Autoridad, al Modelo prestigioso importado de la metrópoli; para el alejamiento del público selecto de Buenos Aires, lo parásita y termina con él oponiendo a su belleza una nueva: la del mamarracho bárbaro-paródico, teniendo como trasfondo el tema de la colonización cultural, pilar del Sistema.” (“El gauchesco como arte bufo”)

But again, by placing the work after Turguenev, the parody becomes a double parody and the cultural colonialism turns into a conversation.

Although the protagonists in both works read or see and retell and react to the story, behind all that we see the writers’ own perception of the work. We know that, *Fausto* according to the translator Bodenshtedt, was his favorite book and he knew its first part by heart. He also translated the last scene of the first part into Russian and, as mentioned before, wrote an analysis of its first translation. Del Campo’s *Faust* is also based on the writer’s own experience of seeing the opera, as Borges and Casares³⁵⁰ explain in their

³⁵⁰ In one of the conversations with Fernando Sorriento Adolfo Bioy Casares remembers that Estanislao del Campo’s work was among those that his father would recite to him when he was a little child: “En realidad, yo desde muy chico oía esos poemas. Mientras me preparaban el baño, mi padre me tenía en brazos y me recitaba a Estanislao del Campo, el *Martín Fierro* y poemas de Ascasubi. Así que casi la primera literatura que oí fue la gauchesca” (*Siete conversaciones* 146). A little later he adds: “Indudablemente, del Campo era de una categoría literaria muy inferior a Hernández. Pero yo le agradezco con muchísimo cariño su poema, porque para mí es un gozo permanente. [...] Este placer puede ser autobiográfico, puede ser el ambiente de mi casa, puede ser una cantidad de cosas que no concede como beneficio de otras lecturas. Ésta es simplemente una predilección que tengo porque siempre he leído el *Fausto*, siempre lo he repetido de memoria, me ha dado placer y lo recuerdo a del Campo con simpatía” (*Siete conversaciones* 150-151).

prologue to *Poesía gauchesca*: “En Agosto de 1866, Estanislao del Campo asistió a una representación del Fausto de Gounod, en el teatro Colón de Buenos Aires, y pensó en la extrañeza que esa obra produciría en un gaucho; esa misma noche produjo el primer manuscrito de su poema” (qtd. in Pasternac 104).

Also, just as Turguenev’s narrator gives his reader his impressions of Goethe’s work and the opera he saw in Berlin,³⁵¹ Del Campo’s Don Pollo also tells about his perception and reaction to the opera *Fausto*. For example, his reaction to Mephistopheles’ laugh when he heard that Fausto did not want money, but love:

No bien esto el Diablo oyó,
Soltó una risa tan fiera,
Que toda la noche entera,
En mis orejas sonó (28)

At one moment, Don Pollo exclaims:

Otra vez el lienzo alzaron
Y hasta mis ojos dudaron
Lo que vi... ¡barbaridá! (30)

Don Pollo also characterizes one of the characters in the following way:

Don Silverino, o cosa así,
Se llamaba este individuo
Que me pareció medio ido
O sonso cuanto lo vi. (29)

Then both comment on Mephistoteles’ actions:

En la caja, Lucifer,
Había puesto un espejo...
-- ¿Sabe que el Diablo, canejo,
La conoce a la mujer?

³⁵¹ «С каким неизъяснимым чувством увидел я маленькую, слишком мне знакомую книжку (дурного издания 1828 года). Я унес ее с собою, лег на постель и начал читать. Как подействовала на меня вся великолепная первая сцена! [...] Я вспомнил все: и Берлин, и студенческое время, и фрейлейн Клару Штих, и Зейдельманна в роли Мефистофеля, и музыку Радзивилла и все и вся...»

These are the similarities. But the main difference lies in the fact that Turguenev's short story is still full of tragedy, though it negates the Western model. Contrary to that, in Del Campo's work, every decisive and tragic moment in Goethe's work is turned into no more than their parodic echo. For example, the entire argument of Faust's unrequited love is summarized by Don Pollo in the following way:

El Doctor apareció,
Y, en público, se quejó
De que andaba padeciendo.
Dijo que nada podía.
Con la ciencia que estudió.
que él a una rubia quería.
Pero que a él la rubia nó. (27)

Or, for example, the moment of Gretchen's suffering is described through the emotions of Don Pollo, diminishing the moment's tragic effect:

-- Al rato el lienzo subió
Y deshecha y lagrimando,
Contra una máquina hilando
La rubia se apareció.
La pobre entró a quejarse
Tan amargamente allí,
Que yo a mis ojos sentí
Dos lágrimas asomarse,
-- ¡Qué vergüenza!
Puede ser:
Pero, amigaso, confiese
Que a usted también lo entenece
El llanto de una mujer. (33)

Seen through the prism of this conversation, the tragic moment of the opera loses its force and produces a comic effect. It also aims at destabilizing a macho image of gaucho.³⁵²

³⁵² Similarly, in Puig's already-mentioned novel, *Kiss of the Spider Woman*, Molina will do it through his film summaries retold to Valentin that shake Valentin's machismo to the very core.

Another way that Don Pollo reduces the tragic effect is by making comparisons between the elements of the French opera based on the German play, with the ones from the life in the pampa. As Carreño-Rodríguez says, “el gaucho describe cosas, personas e incidentos tomados del mundo culto con símiles metafóricos típicamente gauchescos: comparaciones específicas con elementos de la Pampa: animales, elementos del mundo geográfico, faenas cotidianas, ambiente físico, etc” (19). For example the moment of Faust’s rejuvenation: “¿Nunca has visto usted a un gusano / Volverse una mariposa? / Pues allí la misma cosa / Le pasó al Doctor, paisano” (28). To Don Laguna these comparisons seem too “barbaric”: “-- ¡No sea bárbaro, canejito! / ¡Qué comparancia tan fiera!” (33)

Another factor that distances both the characters and the readers from the actual opera is the fact that conversation is consumed together with alcohol and when the bottle is empty the work ends: “Ya es güeno dir ensillando. / -- Tome ese último traguito, / Y eche el frasco ese pocito / Para que quede boyando”. (36)

We can see in del Campo’s work the seed of what later will be at the heart of the avant-garde art: exposure of the artifice of art. As Don Pollo retells the opera to Don Laguna, he also tells the mechanics of everything that was going on on stage: “En dos pedazos se abrió / La paré de la crujida / Y no es cosa de esta vida / Lo que allí se apareció” (36).

In short, we can say that this is a translation of a translation of a translation: first, *Fausto* was translated from German to French by Gérard de Nerval, then adapted by Gounod into an opera, then it is a criollo offshoot of the opera.

When discussing *Faust* and translation, we must mention that Kropotkin, in his

Ideals and Realities in Russian Literature, bring the two together to emphasize the richness of the Russian language that solves Dr. Faustus' problem with translation:

Everyone remembers, for instance, the difficulty which the learned Dr. Faust, in Goethe's immortal tragedy, found in rendering the sentence: "In the beginning was the Word." "Word," in modern German, seemed to Dr. Faust to be too shallow an expression for the idea of "the Word being God." In the old Slavonian translation we have "Slovo," which also means "Word," but has at the same time, even for the modern Russian, a far deeper meaning than that of *das Wort*. In old Slavonian "Slovo" included also the meaning of "Intellect" – German *Vernunft*; and consequently it conveyed to the reader an idea which was deep enough not to clash with the second part of the Biblical sentence. (5)

It was also Haroldo de Campos who, while translating *Faust* to Portuguese, stumbled upon the idea of "transluciferation": "Flamejada pelo rastro coruscante de seu Anjo instigador, a tradução criativa de demonismo, não é piedosa nem memorial: ela intenta, no limite, a rasura da origem: a obliteração do original. A essa desmemória parricida chamarei 'transluciferação'" (Haroldo de Campos 209). His anthropophagic treatment of Goethe's text can be clearly seen in his *Deus e o Diabo no Fausto de Goethe* "which asserts the cannibalistic/dialogical principle from the start, because, for the Brazilian contemporary reader, the nourishment from Glauber Rocha's film *Deus e o Diabo na Terra do Sol* (God and the Devil in the Land of the Sun) is all too obvious. The intertext in the very title suggests that the receiving culture will interweave and transform the original one" (Ribeiro Pires Vieira 106).

Haroldo de Campos' "claim is that Goethe's *Faustus*, the first one, relies a good deal on parody in the etymological meaning of 'parallel canto' and, as such, marks a rereading of the Faustian tradition – the intertexts being various, ranging from the Bible to Shakespeare. Goethe is quoted verbatim in his defense of the accusation of plagiarism on

the grounds that one can only produce great works by appropriating others' treasures, as also is Ezra Pound with the view that great poets pile up all the things they can claim, borrow or steal from their forerunners and contemporaries and light their own lights at the top of the mountain (Ribeiro Pires Vieira 107).

It is also in Haroldo de Campos' work that we find out that the first *Faust* was already a parody: "Já o *Primerio Fausto* é uma obra híbrida, amalgamada, contrastante. Uma primeira versão (o *Urfaust*), parte em verso, parte em prosa, inspirada na transposição para teatro de fantoches de leyenda popular originária do século XVI, foi elaborada pelo poeta entre 1772-1773, quando ele tinha menos de 25 anos, na fase inicial, pré-weimariana, de sua carreira" (72). Also, Goethe openly defended the idea of a supposed plagiarism in literary production

ao rebater com altanaria uma censura de Byron, que o acusou de ter "plagiado" a canção de amor da louca Ofélia (*Hamlet*, IV, 5), na cena em que Mefistófeles canta, acompanhando-se de cítara, em frente à casa de Margarida [...]. Respondeu Goethe: "Então meu Mefistófeles entoia uma canção de Shakespeare? E por que não poderia fazê-lo? Por que eu me deveria dar ao trabalho de encontrar algo próprio, quando a canção de Shakespeare cabia à maravilha e dizia exactamente aquilo que era preciso? (qtd. in Haroldo de Campos 75)

De Campos then adds another quote from Goethe that even more explicitly shows his approval of literary theft: "Não pertence tudo o que se fez, desde a Antigüidade até ao mundo contemporâneo, *de jure*, ao poeta? Por que ele haveria de hesitar em colher flores onde as encontrasse? Somente se pode produzir algo grande mediante a apropriação dos tesouros alheios. Eu não me apropriei de Jó para Mefistófeles e da canção de Shakespeare?" (qtd. in Haroldo de Campos 76). He then expands Goethe's idea by quoting Ezra Pound's idea about Shakespeare's writing:

Grandes poetas raramente fazem tijolos sem palha. Eles amontoam todas as coisas excelentes que podem pedir, tomar de empréstimo ou roubar de seus predecesores e contemporâneos e acendem sua própria luz no topo da montanha. (...) Como Shakespeare escreveu a melhor poesia em inglês, não importa um real se ele pilhou ou não os líricos italianos, no seu saque generalizado da literatura que lhe estava al alcance. (qtd. in Haroldo de Campos 76)

The idea that del Campo's *Fausto* can be considered a refraction of a myth (Pasternac 109) can be also applied to Turguenev's *Fausto*. As Pasternac notices "cada época ha reelaborado este mito germánico convertido en universal" (109) and these ones that we saw are the two examples of this appropriations and re-elaborations. Pasternac also comments on the immensity of the web and interconnections of these elaborations:

Una de las reelaboraciones más logradas es *El maestro y Margarita* [...], del escritor ruso Mijaíl Bulgákov (1891-1940), que constituye una sátira llena de regocijantes bufonadas, osadas alegorías filosóficas y acerada sátira sociopolítica, no sólo del sistema soviético, sino de todo lo que él detestaba en la superficialidad y vanidad de la vida moderna en general. La célebre canción "Sympathy for the Devil" de los Rolling Stones (1968) está inspirada a su vez en la novela de Bulgákov. La grabación de la canción también proporciona el tema a la película de Jean-Luc Godard, *One plus One* (1968); en ella se realiza un recorrido por la contracultura estadounidense de finales de la década de 1960, recorrido mezclado con escenas de los Stones grabando "Sympathy for the Devil". En suma, la red intertextual es inmensa. (110)

One of elements that enters this web is the Argentine writer Alberto Gerchunoff's *La clínica del Dr. Mefistófeles* (1937). Gerchunoff's Mephistopheles, according to the narrator himself, is different from Goethe's: "No es el antiguo personaje, doloroso y enfático, que hemos encontrado en el poema de Goethe y en el drama de Marlow [...] Es un hombrecillo calvo, cargado de hombros, distraído, de aire fatigado y benévolo, dispuesto a sonreír y a quejarse" (12). It is a mix of various mythical figures:

El Doctor Mefistófeles pasea a través de la sala. ¿A quién evoca en nosotros su imponente presencia? [...] Deshumanizadamente latino en su aspecto, con su barbilla puntiaguda y negra, sus mejillas blancas, como si hubiese acabado de

empolvarlas, con sus labios fuertes, las cejas alzadas a ambos lados hacia arriba, nos trae reminiscencias de ilustraciones remotas, de Gustavo Doré, de Durero, de Sascha Schneider, de Ruelas, el artista mejicano que dibujaba ranas y charquitas espectrales bajo la luna. ¿No mira así, con esa mirada mefistofélica, León Trotzki? ¿No descubrimos su semejanza con la silueta, de piernas inverosímilmente extensas, que exorna las iniciales historiadas en que aparece el Diablo hablando al oído de una monja o con la que insinúa, en las viñetas groseras y encantadoras de las biblias primitivas, en el capítulo del Génesis, en que asoman, sobre el mundo recién batido por el aliento de Dios, el pecado humano y la desobediencia humana? (18)

Gerchunoff's work is a parody of not only Goethe's work, but all the ideas coming from Europe and Russia. Argentine Mephistopheles, La Bella Helena and Fausto have a privileged distance from the rest of the world that allows them to see the parodic essence of the assumed truth. Mephistopheles tells an anecdote in the penultimate Jornada of the book:

Un amigo mío, con quien fraternicé mucho durante un viaje, gustaba particularmente vivir en Italia. Le interesaban los museos, los talleres de los pintores, la convivencia con los artistas. Se había educado en las ideas de libertad, en los sentimientos de la primacía del individuo. Pero el gobierno de fuerza lo volvió intolerable la vida en Italia a pesar de que profesaba la doctrina fascista. La conciencia de que no podía ser, si quisiera serlo, un hombre libre, le enfurecía y le desesperaba. Se creía espiado, vigilado, perseguido. Desconfiaba de sus compañeros como los compañeros le desconfiaban a su vez, desconfiaba de las mujeres que trataba. [...] Mi amigo fuse sintiendo comunista como reacción contra el Sistema dictatorial instaurado por el señor Mussolini y un buen día se trasladó a Moscú. Allí se introdujo en los centros artísticos. Trabajaba, se divertía, discutía sobre cuestiones públicas, hasta que le aconsejaron reprimir su sinceridad y no manifestar tan abiertamente lo que pensaba sobre cada cosa. La advertencia le sorprendió al principio y le entristeció después. Moscú se le aparecía como ardiente duplicación de Roma. Se sintió desgraciado porque la libertad, que es un estado imaginario, un fenómeno subjetivo, necesita expresarse en ciertas posibilidades externas, sin las cuales la persona civilizada se suprime, se sepulta, se hunde en la esclavitud. Habrá grandes poetas en Rusia y en Italia, pensadores y constructores sociales, tristes siervos, puesto que les está vedado el derecho a la fantasía, el derecho al capricho de la actitud, que es el atributo de la individualidad. ¿A dónde ir, pues? ¿A alguna de las islas del trópico? (217-218)

Even the characters see themselves as part of a comedy, or as Mephistopheles says: “Una

comedia sin comienzo, nudo no desenlace; una verdadera comedia moderna; carece de saunto, de personajes y de autor” (233).

Returning to del Campo’s work, we cannot ignore that his book was found on the Macedonio Fernández’ shelves and that it was among those that Macedonio would carry with him when he left the family house and started to “peregrinar por las pensiones con un estoico equipaje compuesto de muy pocas obras que lo acompañarían siempre: un ajado ejemplar del *Quijote* [...], un *Fausto* de Estanislao del Campo, los textos satíricos de Quevedo, algún libro de Twain, los poemas de Poe..., sin contar los textos leídos que, en su cabeza, formaban una biblioteca sin peso” (*Diccionario de la novela de Macedonio Fernández* 19). Cristina Landa and Ricardo Piglia ask themselves what was it that Macedonio saw in *Fausto* and they respond: “Revisa el trabajo en los personajes, el tono de los paisanos en el encuentro amistoso, ese creer que se cree, el colocar a la literatura como materia volcada sobre sí misma hasta volverla parodia” (*Diccionario de la novela* 31). The path of del Campo’s work is not the story, but the telling of the story and which makes “Impresiones del Gaucho Anastasio el Pollo” is the zero ground place from where Macedonio starts taking his first steps towards his theory of a novel (*Diccionario de la novela* 31).

Zooming onto the period of *Los Pensadores* and *Claridad* allows us to see that Borges’ parody as an essential constructive element of his writings, was not built over a bare terrain. Knowing that Borges belonged to Florida, whose central role of humor transpires in every page of *Martín Fierro*, makes parody a far from surprising tool for literary creation.

For Borges, Russian literature and parody are at the root of his own writing, according to an anecdote about Borges' early poetic experiences that Dina Odnopozova tells in her dissertation:

It comes as no surprise that Borges, who claims to have heard Rimbaud's "Le bateau livre" for the first time when Abramowitz [his close friend in Geneva who was Polish Jewish] read it to him, calls one of his earlier poetic experiments "Poème pour être récité avec un accent russe" ("Piece to be Recited with a Russian Accent"³⁵³) (1919). "As I knew I wrote foreigner's French," – Borges explains in the "Autobiographical Essay" – I thought a Russian accent better than Argentine one. (82)

One of the collaborative projects that Borges never finished was a fantastic novel *El hombre que será presidente*, which he was planning to write with Macedonio Fernández. In it, similarly to Arlt's parody of Russian Revolution in *Los siete locos*, bolsheviks are planning to install bolshevism by first provoking a total neurasthenia among the residents of Buenos Aires:

El argumento, ideado por mí y todavía muy esquemático y fragmentario, trata de los medios empleados por los maximalistas para provocar una neurastenia general, en todos los habitantes de Buenos Aires y abrir así camino al bolshevikismo. El título – elegido no por su problemática belleza, sino en vista del público es: El hombre que será presidente. El medio empleado por los maximalistas es la multiplicación de muchas pequeñas molestias que, insignificantes cada una en sí, carcomerán combinadas los ánimos de todos. (Borges qtd. in Odnopozova 90)

Another parody of Russian literature that also introduced a new genre,³⁵⁴ the first South

³⁵³ According to Balderston, Borges did study Russian and the fact that in his poem "Rusia" he chooses to spell Kremlin as "Kreml" to reflect the softness of the "l" in accordance with Russian pronunciation.

³⁵⁴ By way of parody, Borges and Bioy adapt "la novela policial" for the Argentine reality: "Se puede deducir que, aunque el texto de Borges-Bioy contenga una refinada re-creacion lingüística, como afirma E. Rodríguez Monegal lo que presente una parodización y carnavalización del género policial, como en la lectura bajtiniana propuesta por A. Julian Pérez, las referencias intertextuales, habitualmente infinitas en los textos borgianos, aquí son senales de un juego paródico del cual no esta ausente el complemento filosófico de los dos autores. Más aun, esta representaría la novedad (la "renovacion" paródica en los términos de Tynianov) que los dos autores argentinos aportan a la novela policial" (D'Angelo 50).

American detective story, is Borges' and Bioy Casares' ³⁵⁵ "The Nights of Goliadkin":

the stratagem of bifurcating doubles in "The Nights of Goliadkin" further complicated by the dual authorship of the story, brings about a figurative rebirth of the Russian protagonist into a conceited Argentine actor, thus saving him from the burgeoning games of pretense. Moreover, with their literary pastiche, which also happened to be one of the first twentieth century detective stories in South America, Borges and Bioy Casares reintroduce Dostoevsky's protagonist to the Argentine readers, catering to their pleasure of reorganizing the familiar character. (Odnopozova 114)

As we know Goliadkin is the protagonist of Dostoevsky's *The Double*, who meets an exact copy of himself, his double. He finally goes mad and is locked up in an asylum. Nabokov considers it almost a parody of Gogol's "The Overcoat" (*Lectures on Russian Literature*³⁵⁶ 71) and Berger a lot of irony in the way Dostoevsky treats this character – "in a mock-heroic fashion; he is "our hero" and we follow his "adventures," though he is anything but heroic and the adventures consist of petty and insignificant matters" (*Lectures on Russian Literature* 118-119).

One of those who laugh in the most erudite way is Borges, whose work, Piglia says, can be divided in two:

on the one hand the stories about knife fighters, with the variations on them; on the other what we could call the erudite stories, where erudition, cultural display, is taken to the most extreme limits: the stories in which Borges parodies the superstitions of high culture and Works with apocrypha, plagiarism, chains of false

³⁵⁵ Parody in Borges was studied in Vease Graciela Scheines, "Las parodias de Jorge Luis Borges y Adolfo Bioy Casares"; Angelica Prieto Inzunza, "La muerte y la brújula. Una lectura paródica del relato policial."

³⁵⁶ Full text available on archive.org:

www.archive.org/stream/VladimirNabokovLecturesOnRussianLiterature/Vladimir_Nabokov_Lectures_on_Russian_LiteratureBookFi.org_djvu.txt

quotations, false encyclopedias and so forth, and in which erudition itself defines the *form* of the stories.³⁵⁷ (*Artificial Respiration* 130)

Although Piglia puts Sarmiento at the origin of this erudite barbarism, it is Macedonio Fernández' "burla" that constitutes one of the foundation stones of Borges' parodic erudism, the conscious one, unlike Sarmiento's case.

Taking one step back and looking at the development of interactions between Russian and Argentine literature, we can actually say that parody permitted the reinstatement of the humor that was lost in translation. Although those earlier translations are already considered bad by default, they are what send Argentine literature in the direction it ultimately took. As we can see, many Russian works were already a parody of European literary tradition; otherwise they would be the result of adaptation of those traditions to the Russian reality. Passing through the parodied place would insert them back into the tradition. By parodying Russian literature translations, Argentine writers managed to get closer to the original than those in Europe. Also, in Argentina, the very writers become Russian novels' characters that, along with their characters, write both themselves and the very authors that created them: "Arlt is a Russian, a character out of Dostoyevsky" (Bolaño qtd. in Odnopozova 189).

³⁵⁷ "por un lado los cuentos de cuchilleros, con sus variantes; por otro lado los cuentos, los cuentos, digamos, eruditos, donde la erudición, la exhibición cultural se exaspera, se lleva al límite, los cuentos donde Borges parodia la superstición culturalista y trabaja sobre el apócrifo, el plagio, la cadena de citas fraguadas, la enciclopedia falsa, etc., y donde la erudición define *la forma* de los relatos" (*Respiración artificial* 129-130).

CHAPTER FOUR: *WRITING* RUSSIAN LITERATURE IN ARGENTINA.

CÉSAR TIEMPO AND ROBERTO ARLT

I El rusito Israel, Clara Beter and Other Russian Writers “Written” by César Tiempo

*Alta está mi ventana sobre el mundo,³⁵⁸
alta está sobre el mundo.
No veo más que el cielo del alba y del
crepúsculo,
del alba y del crepúsculo.
Y el cielo me parece ¡tan pálido y vacío!,
¡tan pálido y vacío!³⁵⁹
Piedad no tendrá para mi pobre³⁶⁰ corazón,
mi pobre corazón.
¡Ay de mí! me consumo.³⁶¹
Anhelo ¡cómo anhelo! eso que no conozco.³⁶²
Y yo no sé de donde me viene ese deseo,
no sé de donde viene.
Pero el corazón lo invoca.
¡Oh, que venga, que venga eso que tanto tarda!
eso que tanto tarda!³⁶³
El pálido infinito me promete el milagro,
me promete el milagro.
Pero acojo sin lágrimas la promesa falaz,
la promesa falaz.
Porque yo quiero aquello que el mundo nunca
tuvo
y que nunca tendrá.³⁶⁴*

³⁵⁸ All commas are omitted in the version published in *Sabati3n argentino*.

³⁵⁹ The exclamation marks are omitted in the version published in *Sabati3n argentino*. The only exclamation mark that the original Russian version contained were in the verses “Pero el coraz3n quiere el milagro y lo pide / el coraz3n lo invoca,” which is not carried out into the translation.

³⁶⁰ It is changed to “vano” in *Sabati3n argentino*.

³⁶¹ En *Sabati3n argentino*: “¡Ay de mí que de locas tristezas me consumo! / ¡ay de mí! me consumo.”

³⁶² En *Sabati3n argentino*: “Anhelo todavía eso que no conozco / eso que no conozco.”

³⁶³ En *Sabati3n argentino*: “Pero el coraz3n quiere el milagro y lo pide / el coraz3n lo invoca.”

³⁶⁴ “Song”

My window is high above the earth,
High above the earth.
I see only the sky with the evening dusk,
With the evening dusk.

And the sky seems empty and pale,
So empty and pale.

“La canción”, Zinaida Ghippins

This poem by a Russian symbolist writer, Zinaida Ghippius³⁶⁵ (spelled incorrectly in *Los Pensadores*) who, together with Valery Briusov, was the founder of Russian symbolism and whose “poetic innovations opened the way for later poets such as Anna Akhmatova” (Greenlee 356). The poem appeared on March 10, 1925 in the issue 107 of *Los Pensadores* among other poems³⁶⁶ under the title “Poetas rusos contemporáneos

It will not spare one's poor heart,
My poor heart.

O, in mad sorrow I am dying,
I am dying.
I'm striving for something, I don't know what,
I don't know what.

And this wish I do not know from where,
Came from where...
But the heart wants, asks for a miracle,
A miracle!

May it be something that does not occur,
Never occurs.
The pale sky promises me miracles,
It promises.

But I cry without tears vows I can't trust,
Vows I can't trust.
I need something that is not in this world,
Something not in this world. (*Modern Russian Poetry* 57)

³⁶⁵ In the Preface to the anthology *Modern Russian Poetry*, Vladimir Markov, the editor, says: “Displaying in her verse both superior intellect and varied emotionality [...], Hippius stood aside from the poetry of her time, almost being ashamed of her poetic gift, and preferred to help her husband Dmítri Merezhkóvsky, in pursuing his religious and political causes. The discovery of Hippius as a major poet by Russians may also be delayed by the fact that she remained to the end of her life a violent anti-Bolshevik, but this discovery is ultimately inevitable. [...] Hippius is almost forgotten now [1967] in Russia, but she herself called memory nothing but ‘this ghost of life’” (LVI).

³⁶⁶ Among other poems translated by César Tiempo in this issue is Sofia Dubnova's poem taken from her collection of poems “Мать” (“Mother”) and “La musa al poeta” by Alexei Plescheev (spelled incorrectly as Elexis Niccolaeavitch Plestchev). He translates the latter in a prose form “para demostrar que a los poetas, no les presenta el verso ninguna traba para expresar altas ideas y profundas reflexiones, que puestas en prosa no pierden su esencia” (*LP*, no. 107) [“to demonstrate that for the poets a verse is not an obstacle for expressing high ideas and profound thoughts, that turned into prose don't lose their essence”].

(Traducción de Israel Zeitlin)” (“Contemporary Russian Poets (Translated by Israel Zeitlin)”). The poem was César Tiempo’s beautiful translation, a discovery that adds a word “translator” to a long list of Israel Zetlin’s (better known as César Tiempo) professions. The translation’s exactitude and its poetic tone evince traces of a direct translation and a poetic talent of the translator. The original³⁶⁷ was written in March 1893 and first published in 1895 in *Северный вестник* (*Northern herald*), no. 12. However, after 1917, and until very recently, Ghippius’ work was not available in Russia, was banned from publication under the Communist rule, and only in the 90s started to be rediscovered (Greenlee).

³⁶⁷ “Песня”

Окно мое высоко над землею,
Высоко над землею.
Я вижу только небо с вечернею зарею,
С вечернею зарею.

И небо кажется пустым и бледным,
Таким пустым и бледным...
Оно не сжалится над сердцем бедным,
Над моим сердцем бедным.

Увы, в печали безумной я умираю,
Я умираю,
Стремлюсь к тому, чего я не знаю,
Не знаю...

И это желание не знаю откуда
Пришло, откуда,
Но сердце хочет и просит чуда,
Чуда!

О, пусть будет то, чего не бывает,
Никогда не бывает.
Мне бледное небо чудес обещает,
Оно обещает.

Но плачу без слез о неверном обете,
О неверном обете...
Мне нужно то, чего нет на свете,
Чего нет на свете.

As will be discussed later in this chapter, César Tiempo wrote poems that he attributed to others. This poem, on the contrary, was later attributed to him, as its author, not translator. In his letter to César Tiempo, written in December of 1933, Abel Rodríguez praises this poem as Tiempo's own creation:

No hubo ocasión de decírselo, hasta ahora, que estoy con su libro, tumbado en el césped, frente a este magnífico crepúsculo de Sorrento, tratando de leer entre sus páginas no cortadas aún. Y de regreso a casa para terminarlo de leer, ¡pienso esas magníficas estrofas de “Sábado nuestro” y el poema “Alta está mi ventana sobre el mundo” de una belleza superior! Con más tiempo, haré aquí en *La Capital* un ensayo sobre su libro porque considero que es como una columna en nuestra literatura. (qtd. in Schvartzman 108)

Although in his *Sabati3n argentino: Antiguas y nuevas donas para la pausa del s3bado*, under the title of the poem Tiempo includes the Russian poet's name in parenthesis – Zenaida Hippus Mereschkovskaia³⁶⁸ – there is ambiguity about whether it is the author's name or a dedication, which most likely gave room to the poem being ascribed to César Tiempo. This Russian poem makes it to the book that, as Enrique Méndez Calzada puts it, “inviste [...] una significaci3n excepcional dentro de nuestra literatura, a la que allega una de las aportaciones m3s originales que haya recibido desde que existe” (*Sabati3n argentino* 28). Moreover, the poem was put to music by a Russian-born composer, the founder of the Grupo Renovaci3n, Jacobo Ficher. Ficher was one of the nationalist composers who, at the beginning of the 20th century, turned to the poetry of their compatriots, “to create a national school of composition and a system of musical education comparable in quality to those then found in Europe” (Hoover 1). However, the supposedly Argentine poetry in this case is a Spanish translation of a poem written by a Russian female symbolist poet. What

³⁶⁸ See *Sabati3n argentino*, p. 83.

complicates the matter of the Argentine national music even more is that this particular piece by Jacobo Ficher was written to an Italian translation by Honorio Siccardi³⁶⁹ of the poem attributed mistakenly to César Tiempo. This is an example of translation paving the way for an anthropophagic construction of Argentine culture.

César Tiempo turns into a poet who *writes* Russian poetry in Spanish in two different ways: by becoming the author of a Russian poem, and by lending his voice to a Russian prostitute to write her poetry in Spanish, the case that is at the center of this chapter. Although César Tiempo does not owe his recognition in the literary world to translation, his writings are crucial for understanding the role Russian literature translations played in the development of Argentine literature.

He was born in 1906, in Ekaterinoslav (present-day Dniepropetrovsk³⁷⁰), which in Russian, as he explains in *Mi tío Scholem Aleijem*, means “Gloria de Catalina” (8). The “Dniepropetrovskian” (or “Ekaterinoslavian”) mark is consistently highlighted in his writing. Tatiana Pavlova, a Russian-Italian actress who often appeared on the pages of *Claridad*, was the addressee of the first poem of his *Versos de una...* (1927).³⁷¹ From his

³⁶⁹ Ficher, Jacobo. “Alta está mi ventana sobre el mundo. Alta è la mia finestra sopra il mundo.” *Ocho poemas para canto y piano*.

³⁷⁰ The name keeps reappearing in various instances in César Tiempo’s writings. For example, in his *Sabatiòn argentino*, in “Epiceyo en la muerte de Israel Zeitlin”: “Desde Ekaterinoslav – ahora Dniepropetrovsk -- / donde vieron tus ojos por vez primera el sol, / el Océano cruzaste para darnos tu canto / y la ciudad multánime te devolvió cantando” (167). Here, just like in his autobiographical note, we sense the same humor, as he writes a “epiceyo” for himself. Dniepropetrovsk is also the hometown of Helena Blavatsky. As Julian Henry Lowenfield notes in his Pushkin’s autobiography, Dniepropetrovsk is “best known for its “Potemkin villages” – facades of non-existent palaces erected to deceive Empress Catherine the Great as she sailed past by riverboat” (37).

³⁷¹ A new edition of *Versos de una...* was just published by Biblioteca Nacional in 2015 with an Introduction titled “El caso Clara Beter. Sueños y espíritu de grupo en los años veinte” by Solana Schwartzman who I interviewed as part of my research. Solana points out that 1926 is the year that is usually thought of as the year of the publication of *Versos de una...* “Sin embargo si bien el primer poema firmado por Clara Beter, “Filosofía”, se publica en la revista *Claridad* en agosto de 1926, fue recién en febrero de 1927 cuando se

Clara Beter y otras fatamorganas, we find out that Tatiana Pavlova was born in the same city of Ekaterinoslav, “in the same street, in the same house”³⁷² (24). He also writes: “Yo nací en Dniepropetrovsk. / No me importan los desaires / con que me trata la suerte. / ¡Argentino hasta la muerte! / Yo nací en Dniepropetrovsk”³⁷³ (qtd. in Schwartzman 29n27). The poem demonstrates that the two facts – being born in Russia and being Argentine – never had to be reconciled in his identity: he was born in Dniepropetrovsk and hence, was a true Argentine.

Tiempo’s identification with his Russian roots informs all of his writings. As Estelle Irizarry points out, his *Versos de una...* is full of allusions to César Tiempo’s own childhood. For example, in “Patio de la infancia”: “¡Oh!, patio de la vieja casona de Alexándroff, / donde el trompo de música de mi hermano David / daba vueltas y vueltas ante el corro risueño / de chicuelos, precoces sabios del gay vivir!”

César Tiempo, under the name of Clara Beter, evokes his own childhood memories that reappear in his *Sabatión argentino* (1933), in which he describes his house where “Rosa y David esmaltan su claro mediodía / con gritos y canciones mientras dibujo sueños”. In the “Patio de infancia,” Clara Beter also talks about a grandmother who would

publica el poema “Versos a Tatiana Pavlova” y finalmente en mayo de ese año se anuncia la publicación del libro completo” (7).

³⁷²“Tatiana Pavlova nació en Ekaterinoslav. Mi alter ego también. En la misma calle y en la misma casa. Pero como estábamos tallados en el remo de Ulises, Tatiana abandonó los pagos de Helena Blavatsky por su propia voluntad y mi alter ego cuando contaba recién nueve meses y nueve días de existencia. Y no llegó a Buenos Aires andando, precisamente. Ekaterinoslav fue fundad por Potemkin en 1786 y tiene comunidad judía desde 1787. Esa es la antigüedad de nuestras respectivas familias en Ucrania” (24).

³⁷³This poem also reminds Alejandra Pizarnik’s poem “Sólo un nombre”: alejandra alejandra / debajo estoy yo / alejandra” (65). But if Tiempo’s demonstrates that, [I]ike Alberto Gerchunoff and Carlos M. Grunberg, he was deeply Jewish by upbringing and belief; at the same time these three intellectuals deliberately chose to integrate into national Argentine life” (Brodsky & Rein 229), Pizarnik’s “Sólo un nombre” can be read as alienation from the name Alejandra imposed on her real name, Flora.

tell them legends and stories; this figure coincides with the image of César Tiempo's own grandmother, whom he also remembers in his *Sabati3n argentino*.

On one occasion, César Tiempo reminds us that Jacobo Fijman “sostenía estentóreamente que los 3nicos escritores argentinos que sabían escribir en espa3ol eran de origen ruso” (*Clara Beter y otras fatamorganas* 21). César Tiempo then explains that although Fijman pretended to allude to Alberto Gerchunoff, in reality was talking about himself (*Clara Beter y otras fatamorganas* 21). To continue César Tiempo's line of thought, I suggest that César Tiempo was also alluding to his own Russian roots when he said that Jacobo Fijman alluded to himself while pretending to be pointing to Gerchunoff who in his turn was demonstrating his pride in being Russian. On another occasion, in his article devoted to Alberto Gerchunoff “Alberto Gerchunoff: Vida y manos” César Tiempo repeats the same phrase ascribing it to Enrique Méndez Calzada: “Enrique Méndez Calzada, el agudísimo autor de *El tonel de Di3genes*, solía decir que los mejores escritores argentinos eran rusos de nacimiento o de origen...” (37).

One can discern traces of longing to belong to those writers of Russian origin who marked Argentine literature and who weave his Russian roots into his literature not only biographically, but also literarily. It is especially evident in his very first literary step, in his first book *Ruzafa polícroma (Primeros versos)*, a handmade collection of his first poems,³⁷⁴ published in, and manually cut out from, different newspapers and magazines of the time. The poem “Ouverture” apart from opening the collection and revealing, through

³⁷⁴ It can be found in the Departamento de Archivos y Colecciones Particulares de la Biblioteca Nacional de Argentina, Subfondo César Tiempo.

its title, Tiempo's great aspirations, also harbors the origin of the title for the entire book: "Policromas florecillas / forman mi ruzafa lírica, / cuyas corolas son ánforas / donde se alberga el espíritu, / el alma de mi poesía" (SCT).

Although the content leaves no doubt that "ruzafa" refers to a garden, it is no coincidence that for his first book of poems, he chose a title that would evoke Russia, but which at the same time would be of Arabic origin. He plays the same game with the pseudonym that he uses to sign the second poem of the collection "Ante tu imagen." "Lear Siotisurle" sounds foreign, but read backwards reveals a familiar 'El rusito Israel.'³⁷⁵ It is foreignness of the form that through everyone's childhood game with words confirms the very foreignness of its content. Later, when he writes *Versos de una...* "César Tiempo construye la biografía de Clara Beter sobre la trama de la suya propia. Hace nacer a Clara Beter en su Ucrania natal; como él, Beter se embarca también en Hamburgo y llega a Buenos Aires en el barco *Capitán Roca* (ver "Un lejano recuerdo"); y, finalmente, *Versos de una...* guarda un fuerte lazo con el resto de la producción del autor" (Schvartzman 28).

Parallel to this implied respect and pride in his Russian origin, César Tiempo also jests about it. "Tengo serias sospechas de haber nacido el 3 de marzo de 1906³⁷⁶ en un pueblo de la Europa Occidental. Pero bien pronto tuve que franquearme la intimidad

³⁷⁵ This finding was made by two devoted archivists in the Biblioteca Nacional de Buenos Aires, Natalia González Tomassini y Nicolás Del Zotto, who organized the César Tiempo's archives that were recently donated.

³⁷⁶ When on March 7, 1976, in *La Opinión*, a note came out stating that he turned seventy-one, César Tiempo wrote to the Editor Jacobo Timerman, after receiving a call from his mother, pointing to the error – he turned seventy and felt obliged to correct the mistake, since "*La Opinión* hará historia [y por eso] conviene que los historiadores de mañana sepan a qué atenerse" (qtd. in Fingueret 40): "Mi madre es menor [sic?] que yo pero recuerda muchas cosas. Sabe que nací en 1906 y cree que es importante cumplir setenta años, número que tiene a la vez un significado místico y simbólico. Recuerda que setenta fueron los familiares de Jacob que entraron en Egipto, setenta las naciones de la tierra, setenta las lenguas, setenta los tronos del reino celestial y setenta los nombres de Dios" (Tiempo qtd. in Fingueret 39).

brumosa de la geografía experimental pues, mis padres previendo mi irremediable inclusión en esta Antología me trajeron a Buenos Aires el 12 de diciembre del mismo año,” (225) says his auto-biographical note in the poetic anthology *Exposición de la actual poesía argentina (1922-1927)*. This mocking tone is echoed in one of Benjamín Abramson’s letters to Tiempo, from Moscow, who says: “Tu bella tierra del sud de la URSS se llama DNIPROPETROVSK”, and adds, mocking the lengthy name: “un nombre ligeramente kilométrico,³⁷⁷ como cuadra a un país llano.”

His *Mi tío Scholem Aleijem* also starts in Ekaterinoslav. However, there, he fictionalizes his native city by making the protagonist meet Máximo Gorky there. His own childhood becomes part of his fiction. Gorky here is one of the literary characters whose role is to introduce the real protagonist, Scholem Aleijem,³⁷⁸ who, in turn, is central to the development of the Jewish-Argentine novel:

al moroso visitante le ocurrió pedir disculpas por la tardanza. Y explicó que se había encontrado de camino con un escritor que solía pasar algunas temporadas en su pueblo, con un *bosiak* genial que era el ídolo de los muchachos de su tiempo [...]. Pronunció su nombre mirando a los muchachos, que se sintieron sacudidos y conmovidos, no así Reb Israel que oía al huésped como quien oye llover: *Máximo Gorky*. [...] Gorky no venía solo. Y llano y efusivo como era, le había presentado con grandes elogios y grandes risas al personaje que lo acompañaba, al parecer muy amigo suyo, un hombrecillo que tendría unos diez años más que aquel, [...] que también era escritor, pero que no escribía en ruso sino en idish. Y que firmaba sus escritos con el nombre de *Scholem Aleijem*. (11)

³⁷⁷ The same irony towards Russian geographic names transpires in a parodic short story “Redención” from a series “A la manera de...” that is discussed later in this chapter. The protagonist is from the “gobierno de Kartimskrasolvichegosk, distrito de Vokovosnesenk-Anskrevosantchursk, comuna de Ortupinskaieskaia-Tienslavpopol, aldea de Tartine” (*Claridad*, núm. 167, September 22, 1928).

³⁷⁸ In 1923, Vigodsky’s review of Scholem Aleijem’s *Еврейские дети* [*Jewish Children*] translated by the author’s daughter, appeared (“Шолом-Алейхем. Еврейские дети. Перевод дочери автора Л. К. под редакцией К. Бархина. Изд. акц. об-ва “Накануне”. Берлин. 1923 г. Стр. 308”. *Петроградская Правда*, 11 окт. 1923.) In it, Vygódski says that Aleijem had been many times called “Jewish Chekhov” (“еврейский Чехов”). However, he does insist that Aleijem’s work gives in “the subtleness of his brush and the depth of his humor” (“в тонкости кисти и в глубине юмора”)

This episode of utilizing a Russian writer as a sort of “recommendation letter” for an Argentine literature is representative of the relationship between Russian and Argentine literatures. Although Gorky is the one who first attracts everyone’s attention, the one who actually helps to rule the situation out in this narrative is Scholem. But if Russian authors are the ones who laugh with a bitter laugh, Argentines learn to swallow the bitterness and laugh to have a good laugh, not to cry or make anybody cry or feel guilty. This transpires in Tiempo’s description of Scholem Aleijem:³⁷⁹

El humorismo de Scholem Aleijem, afirmó un crítico acotado, refleja no sólo su genio personal sino el genio, en su sentido etimológico, del pueblo judío. Pero, ¿quiénes son los humoristas? La gente que nos ayuda con su genio a añadir una hora de felicidad, de distensión, al calendario descolorido de nuestra existencia, constituye un mundo aparte. [...] No nos muestran sus penas, sus llagas, sus desazones. Siempre dispondrán de una sonrisa, de una ocurrencia genial para disipar nuestro mal humor. (24)

Tiempo in his *Mi tío Scholem Aleijem* puts the humor of the Argentine literature in the limelight by exclaiming at the very end of the book: “Un nuevo Génesis debería empezar con estas palabras: Scholem Aleijem dijo: Hágase la risa. Y la risa se hizo. Después vino la luz.” (39). The Argentine literature laughed even before it was born – that is what lays foundation for the bridge that connects Russian literature translations with Argentine parody.

The idea of translating his own name also evinces his playful approach to language, culture, authority, and his own identity. Already in his first book of poetry, there are at least three different pseudonyms under which he published his poems, such as Gregorio Poter

³⁷⁹ On Sholem Aleichem’s humorism also see David Roskies’ *Against the Apocalypse. Responses to Catastrophe in Modern Jewish Culture*.

(hijo), Lear Siotisurle and César Tiempo. In spite of the fact that this book – which combines works written with the same hand, but signed with different names – was never published, Tiempo managed to repeat the trick in the first issue of *Claridad*, which published Clara Beter’s poems alongside César Tiempo’s and finished it all off with Israel Zetlin’s article.

Behind his choice of names there is a strong conscience of translation. The pseudonym by which he ended up being known more than by his real name,³⁸⁰ César Tiempo, is a translation of his last name from German (with a mix of Yiddish) into Spanish. *Zeit* in German and Idish means ‘time’ (‘tiempo’ in Spanish) and *lin* is ‘to stop’ (‘cesar’)³⁸¹. Thus,

³⁸⁰ In the aforementioned letter that he wrote to Jacobo Timerman, the Editor of *La Opinión*, on March 7, 1976, he points out that César Tiempo is not his pseudonym, but his real name: “Por otra parte ¿para qué escribir Israel Zeitlin (Cesar Tiempo) como si fuera un alias? Yo soy César Tiempo desde hace más de cincuenta años y todos mis documentos civiles y militares se encuentran a nombre de César Tiempo que no es un seudónimo (un falso nombre) sino mi nombre, al revés de los Papas cuyos verdaderos nombres la mayor parte de la cristiandad ignora. Y no es que me avergüence de mi origen, al contrario, desciendo de rabinos, de masoretas, de talmudistas y de exégetas. Pero me llamo César Tiempo, nombre que adopté a los quince años y seguí usando toda la vida a despecho de nazis y resentidos.”

³⁸¹ César Tiempo talks about this change in “Paseo alrededor de los demás” in *La Opinión* from December 10, 1972: “En esa época yo usaba muchos seudónimos porque no tomaba en serio la literatura y no esperaba nada de ella. Como me llamo Zeitlin – *seit* quiere decir ‘tiempo’ en alemán y *lin* es del verbo ‘cesar’ – decidí llamarme César Tiempo. Eso fue en el año 1926” (qtd. in Schwartzman 7). Nevertheless, for Manuela Fingueret the question of the change of his name to César Tiempo does not have definitive explanations: “no hay una única hipótesis irrefutable que permita entender el cambio de nombre y apellido. Se hicieron diferentes conjeturas. Si *tzait* en idish significa “tiempo”, podría ser que con ese deseo de ser parte indisoluble de un idioma que amaba, el español, se le ocurriera esa mutación. Aunque, en ese supuesto, el cambio de Israel por César no tendría explicación. Algunos creen que fue un heterónimo sobre su propia persona, que le permitiría encajar su obra en espacios de ruptura sin ser identificado. También están los que consideran que respondió a una de las tantas humoradas que jalonaron su vida, pero en un hombre tan racional resulta difícil adherir a esta última opinión. Distintas disquisiciones se han hecho sobre el tema, y cada quien podrá elegir una opción o pensar alguna otra a medida que se avance durante este viaje por su obra y su historia personal. Lo cierto es que esta cuestión, aún controversial, no ha obtenido respuestas concretas a través de los entrevistados o en las páginas de tantos manuscritos y cartas que se han investigado” (42). In her essay “César Tiempo: El poeta de la judería porteña” in the collection of essays from the Tercer encuentro de escritores judíos latinoamericanos called *El imaginario judío en la literatura de América Latina*, calls this name change “una ofrenda a su amado y querido compatriota, porteño *goi*, su interlocutor predilecto. César Tiempo no les escribe sólo a los judíos. Describe a los judíos desde una memoria ancestral y desde una realidad cotidiana, para que ese espíritu sea comprendido por el habitante no judío de su querida Buenos Aires” (152). For Manuela Fingueret this name change reflects “su deseo de integración. [...] el deseo de fundirse con el otro, para ser uno solo en esa ciudad de muchos que empieza a crecer desmesuradamente”

Zeitlin becomes Tiempo Cesar, which he inverts (or the inversion may have taken place in the last name itself, Linzeit, since as we see later on, he played with the order of letters in his names as well) and he finally gets to César Tiempo, a name that, ironically, makes him immortal through his poetry and thus, does bring time to a halt. The name Clara Beter,³⁸² his other pseudonym, which acquired the dimensions of a real person, also reveals a translator's thinking, with "Beter" alluding to Gorky which in Russian means bitter and in its turn, is also a pseudonym – Gorky's real name was Peshkov. According to Solana Schvartzman, "biter" alludes to Tiempo's own name: "biter – "amargo" en ídish – juega con el contrario de César, tomado como sinónimo de *ziser*, "dulce" en ídish" (28).

His first name, Israel, for Tiempo is born a pseudonym. In one interview, he tells *Revista Mercado* the biblical story in which Jacob asks God to change his name. God listens to him and gives him the name of Israel, thus legalizing the first pseudonym, says Tiempo. He continues: "Irónicamente, Israel es mi nombre; después de Clara Beter, después de César Tiempo. Es lo mismo" ("La verdadera historia de Clara Beter"). In the same way that we cannot any longer say what is original and what is translation, in the case of César Tiempo, his own name loses its supposed authority, originality, capability of creation. It is all the same.³⁸³ And rather, his own right to name himself grants him greater capacity to create, while a name given to him by others loses its power.

(152).

³⁸² For Manuela Fingueret, all the three names, Israel Zeitlin, César Tiempo and Clara Beter, express his "deseo de ser la voz de la gente de esos pueblos que amaba: los judíos, los argentinos. El juglar de esos bares frecuentados por obreros y poetas, actores de los teatros de la calle Corrientes, cantores y jugadores de ajedrez con los que se siente identificado. Esos personajes de Buenos Aires de los que también hablan sus amigos, escritores que delinearán un decir porteño y popular: Roberto Arlt, Enrique González Túñon, Enrique Santos Discépolo" (152-153).

³⁸³ On one occasion, César Tiempo says: "mi padre (el de Zeitlin y el de César Tiempo)" (Schvartzman 28).

Turning to the story of Clara Beter, one also turns to the story of parody of Russian literature taking part in the molding of Argentine literature. In the previous statement, Tiempo declared that Clara Beter came before Israel. More than just a pseudonym, Clara Beter is a name that gave life not only to a person, a Russian³⁸⁴ prostitute living in Buenos Aires, but also to a whole new kind of poetry. Just as Borges can say that the original was not loyal to the translation, César Tiempo can consider his real name as an alter ego and his pseudonym his real name, as he does telling the story of Clara Beter. He starts with “Cierta día mi alter ego recibe un regalo inesperado” (17), then says: “La poesía, tal cual bajó del colodrillo a las manos del embaidor, que aun no había cumplido los 18 años” (17), later he adds: “Al adolescente entremetido le fue fácil deslizar entre los originales de ‘Claridad’ los versos firmados por Clara Beter” (18) and finally calls the creator of Clara Beter “el autor de la superchería” (18)³⁸⁵.

In his *Clara Beter y otras fatamorganas* César Tiempo, almost fifty years after the creation of Clara Beter, tells us about the moment of conception of Clara Beter³⁸⁶. It happened when one day he received an unexpected gift – *Plato’s Dialogs*. In it, he came

³⁸⁴ I leave it as Russian, using the classification used at the time when the word “Russian” could include people from Ukraine, Poland, or other Eastern-European countries. Although Fingueret in her “César Tiempo: El poeta de la judería porteña” calls her “[u]craniana (como su autor)”, Schwartzman specifies that Clara Beter was of a Polish origin: “Hago hincapié en el origen polaco de la poeta porque, como señala el propio Tiempo, Zum Felde [...] llega a inventar una biografía de Clara Beter atribuyéndole un peregrino origen polaco, a pesar de que los versos hablan explícitamente de la Ucrania natal” (16).

³⁸⁵ César Tiempo tells the story of Clara Beter’s creation in various places. As Solana Schwartzman says, it appears in an article in *Argentina de hoy* (1952), in César Tiempo’s *Clara Beter y otras fatamorganas* (1974), in the second edition of *Versos de una...* (1977) with the author’s note, and in his *Manos de obra* (1980).

³⁸⁶ *Clara Beter*, the play helps us understand the relation between Tiempo and his own creation, Clara Beter, through the relationship between Clara and Abel in the play. As we find out, Abel is also a writer of a Russian origin. When Abel says that he wants Clara to read some of her poetry, she protests: “Pero si no conozco ninguna. Usted es tan egoísta que no quiere que las conozca”. To which Abel answers: “En cuanto las conozca me va perder [...] toda estimación. Un hombre haciendo versos de mujer... Y, lo que es peor, sintiéndolos...”

across a phrase that has been attributed to Socrates: “A poet, to be a real poet, should not put his speech in verse, but rather invent fictions” (17). This is when a thought of Clara Beter came to his mind.

Clara Beter’s poems appeared in the very first issue of *Claridad* with a poem “Visión” in which she dreams of the moment when all women will be equal – “la ramera,

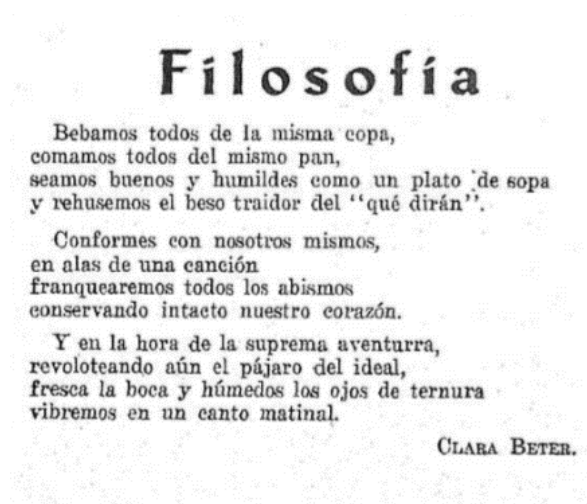


Figure 2. Clara Beter’s poem “Filosofía” published in the first issue of *Claridad*

la virgin, la aristócrata altiva y la humilde mucama” (*Claridad*, no. 1). In the same issue there appears another poem by Clara Beter, titled “Filosofía” (fig. 2) that shows the same aspiration for a communist way of living: “Bebamos todos de la misma copa, / comamos todos del mismo pan, seamos buenos y humildes como un plato de sopa / y rehusemos el beso traidor del

“qué dirán”. The poem clearly dialogs with Tolstoy’s doctrines that call for a simple life: “Conformes con nosotros mismos, / en alas de una canción / franquearemos todos los abismos / conservando intacto nuestro corazón” (*Claridad* num. 1). Although these poems do not revolutionize the form,³⁸⁷ we can still call them avant-garde in the same sense as the Boedo group is avant-garde.

Clara Beter’s poems attracted the attention of the writers of the Boedo group.

³⁸⁷ As Margartet Litvin helped me note, “Filosofía” emulates the Russian way of using rhyme and meter in poetry.

Castelnuovo, upon reading them for the first time, “se desata en un elogio ardoroso y señala con la mejor buena fe el poema subrepticio como un paradigma digno de oponerse a los nuevos poetas fanáticos de la imagen por la imagen” (*Clara Beter y otras fatamorganas* 18) and then desperately tries to find her. Clara Beter became an important presence in the literary life of Buenos Aires. As César Tiempo himself says:

La curiosidad suscitada por la aparición del extraño personaje fue extraordinaria. A la editorial llegaban cartas de los lugares más increíbles de América, cartas en las se expresaba su solidaridad con la autora de *Versos de una...* Algunos, en su afán redentorista, le hacían ofertas de matrimonio, piadosamente dispuestos a salvarla, a borrar su pasado, a proporcionarle una vida tranquila, cuadrículada y burguesa. (qtd. in Schvartzman 14)

Clara Beter became the muse of Boedo, that was, according to Tiempo, “totalmente integrado por hombres, como si el amor por la humanidad que proclamaban con sus plumas excluyese su amor por las mujeres, como si la única compañera posible fuese la Revolución, con mayúscula (*Manos de obra* 56). The only exception was Clara Beter. César Tiempo made a note of that and added more to demonstrate the extent that his little trick reached:

La venta del engendro alcanzó cifras increíbles para la época. Zum Felde le dedicó un segundo artículo³⁸⁸ en “El Día”, de Montevideo. Georg H. Neuendorff, desde

³⁸⁸ The first said: Alberto Zum Felde wrote in “El Día” in Montevideo:

Por estos versos sea acaso redimida de su infamia que es la infamia de la sociedad entera, cuyo monstruoso egoísmo la ha condenado a remar en las galeras trágicas del vicio en el viraje largo a través de los ríos negros de la noche, fosforescentes de luces eléctricas. Desgarradora tragedia la de esa alma de mujer, hondamente sensible y fuertemente intelectual, presa de la infamia del comercio sexual, envuelta en la túnica de Neso del vicio errante y mercenario, arrojada al margen de los detritus humanos. (*Clara Beter y otras fatamorganas*

Dresde, tradujo los poemas al alemán con destino a una editorial suiza, la misma que publicó su versión de *Las lanzas coloradas*, de Uslar Pietri. El poeta Roberto Ibáñez le dedicó un estudio en “La Pluma”, de Montevideo. (*Clara Beter y otras fatamorganas* 21)

Clara Beter even made it into the list of authors discussed by David Vigodsky³⁸⁹ in his *Literatura de España y América Latina*. When discussing *Claridad*, Vigodsky says: “Es una revista tipo “Clarté”, de Barbusse, en cuyas páginas van formándose algunos escritores jóvenes, entre cuyos nombres podríamos mencionar los de Yunque, Barletta, Clara Beter, poeta del pueblo, de sus suburbios, y que a través de sus versos exteriorizan su protesta” (*Claridad* 207). But the irony here lies in the fact that David Vigodsky makes this comment in a letter to César Tiempo written on June 16, 1931: “Su libro de Ud he leído con sumo interés pues estoy [sic] también judío y su poesía emocioname doblemente. He leído también las poesías de Clara Better [sic] y he hablado sobre el libro en mi folleto sobre las obras de España y de América” (SCT). Clara Beter also became part of *Repertorio Americano* where Alberto Guillén, the famous Peruvian poet, repeats some of the lines of *Versos de una...*

Even Roberto Arlt, when the mystery of Clara Beter was still unrevealed, suggested setting up a brothel and using the money earned to give her a prize (Fingueret 44), which again leads us to the world where fiction and literature merge and produce meaning. As

19)

³⁸⁹ When talking about Tiempo, we should not forget about the crucial role he played in maintaining direct communication with the Russian literary world. It is seen in his correspondence not only with Abramson, but also with David Vigodsky. For example, David Vigodsky writes him a letter in which he informs César Tiempo that he had received and read his pamphlet about Stefan Zweig.

Fingueret says,

Boedo consiguió en Clara Beter la musa inspiradora de una mujer sin cuerpo conocido, pero con un alma llena de cicatrices por la vida de vicio, sometimiento y vergüenza que la sociedad depositaba de un modo hipócrita en los prostíbulos o bares cercanos al río a los que asistían también esos “niños bien”, herederos de fortunas destacables. Muy pocas se atrevieron a saltar el cerco del sojuzgamiento de género y pagaron muy caro ese grito de libertad. Clara Beter fue un mito de tal magnitud que atravesó Boedo como un fantasma y entró a la literatura para siempre a través de las leyendas literarias locales. (61)

Leonardo Candiano y Lucas Peralta note that Clara Beter’s book of poetry is “uno de los libros más importantes de toda la práctica estética boedista; pero su relevancia no se debe sólo al hecho artístico en sí, sino también a que, por la forma en que fue producido, derriba uno de los pilares fundamentales en los que se apoyaba el Grupo de Boedo: la ineluctable necesidad de la experiencia para narrar literariamente” (qtd. in Schwartzman 23n20).

Clara Beter was one of the first books in the series “Los Nuevos” that was created by Zamora in 1924. The series published the work of young Argentine writers. It is important to point out that this is the time when the Boedo group was conceived and the majority of the writers of the series were representatives of this group. It is notable that Castelnuovo, in his introduction to Clara Beter’s poetry, sees the work as a representation of “un afán sincero de reflejar la vida de nuestro pueblo. Particularmente la vida del pueblo que sufre y que trabaja. [...] recién ahora, se empieza a cultivar la sinceridad entre nosotros.” According to him, the voice of the *pueblo*, the one that Clara Beter represents, is what can bring Argentine literature independence. Thus, it is parody that turns out to be at the base of sincerity and it is Russian literature translation that gives the language to the so-called authentically Argentine writers. We can say that this language that parodies Russian literature based on Russian literature translations, is the one at the base of the

language of Argentine writers. And we should remember, as Estelle Irizarry exclaims: “este mismo César Tiempo de *Versos de una...* [...] es Académico de Número y vicepresidente de la Academia Porteña del Lunfardo!”

And since, according to César Tiempo, “la heroína de papel impreso se apoyaba en una heroína de carne y hueso, en Tatiana Pavlova, como para nutrirse de su sangre y de su cal hasta adquirir esencia y presencia, erguirse, caminar, existir,” it is a parody of a Russian-Italian actress that becomes the protagonist and the very author of the first “authentically Argentine” work in *Claridad*.

The fact that in the same first issue of *Claridad* where Clara Beter’s poems are published, there also appears César Tiempo’s poem “Descanso dominical” evinces the absolute independence acquired by Clara Beter. It is decisively different in style and vocabulary from Clara Beter’s poems. The structures are more complex and the vocabulary elevated. For example, it starts with “Empolvada de hastío / la tarde se consuma blandamente / en el escaparate de mis ojos. / Con cuarenta centavos por fortuna / ¿Qué regocijo habré de procurarme / sino cuadrangular líricamente / la empalagosa cinta ciudadana?” (*Claridad*, no. 1). Its abundance of metaphors and the centrality of the city-theme put this poem in the same row with Spanish avant-garde poets in the 1920s, such as Gerardo Diego, Guillermo de Torre, Federico García Lorca, among others. Although there is a general fascination with the city, many poets also see a city that is scared, a city full of suffering. For Lorca, for example, the city is threatening and destructive. Likewise for César Tiempo the city is cruel: “¡Crueldad burguesa de los edificios / que impiden a la calle el desperezo!” (*Claridad* num.1). It brings fear: “Cuando un monstruo mecánico / surca el

férreo bigrama de las vías / se precipita el tímido silencio / a las alcantarillas aledañas, / ¡providencial y sólida refugio!” (*Claridad* num. 1). Like Alberti’s city, the city of César Tiempo brings loneliness. Alberti says: “Viento contra viento. / Yo, torre sin mando en medio. / Remolinos de ciudades / Baján los desfiladeros. / Ciudades del viento sur, / Que me vieron. / Pero los pueblos lo desconocen y él desconoce los pueblos”. And César Tiempo’s only friend is the street:

“Mi corazón quisiera treparse a ese tranvía / e ir a pasear la calle / a la única amiga que ha sabido / empapelarlo de romanticismo” (*Claridad*, no. 1). It is precisely the images and the metaphors that bring Tiempo’s poem and avant-garde poetry together: “el escaparate de mis ojos”, “empalagosa cinta ciudadana”, “en un rincón del cielo / está mohino el sol cual si lo hubiera / sacado a puntapiés del horizonte” (*Claridad*, no. 1).

As a matter of fact, as several letters from César Tiempo’s archive³⁹⁰ attest, he was in close contact with Ramón Gómez de la Serna and his wife Luisa Sofovich³⁹¹ whom Alejandra Pizarnik describes as “una mujer valiente e inteligentísima” (qtd. in *La vida sin Ramón* 13). Ramón Gómez de la Serna calls him “Mi querido y admirado Cesar Tiempo” (SCT) and ends some of his letters with a warm “Con admiración y afecto le abraza Ramón,”³⁹² and others with “un devoto amigo y admirador que le abraza” (SCT).

Another link between César Tiempo and Ramón Gómez de la Serna is their interest in Russian themes. In Gómez de la Serna’s collection of *Seis novelas falsas*, there is a false

³⁹⁰ Subfondo César Tiempo. Fondo Centro de Estudios Nacionales. Archivos y Colecciones Particulares. Biblioteca Nacional de la República Argentina.

³⁹¹ There is a 1967 short video where Luisa shows around their Buenos Aires apartment <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GL79qiMrRZQ>.

³⁹² See Appendix B.

Russian novel whose parodic atmosphere is similar to Woody Allen's *Life and Death* (1975). Ramón Gómez de la Serna, like Borges and many others, invents names that only sound Russian: el señor Varilich, el señor Dorisly, Yadsy Yeskinef, Yusut Pedronilevit, Marionna Kesavell, Lisabet Kochanchovna, Vanda Ludvica. Ivantine Nachapriska, el caballero Tolkuchi, Marcian Archivzlesco. This proliferation of names comes not only from the actual abundance of characters in Russian novels and short stories, but also from the fact that the same name in Russian has different forms depending on the context it is used in. For instance, the name Katherine, in a formal setting in Russian would be Ekaterina; friends and family would call her Katia; affectionately, she'd be called Katienka or Katiusha; she could also be called Katerina or Katerinochka.³⁹³ As in all the parodies of Russian literature, this example is full of stereotypes that we also see in Clara Beter's poetry. First, a drowned person: "¡Pobre Elena Avantovna! – dijo la voz compasiva de Lisabet, recordando a la que todos sabían que se había ahogado ayer en el Verneva" (6 *falsas novelas* 44). Then, a bear invasion and Cossacks: "El síndico Leónidas Sanevich contó que en Grussal habían entrado los osos blancos en el pueblo, y seguían palabras textuales del cosaco Wladimiro Dimitrichi, "eran como estatuas de nieve animadas por el hambre" (6 *falsas novelas* 45).

La *Falsa novela rusa* was the first of the cycle of five false novels. It appeared as an avant-gardist and provocative text, says Miguel Ángel Echegaray (*Dos falsas novelas*). All six – rusa, china, tártara, negra, alemana, americana – appeared in Paris in 1927.

³⁹³ In Aleksey Burago's play based on Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment*, performed in the summer of 2016 by the Russian Arts and Theater Studio, they actually gave a handout with a chart showing all possible names by which each character can be called.

However, Gómez de la Serna's interest in Russian literature also stems from Europe's general interest raised at the time in the East and the trend of exoticism. That is why in her Introduction to the *6 falsas novelas*, Ioana Zlotescu Simatu calls them "las Falsas novelas exóticas" (28). La falsa novela rusa is also an exotization of a Russian reality in which the protagonist, opportunely called "El extranjero," arrives at the house of Gran Fédor, coming from a different town. He does feel like a foreigner and everything seems strange and different to him: "El extranjero sintió que aquello tenía un espesor de psicologías diferentes y enrevesadas. Sentía que respiraba almas irrespirables. Él, aun con el frío que hacía fuera, hubiera abierto los balcones. Notaba el extranjero que todos trataban de reconocerle con el poco disimulo de los perros que husmean al nuevo compañero" (*6 falsas novelas* 43).

Returning to the story of Clara Beter, it is a perfect example for tracing the path of Russian literature in Argentina. Although Estelle Irizarry rightfully laments the fact that *Versos de una...* "ha caído en el olvido" (Irizarry), it is erroneous to say that it disappeared "sin dejar apenas rastro de su antigua gloria" (Irizarry), since it left a major imprint on the development of parody in Argentine literature. The fact that it is attributed to a prostitute, goes along the lines of the Argentine writers' interest in the marginal side of society. The fact that this prostitute is Russian³⁹⁴ and writes poetry is part of the love and admiration for Russian literature. Moreover, her poetry itself is pregnant with Russian literature references. As was mentioned earlier, the very name Beter is an allusion to Gorky. The

³⁹⁴ This is what they called her, but in reality she was Polish, as Solana Schwartzman says: "Hago hincapié en el origen polaco de la poeta, porque, como señala el propio Tiempo, Zum Felde [...] llega a inventar una biografía de Clara Beter atribuyéndole un peregrino origen polcao, a pesar de que los versos hablan explícitamente de la Ucrania natal" (16).

very first poem has not only direct references to Russia, but also implicit allusions to Russian literature. For example, Clara evokes her childhood memories from faraway Ukraine: Katiuchka, a childhood friend from number 8 Poltávaia Úlitcha,³⁹⁵ the kopeks spent in the Bogdanovsky Dom, Pétinka, Tatiana's boyfriend. César Tiempo himself says that *Kátinka* was a reference to Tolstoy's *Resurrection*. In the article "La poesía de una mujer de la calle," published in *Claridad*, num. 130 in February of 1927, César Tiempo (signed as Israel Zeitlin) says that Clara Beter carries out some of Tolstoy's advice: "El pensador, el artista no deben cernirse en la serenidad de las alturas olímpicas como tenemos costumbre de imaginárnoslo. El pensador, el artista, deben sufrir con los hombres para salvarlos y consolarlos³⁹⁶" (qtd. in Schwartzman 100). In *Clara Beter*, the play that I turn to next, César Tiempo alludes both to Dostoevsky and Tolstoy when Clara says "Pertenezco a una raza que solo sabe ser humillada y ofendida; para recibir heridas y ofrecer el pecho para nuevas heridas" (SCT).

Lastly, the fact that it is all part of César Tiempo's so-called literary prank, that nevertheless entered the so-called "canon" of that time, reflects the mechanism of the development of Argentine literature, with a parody as a base for creation. And in the case of Clara Beter it is a parody of the translations of Russian literature. It was written specifically to fit into the magazine whose authors had Russian literature as a model to follow, and thus was written in the same key as the translations of Russian literature

³⁹⁵ It should be spelled "Úlitsa" which means *street* in Russian.

³⁹⁶ This, by the way, is a very good translation of Tolstoy's words: "Мыслитель и художник никогда не будут спокойно сидеть на олимпийских высотах, как мы привыкли воображать; мыслитель и художник должен страдать вместе с людьми для того, чтобы найти спасение или утешение." (*Так что же нам делать?* 282)

published there, especially since César Tiempo did not speak Russian himself, but had to write as a Russian woman would. And the language he had to imitate was taken from Russian literature translations. As César Tiempo himself tells his readers in his *Clara Beter y otras Fatamorganas*, he could easily enter that context precisely by writing Russian literature in Spanish:

Kátinka no podía ser otra, claro está, que la protagonista de *Resurrección* – la entonces tan trajinada novela de Tolstoi – y la tónica de los versos engarzaba con puntualidad prefabricada en la estética redentorista de Boedo (o *Boedowskaia*, como decía Enrique Méndez Calzada, aludiendo a la devoción por Dostoievski, Gorki, Chéjov, Tolstoi y compañía, de los integrantes del grupo). Al adolescente entremetido le fue fácil deslizar entre los originales de “Claridad” los versos firmados por Clara Beter, seudónimo de transparente reminiscencia gorkiana. (Beter equivale a amargo). (*Clara Beter y otras Fatamorganas* 18)

As César Tiempo’s story demonstrates, parody of Russian poetry becomes the soil for other parodies. “La vida misma es una fatamorgana, un gran engaño, un fraude” (*Todo es historia* 24), and not only in the work of others, but in the work of César Tiempo himself. Among his archives in the Biblioteca Nacional in Buenos Aires,³⁹⁷ there is also an unpublished play called “Clara Beter” written in December of 1938 that in a certain way reflects the story of César Tiempo’s creation of Clara Beter. In it, Lea, the protagonist, does not stop singing in Russian. But the lyrics that appear are the ones of “Divina eres tú” written by Enrique Rodríguez in 1938, and then Manuel Acuña’s “Nocturno a Rosario.” The song says: “Pues bien, yo necesito / decirte que te quiero / decirte que te adoro / con

³⁹⁷ As Manuela Fingueret tells in the last chapter of her book devoted to César Tiempo, under the title *César Tiempo. El poeta de los tres nombres*, the archives were opened to public in 2012 after been donated to the Biblioteca Nacional in Buenos Aires in 1996: “Gracias al esfuerzo de los expertos que desandaron ochenta y dos cajas llenas de papeles, ha sido posible completar el mundo de este escritor tan prolífico en sus aristas menos conocidas. En esas cajas apareció valiosa información sobre algunos vínculos literarios o escrituras de Tiempo que contribuyen a entender mejor a este intelectual con una producción y una vida ecléctica” (Fingueret 98).

todo el corazón.”

Coronel and Lea’s mother Débora both yell her to stop singing and Coronel adds: “Que cantara de vez en cuando no sería nada. Pero cantar en ruso, en ruso.” But Débora does not agree with him: “Si cantara en ruso sería yo la primera en alentarla para que siga. Qué tiene usted que decir de las canciones rusas? Ochi chorni (Tararea). Gorachi Búblichí (Tararea).” The fact that César Tiempo decides to insert this song calls for special attention for several reasons. First of all, “Ochi chorni” is one of the most well-known Russian romances and the link between Russian romance and Argentine tango also passes through translation. Secondly, it is a romance with roots that lead to Ukraine. Although it is an unknown fact to many Russians, its chorus comes from a poem written by a Ukrainian poet Evguenii Grebinka in 1843. What calls for even more attention is Débora’s or César Tiempo’s parody of it: the line that follows, says “hot bagels” in Russian translation, clearly, a different version from the original.

The question of translation reappears in the play several times. For example, in the middle of the second act there appears a couple that has no connection to the plot and their conversation interrupts the play:

El.- Querida. Querida.

Ella.- Tesoro, precioso.

El.- ¿Con qué palabra vamos a despedirnos hoy?

Ella.- Ayer nos despedimos con un “Good Bye”, antes de ayer con un “Au revoir.

El.- ¿Y el jueves?

Ella.- El jueves con un “Auf wiedersehen.

El.- ¿Y hoy?

Ella.- “Sayonara”, como los japoneses. De todas las palabras de despedida es esa la mas dulce y la mas triste, querido. Quiere decir: ya que tiene que ser así.

El.- Me gusta mas que todas. /Sayonara/

Ella.- ¿Verdad, encanto? (SCT).

Also, as it turns out that even the Mayor used to be a literary translator before becoming mayor. At an event organized to honor of Clara Beter's success, he says:

Señorita Clara Beter, señoras, señoritas, señores: Insólito puede parecer el gesto de la primera autoridad de esta villa, consagrando públicamente el talento de una artista de la pluma en una época que profesa el culto de la materia. Pero quien les habla no ha proclamado nunca el pragmatismo su evangelio y supo en juventud rendir culto a las mas bellas deidades. No obstante mis severos estudios, cuando estaba lejos de mi imaginación llegar a la Intendencia de esta hermosa ciudad, supe traducir a Oscar Wilde, el poeta de "El ruiseñor y la rosa" y ganar seis primeros accésit en y una flor natural en los juegos florales de mi aldea natal, con una Oda a la modestía. (SCT)

Clara Beter, from the play, can also be seen as a metaphor for Russian literature.

Coronel says: "Esos rusos, no es por decirlo, pero cuando salen buenos, son bárbaros. Bárbaros. Qué me dicen? Una pobrecita maestra de la escuela metida toda la vida en su casa, revolucionando al país con su talento." The fact that no one actually read anything by the Russian teacher Clara Beter but so many admired her apocryphal writing, can be seen as a representation of the reception of Russian translations in Latin America. A piece of Russian writing is admired, but it is forgotten that no one actually reads it directly and that it is actually written by a translator. For example, Clara asks her boyfriend Liberato if he has actually read any of his writings after all the compliments and congratulations he gave her on her success. He answers: "No; ni falta que hace. En Santa Fé todos los diarios traen su primera página tu retrato y noticias de la fiesta de hoy" (3). The same happens with Directora that to Coronel's question whether she reads anything by Clara Beter, says: "Como leerlas, no las has leído. Pero, ¿qué falta hace? Los mas grandes críticos han dicho que es un portento. Sale su retrato en todas partes. Qué más?" (6).

Although at her origin, Clara Beter is inherently linked to Russian literature and the

poetics of Boedo's group, and in the play Clara becomes a Macedonian character. She is not a character that wants to be a real person, she is a real person that turns into a character, which, in turn, gives her life. When Abel, her creator, tells her to forgive her for taking away her life and turning her into a character ("Perdóneme, Clara, perdóneme. Que viento de locura me habrá impulsado a envolverla en todo eso? Porque tiene que ser usted la víctima de mi delirio?"), she disagrees: "Usted me ha dado la vida, Abel. Yo era un leño seco; necesitaba el contacto de un fuego nuevo para abrasarme. Me lo dio su poesía que ya está en mí como un hijo" (SCT). Then, when later, Liberato, her boyfriend, wants to attack Abel, she screams: "No, Abel me dio la vida; me mostró luz, te enseñó a quererme. No lo toques" (SCT). In this, Clara Beter is like one of Ramón Gómez de la Serna's characters in his *False Russian Novel*, María Yarsilovna:

Era la imagen que todos contemplaban, la imagen bellísima que se busca en los pueblos para adormecerse en su tertulia. Parecía que todos estaban al lado de aquella mujer como los que velan una enfermedad o un sueño. [...]

-- ¿Se habrá creído personaje de una novela? Muchas veces por eso se quedan tan escuálidas y con esa mirada de torre de castillo – oyó el extranjero que decía a su lado Maradiski a Yusuf Pedrnilevit. (*6 falsas novelas* 44)

But if Clara acquired her life being a real character, María Yarsilovna seemed to have partially lost hers. The difference lies in that Clara *became* that character and María thought herself to be that character. That is why Macedonio expelled all the characters are halfway between life and fiction. He wanted them to be either really fiction or really alive. María, thinking herself a character from a novel, does not live the reality of a fiction that is the

reality of the rest of the characters of the novel: “El extranjero miró a María Yarsilovna y contempló su indiferencia. Se veía que era una mujer terrible, pues ni siquiera volvía la cabeza al oír aquel reloj, con el que se hubiese podido hacer la conquista de una virgencita, dándosele a cambio de su inocencia” (6 *falsas novelas* 44) or later: “Todos hablaban, menos María Yarsilovna y el extranjero; pero el silencio de María iba solo por su camino y no contestaba a nada, como no contestaba una mujer que se ha desmayado o se ha convertido en estatua de mármol” (6 *falsas novelas* 45). At the end, the narrator says that she was “máscara y a la vez estaba desenmascarada” (6 *falsas novelas* 50). In other words, not being a real a character, but rather a character that thinks herself a character, when she takes off her mask, discovers another mask beneath. Macedonio’s character of Eterna is eternal precisely because her “personality is a fabric of *personae* in the original, etymological sense, masks she can change at will, ‘through’ which she ‘sounds’ her roles. But her being remains independent of her *personae*; she is Eterna – eternal – precisely because she is not identical with the fictive masks she wears” (Engelbert 167-168). Engelbert’s footnote brings us back to the first chapter and the image of the mask with an absence of the face behind:

Heinrich Zimmer in *Philosophies of India* writes, “The term ‘personality’ is derived from the Latin *persona*. *Persona*, literally, means the mask that is worn over the face by the actor on the Greek or Roman stage.... The mask is what bears the features or make-up of the role, the traits of the hero or heroine, servant or messenger, while the actor behind remains anonymous, an unknown being intrinsically aloof from the play. (qtd. in Engelbert 167)

With Clara Beter, César Tiempo arrived at what Macedonio aimed for in his work: to expose the fiction of the reality and reality of fiction. In his play *Clara Beter*, Abel writes a novel that he will publish under Clara Beter's name. As César Tiempo recounts in his *Manos de obra, Claridad* "alcanzó a anunciar una novela y a publicar el primer capítulo de la misma. La novela se llamaría simplemente *Una*." (57) *Clara Beter*, the play, thus actually tells the truth of the reality that turns out fictional. If "A la manera de Tolstoy" makes fun of Tolstoy's idea of redemption in literature, Tiempo manages to ridicule it in real life, since Clara Beter was also receiving, according to his *Manos de obra*, offers of marriage: "Algunos, en su afán redentorista, la hacían ofertas de matrimonio, piadosamente dispuestos a salvarla, a borrar su pasado, a proporcionarle una vida tranquila, cuadrículada y burguesa" (57).

The humor and parody that started with Clara Beter continues throughout César Tiempo's work. In his *Clara Beter y otras fotomorganas*, César Tiempo first tells us the story of Clara Beter and then passes to microbiografías de chaleco. In this way, he does not distinguish between fictitious and real life and tells a life of a real person in the same humorous way as he talks about his literary hoax with Clara Beter. As Estelle Irizarry notes, his "'microbiografías' se nutren de las palabras fáciles, el juego de palabras, el chiste y la picardía. [...] Cada biografía da lugar a una proliferación de datos inventivos de gran humorismo" (Irizarry).

The way Estelle Irizarry sees *Versos de una...* as a cornerstone of César Tiempo's poetry, we can see Clara Beter as one of the cornerstones for the development of parody in the Argentine literature. Clara Beter obviates the fact that Russian literature translations

and parody went hand-in-hand in Argentina. In her book *La broma literaria en nuestros días*, Irizarry underlines the fact that Hispanic literature is especially rich in parody: “Lo que nos parece de veras notable es que hayan dado tantas bromas de tan alta categoría literaria en autores hispánicos de nuestros días. Estos no son escritores segundones obligados a buscarse artificios llamativos para imponerse en el mundo de las letras, porque todos han sobresalido como poetas, críticos o novelistas, antes o después de producir las bromas” (Irizarry). She says that although there are plenty of examples of literary hoaxes, the examples from Hispanic literature, both because of their literary value and the high quality of the fraud, “representan formas nuevas de gran imaginación dentro de un género ya tradicional” (Irizarry). Thus, we can say, that the imprint of the Russian literary translations can be discerned not only in Argentine literature per se, but also in the development of the genre.

II. *El crimen y el castigo* in *Los siete locos*: Russian Literature Translation and Roberto Arlt

Roberto Arlt is an ultimate example of all the effects born from the contact of Russian literature translations with the Argentine literature, in terms of language, adaptation of realism and development of parody in his work.

As was mentioned earlier, Arlt occupied an intermediary position between Boedo and Florida groups,³⁹⁸ or as Arturo Cancela would say, Arlt belonged to an intermediate

³⁹⁸ See Florencia Ferreira de Cassone, “Roberto Arlt y Claridad”; Eduardo Romano, “Arlt y la vanguardia argentina”; David Viñas, “El escritor vacilante. Arlt, Boedo y Discépolo.”

group *Floredo*³⁹⁹ (Lafleur, Provenzano, Alonso 79) and Eduardo González Lanuza – “grupo Boída” (*Los martinfierristas* 100), rooted in which is Herrera’s definition of Arlt’s work as heterodox or hybrid avant-garde. Although a variety of very different works can fall into this category, they all share one common trait – a redefinition of the elements of realism by inscribing them into different narrative conception.

Mirta Arlt, Roberto Arlt’s daughter, in her *Para leer a Roberto Arlt* puts faces to the groups’ names, remembering that Arlt met Ricardo Güiraldes, a member of the Florida group, through Nalé Roxlo. Ricardo right away turned into his favorite reader and made sure that the first two chapters of Arlt’s *El juguete rabioso* – with the original title *La vida puerca* – were published in *Proa*. In spite of the initial rejection of Arlt’s work, the sequel that would bring him recognition, *Los siete locos* and *Los lanzallamas*, was brought to light by Boedo’s *Claridad*, that later on also published the second edition of *El juguete rabioso*⁴⁰⁰ (28). As for Arlt’s own literary preferences, along with Dostoevsky and Gerchunoff, he admired Ramón Gómez de la Serna, as some of his *aguafuertes* and *El Mundo* notes bear witness (Tiempo, *Manos de obra* 25).

It is Arlt’s intermediate position that gives us the perspective of tracing the role translation played in Arlt’s shift from imitating Russian literature to being one of the innovators of Argentine literature.

³⁹⁹ It is a mix of Florida and Boedo: “la actitud intelectualista, el impulso renovador, el culto de la forma; y también la preocupación social, el interés por los problemas políticos, económicos y hasta religiosos” (Lafleur, Provenzano, Alonso 79). More on this “alternative zone” also in the introduction by Ana Ojeda and Rocco Cabrone to *Obra completa* of Roberto Mariani, pp. 5-57.

⁴⁰⁰ Such recognition and respect from both groups is more probable as his intermediary Boedo-Florida position than the rejection by both described by Stasys Goštautas: “Arlt, es anarquista para los de Boedo y el escritor vulgar para los de Florida, no fue del agrado no de los maximalistas no de los esteticistas europeizantes cuyas innovaciones estéticas no podía captar por falta de cultura personal” (Goštautas 10).

The son of immigrants, Arlt considered immigrants and children of immigrants the ones who “habían enriquecido nuestras letras,” says César Tiempo: “Fue un admirador apasionado de Alberto Gerchunoff y cierta vez le oí afirmar: ‘El ruso le pasó la trilladora a todos los prosistas de su camada’ (*Manos de obra* 25). In his *Respiración artificial*, Ricardo Piglia calls Arlt the first Argentine writer to defend translations and build his own style out of translations.⁴⁰¹

Arlt [...] does not suffer from this doubling of the language of literature (read in another language) and the language in which one writes. Arlt is a reader of translations and hence receives foreign influences already sifted and transformed by the passage of the works from their original languages into Spanish. Arlt is the first, besides, who defends the reading of translations. [...] Where does he find his model of literary style? He finds it where he reads, that is to say, in the Spanish translations of Dostoevsky and Andreiev. He finds it in the *style* of the worst Spanish translators, in the cheap Tor editions. And that’s the second body of material on which Arlt founds his style. Words like “jade” (for horse) and “lad”: his texts are full of that, because he reworks what the Spanish translators establish as the clichés of translation and of diction, transforming them into the primary material of his writing.⁴⁰² (*Artificial Respiration* 135-136)

In the interview that appeared in *Literatura Argentina* in August of 1929, Arlt himself confirms the fact that Argentine culture is made up of other foreign cultures, especially Spanish, French, and Russian cultures. He goes so far as to say that there is no Argentine culture proper if we understand culture as a uniform psychology proper of a nation formed

⁴⁰¹ Abelardo Castillo echoes Piglia in his “El mito del bárbaro y sus ecos” saying that “Arlt creyó candorosamente que debía escribir según el canon de las traducciones españolas y del diccionario.”

⁴⁰² “Arlt no sufre ese desdoblamiento entre la lengua de la literatura que se lee en otro idioma y el lenguaje en el que escribe: Arlt es un lector de traducciones y por lo tanto recibe la influencia extranjera ya tamizada y transformada por el pasaje de esas obras desde su lenguaje original al español. Arlt es el primero, por otro lado, que defiende la lectura de traducciones. [...] De allí que el modelo del estilo literario ¿dónde lo encuentra? Lo encuentra donde puede leer, esto es, en las traducciones españolas de Dostoievski, de Andreiev. Lo encuentra en el *estilo* de los pésimos traductores españoles, en las ediciones baratas de Tor. Y ése es el segundo material sobre el que se construye el estilo de Arlt: ‘jamelgo’, ‘mozalbeta’, sus textos están llenos de eso, porque lo que los traductores españoles fijaban como cliché de traducción y como léxico, Arlt lo trabaja y lo transforma en materia prima de su escritura” (Piglia, *Respiración artificial* 134-135).

through the assimilation of outside, foreign ideas and knowledge, accompanied by its own characteristics. Then in Argentina instead of culture, there is a “superficial knowledge of foreign books. And in the writers an undetermined force that doesn’t know in which direction to expand itself.”⁴⁰³ Based on the level of the intervention of each of the three foreign cultures, Arlt divides all Argentine writers into three categories: “españolizantes” (Banchs, Capdevila, Bernárdez, Borges; entre los afrancesados a Lugones, Obligado, Guiraldes, Córdoba Iturburu, Nalé Roxlo, Lazcano Tegui, Mallea, Mariani), “afrancesados” (he does not name anyone specifically), and “rusófilos” (Castelnuovo, Elchelbaum, he himself, Barletta, Eandi, Enrique González Tuñón and almost everyone else from the Boedo group) (*Arlt en dos* 186).

Among the “rusófilos” he becomes “little Dostoevsky”: Arlt himself along with many of his contemporaries and recent critics, openly recognized the imprint the Russian classic left on his writing. Nicolás Olivari, in the “Bibliography” section of the issue 239 of *Claridad* writes to Roberto Arlt, regarding his *Los lanzallamas*: “Hace años que no leo a Dostoyevski, pero me encontré de pronto con uno nuevo, no sé si mejor, porque es más nuestro o peor porque es nuestro. Lo único que sé es que hoy por hoy nadie puede igualarte y yo estoy confuso y triste porque quisiera haber escrito uno solo de tus capítulos y no podré hacerlo nunca” (*Claridad*, no. 239). In his book *Roberto Arlt. El arte de inventar*, Pablo Montanaro also suggests that the idea that “every man carries his own hangman

⁴⁰³ “Aquí lo único que tenemos es un conocimiento superficial de libros extranjeros. Y en los autores una fuerza vaga, que no sabe en qué dirección expansionarse” (*Arlt en dos* 186)

inside”⁴⁰⁴ Arlt took from Dostoevsky and that Dostoevsky is present on each page of *Los siete locos* (30). Juan Carlos Onetti writes that: “Roberto Arlt tradujo a Dostoyevski al lunfardo. La novela que integran *Los siete locos* y *Los lanzallamas* nació de *Los demonios*. No sólo el tema, sino también situaciones y personajes” (15). However, later on, Alberto Vanasco clarifies in his prologue “Roberto Arlt y los ruidos del derrumbe” to *Un cuento, dos burlerías y un esbozo autobiográfico* that we can agree with Onetti only as long as we understand translation as emulation and *lunfardo* as the language of the *porteño* people (18). Dina Odnopozova sees the repetition of the affinity between the two and the consecration of Dostoevsky on Latin American land as another bypass of the “Greenwich meridian of literature” (189), referring to the initial unpopularity of Dostoevsky in Europe and particularly in Spain and the early appreciation of his work in Latin America. Arlt’s “trans-lation” of Dostoevsky, thus, onto the Argentine land also takes part in the fight against the epistemological colonialism.

Here two facts beg to be reiterated. First, Arlt read Dostoevsky in translation. And second: almost any time Russian authors appear on Arlt’s reading list, the low quality of those translations is evoked. In his prologue to the Italian translation of *Los siete locos*, Juan Carlos Onetti testifies that Arlt “read Dostoyevsky in the miserable Argentine translations of his era. *Humiliated and Insulted* without any doubt.”⁴⁰⁵ Ricardo Piglia argues that Arlt was introduced to the Russian classic through “the worst Spanish translators, in the cheap Tor editions” (*Artificial respiration* 135-136). These “miserable,

⁴⁰⁴ “cada hombre lleva en su interior un verdugo de sí mismo” (30).

⁴⁰⁵ “leyó Dostoyevski en miserables ediciones argentinas de su época. “Humillados y ofendidos”, sin duda alguna” (Onetti 135).

worst translations” are blamed for the problems with orthography and grammar that “plagued” Arlt’s, another constant that always gets highlighted by writers and critics when Arlt’s work is in question. For instance, when Castelnuovo first saw Arlt’s first novel *El juguete rabioso*, he described it as a book that “ofrecía innumerables fallas de diversa índole, empezando por la ortografía, siguiendo por la redacción y terminando por la unidad y coherencia del texto. [...] Había, asimismo, una ensambladura des estilos distintos y contrapuestos, una mezcla de Máximo Górkí y Vargas Vila” (qtd. in Odnopozova 26n3). Eduardo Romano sees in it an opportunity to cleanse the stale correctness of the Spanish language that Arlt did not fail to seize, taking on a role of a literary revolutionary with his “su lenguaje abigarrado, indiferente a los ideales de escritura correcta y elegante, o su asimilación del lunfardo, del léxico folletinesco de las traducciones baratas” (147). Hence those “bad translations” not only legitimized Arlt’s bad writing, they also offered him the very style he was searching for to adequately convert the Buenos Aires he saw into the words that were to reconstruct it in front of the reader’s eyes:

the Spanish translations of Dostoevsky’s prose that were available to Arlt intensify this “speech style” manner (“writing as speaking”) even further, and it is precisely these translations that Arlt uses to justify his own expressionistic and often jerky narrative style: if the world classic disobeyed the laws of “good writing,” then the self-taught son of immigrants⁴⁰⁶ can certainly afford to breach the grammatical and

⁴⁰⁶ The question of immigration in the development of Argentine literature is crucial, as we can see from Piglia’s *Respiración artificial*: “La autonomía de la literatura, la correlativa noción de estilo como valor al que el escritor se debe someter, nace en la Argentina como reacción frente al impacto de la inmigración sobre el lenguaje. Para las clases dominantes la inmigración viene a destruir muchas cosas, ¿no? destruye nuestra identidad nacional, nuestros valores tradicionales, etc., etc. En la zona ligada a la literatura lo que se dice es que la inmigración destruye y corrompe la lengua nacional. En ese momento la literatura cambia de función en la Argentina; pasa a tener una función, digamos, *específica*. Una función que, sin dejar de ser ideológica y social, sólo la literatura como tal, sólo la literatura como actividad específica puede cumplir. La literatura, decían a cada rato y en todo lugar, tiene ahora una sagrada misión que cumplir: preservar y defender la pureza de la lengua nacional frente a la mezcla, el entrevero, la disgregación producida por los inmigrantes. Esta pasa a ser ahora la función ideológica de la literatura: mostrar cuál debe ser el modelo, el *buen uso* de la lengua nacional; el escritor pasa a ser el custodio de la pureza del lenguaje” (*Respiración artificial* 133). And

syntactic norms and write as he speaks not only in his journalistic pieces, but also in his fiction. (28, 49)

However, difficult it is to prove or disprove similar claims, tracing general influences on style is not only next to impossible, it also turns out futile. Putting all value judgements aside, with no tags of “bad” translation or writing, I instead turn to the analysis of how certain changes that translation introduced into Dostoevsky’s work affected Arlt’s writing. In my simultaneous reading of Arlt’s *Los siete locos* (1929), Dostoevsky’s «Преступление и наказание» (*Crime and Punishment*) (1866)⁴⁰⁷ and Pedro Pedraza Paez’s translation of Dostoevsky’s novel into Spanish – *El crimen y el castigo* – published by *La Nación*⁴⁰⁸ in

while others, such as Leopoldo Lugones, defended the purity and the unity of the national language, Arlt “trabaja en un sentido absolutamente opuesto. Por de pronto maneja lo que *queda* y se sedimenta en el lenguaje, trabaja con los restos, los fragmentos, la mezcla, o sea, trabaja con lo que realmente es una lengua nacional. No entiende el lenguaje como una unidad, como algo coherente y liso, sino como un conglomerado, una marea de jergas y de voces. Para Arlt la lengua nacional es el lugar donde conviven y se enfrentan distintos lenguajes, con sus registros y sus tonos” (*Respiración artificial* 133-134). Arlt himself was from a family of immigrants. His father, Karl Arlt, was from Posen, Northern Germany. His mother Ekatherine Iobstraibitzer, came from Trieste, Northern Italy. At home they spoke their native languages – German and Italian. Neither of the two ever managed to master Spanish. This is the language on which Arlt builds the foundation of his work: “El modelo de la lengua que se practicaba en la sobremesa de su hogar, está viciado de deformaciones sintácticas, de declinaciones defectuosas propias del alemán y del italiano que hablaban sus padres. Literalmente tiene la influencia de las malas traducciones españolas en ediciones baratas que llegaban al país. Por lo tanto, su uso de la materia literaria, su idioma, es el producto de una improvisada artesanía individual, elaborada en el vagabundeo de sus años juveniles. El esfuerzo por dominar la lengua concluye cuando es invadido y dominado por ella. Cuando entre lengua y escritor se produce una aceptación sin reticencias; una complicidad la que se sirven mutuamente” (*Para leer a Roberto Arlt* 20).

On the other hand, it is not just immigration in itself, but a Jewish, or to be more specific Jewish-Russian immigrants that had a particular impact on the Argentine literature, through their quick incorporation into the literary world even before fully acquiring a better command of the Spanish language.” (Walsh qtd. in Fingueret 56). See also *El imaginario judío en la literatura de América Latina: Visión y realidad. Relatos, ensayos, memorias y otros textos del Tercer encuentro de escritores judíos latinoamericanos* that includes essays by such prominent Jewish writers in Latin America as Alicia Steimberg, Margo Glantz, Ana María Shúa, Antonio Brailovsky, Leonardo Senkman among many others.

⁴⁰⁷ To present examples from the original, I use the English translation by Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky. The translations of this couple who have been married for more than thirty years, are considered the ones that restore “the idiosyncrasies of the originals – the page-long sentences and repetitions of Tolstoy, the cacophonous competing voices of Dostoevsky” (Hennewell).

⁴⁰⁸ Although published in Argentina, the translation was originally made in Spain and published by Ramón Sopena in 1914. This is most probably the translation that Arlt read as the Biblioteca de la Nación’s edition was one of the most common and accesible. It is available in the digitalized form here www.bdh-rd.bne.es/viewer.vm?id=0000132286&page=1. Although in some places the year is 1917, the digital

1916, I have looked for more concrete evidence than style or grammatical mistakes, in the form of repetitions and specific language use, as, for instance, in the use of meta-language.

The proposed simultaneous reading of *Los siete locos*, the translation of *Crime and Punishment* and the Russian original, does explain why Arlt would call himself “little Dostoevsky,” as some of his protagonists’ ideas are almost direct quotes from the Russian novel. For example, here one of the Arlt’s novel’s seven madmen, Astrologer, thinks of Lenin’s supposed call for violence as an indispensable element of the revolution and comes to the conclusion that all innovators are criminals for they go against traditions, break them, violate laws on which the society has been built for centuries:

Then he thought of Lenin rubbing his hands and telling the Soviet commissars: “This is madness. How can we make a revolution if we don’t shoot anyone?” The Astrologer’s heart leapt for joy. He would make sure his society adopted the same principle. The future founders of races would be instilled with this strict political discipline; the thought gave him fresh impetus. Then it occurred to him that any innovator has to struggle against outmoded ideas that form part of his own make-up, and he saw that all his current hesitations were a result of a conflict between principles yet to impose themselves and those already established. Time slipped through his fingers, clasped together in thought. Today’s murderer would be tomorrow’s conqueror, but in the meantime he had to put up with the sordid resistance of a present mixed with all it contained of the past⁴⁰⁹. (211-212)

The idea actually does not come from Lenin, but from Raskolnikov’s article in

catalog of the Biblioteca Nacional de España does date it as 1914:
www.bdh.bne.es/bnsearch/detalle/bdh0000132286.

⁴⁰⁹ “Luego pensaba en Lenin, que, restregándose las manos, repetía a los comisarios de los Soviets:

-Es una locura. ¿Cómo podemos hacer la revolución sin fusilar a nadie? – Y esto regocijaba el corazón del Astrólogo. Establecería dicho principio en la sociedad: Los futuros patriarcas de razas serían educados con un inexorable criterio homicida; y nuevamente se ensanchaban sus esperanzas. Luego reconocía que todo innovador debía luchar con ideas antiguas, estampadas por la costumbre en sí mismo, y que todas sus cavilaciones actuales eran la consecuencia de una contradicción entre principios a sancionarse y aquellos establecidos.

El tiempo corría entre sus dedos trabados por la cavilación. Asesino de hoy sería el conquistador del mañana, pero en tanto soportaba la hosca malevolencia del presente amasado de ayer” (162-163).

which he explains his theory of the extraordinary human beings whose crimes can be legitimized for they are committed for the general good of the humanity:

Further, I recall developing in my article the idea that all... well, let's say, the lawgivers and founders of mankind, starting from the most ancient and going on to the Lycurguses, the Solons, the Muhammads, the Napoleons, and so forth, that all of them to a man were criminals, from the fact alone that in giving a new law they thereby violated the old one, held sacred by society and passed down from their fathers, and they certainly did not stop at shedding blood either, if it happened that blood (sometimes quite innocent and shed valiantly for the ancient law) could help them. It is even remarkable that most of these benefactors and founders of mankind were especially terrible blood-shedders. In short, I deduce that all, not only great men, but even those who are a tiny bit off the beaten track – that is, who are a tiny bit capable of saying something new – by their very nature cannot fail to be criminals – more or less, to be sure. Otherwise it would be hard for them to get off the beaten track, and, of course, they cannot consent to stay on it, again by nature, and in my opinion it is even their duty not to consent⁴¹⁰. (259-260)

Or, for example, here Erdosain makes Raskolnikov's reality his own when he imagines himself walking as if he were among the snow of Siberia, where Raskolnikov was sent:

At other moments, Erdosain was in the grip of terror: he felt he was in shackles –

⁴¹⁰ “Далее, помнится мне, я развиваю в моей статье, что все... ну, например, хоть законодатели и установители человечества, начиная с древнейших, продолжая Ликургами, Солонами, Магометами, Наполеонами, и так далее, все до единого были преступники, уже тем одним, что, давая новый закон, тем самым нарушали древний, свято чтимый обществом и отцов перешедший, и, уж конечно, не останавливались и перед кровью, если только кровь (иногда совсем невинная и доблестно пролитая за древний закон) могла им помочь. Замечательно даже, что большая часть этих благодетелей и установителей человечества были особенно страшные кровопроливцы. Одним словом, я вывожу, что и все, не то что великие, но и чуть-чуть из колеи выходящие люди, то есть чуть-чуть даже способные сказать что-нибудь новенькое, должны, по природе своей, быть непременно преступниками, – более или менее, разумеется. Иначе трудно им выйти из колеи, а оставаться в колее они, конечно, не могут согласиться, опять-таки по природе своей, а по-моему, так даже и обязаны не соглашаться” (125).

The Spanish translation says: “En mi artículo insisto, me acuerdo de ello, sobre esta idea, a saber: que todos los legisladores y guías de la humanidad, comenzando por los más antiguos y pasando por Lucirgo, Solón y Mahoma hasta llegar a Napoleón, etc., todos sin excepción han sido delincuentes, porque en el hecho de dar nuevas leyes han violado las antiguas, que eran observadas fielmente por la sociedad y transmitidas a las generaciones futuras; indudablemente no retrocedían ellos ante el derramamiento de sangre en cuanto les podía ser útil. Es también de notar que todos estos bienhechores y guías de la humanidad han sido terriblemente sanguinarios. Por consiguiente, no solo los grandes hombres sino todos aquellos que se eleven sobre el nivel común y que son capaces de decir alguna cosa nueva, deben, en virtud de su naturaleza propia, ser necesariamente delincuentes en mayor o menor grado, según los casos. De otro modo, sería imposible salir de la rutina; y quedarse en ella, es cosa en que no pueden consentir, pues, a mi manera de ver, su propio deber se lo prohíbe” (308).

loathsome civilisation had put him in a straitjacket he had no chance of escaping from. He could picture himself in chains, wearing a striped uniform, trudging slowly in a column of prisoners through mounds of snow towards the forests of Ushuaía. The sky above was as white as a sheet of tin.⁴¹¹ (106)

But more than similarities of certain ideas, I am interested in the differences: the ones that the translation introduced into the original and the changes in Arlt's work that could have been results of those changes.

To give a general idea of the quality of this particular Spanish translation, I think it would be appropriate to turn to one meta-moment in Dostoevsky's novel. It is the one where Raskolnikov comes to Razumkhin and finds him translating an article⁴¹² from a German journal in which its author is trying to prove that a woman is a human being. The whole conversation about a bad Russian translation of a German article, read in a Spanish translation sounds self-referential or even self-parodic:

Aquí tienes estas dos hojas y media de una revista alemana; me parecen de la charlatanería más necia que puedas imaginarte. El autor estudia la cuestión de averiguar *si la mujer es un hombre* y, claro está, se decide por la afirmación y la demuestra de una manera incontestable. Estoy traduciendo este folleto para Kheruvimoff, que lo juzga de actualidad ahora que tan en boga está *la cuestión feminista*. Publicaremos seis hojas con las dos hojas y media del original alemán, le pondremos un título rimbombante que ocupará media página, y lo venderemos a cincuenta kopeks. ¡Será un éxito! La traducción se me paga a razón de seis rublos por hoja, lo que hace un total de quince rublos; he cobrado seis por adelantado. Vamos a ver, ¿quieres traducir la segunda hoja? Si quieres, toma el original, pluma y papel, todo ello corre de cuenta del Estado, y permíteme que te ofrezca tres rublos. Como yo he recibido seis, por la primera y segunda hoja, te corresponde tres, y cobrarás otros tantos cuando hayas terminado la traducción. No me lo agradezcas. En cuanto te he visto he pensado en utilizarte. En primer lugar, yo no estoy muy

⁴¹¹ “En otros momentos el terror avanzaba en Erdosain; tenía la sensación de estar engrilletado, la terrible civilización lo había metido dentro de un chaleco de fuerza del que no se podía escapar. Veíase encadenado y con el traje de rayadillo, cruzando lentamente en una columna presidiaria, entre médanos de nieve, hacía (sic) los bosques de Ushuaua. El cielo estaba arriba blanco como una chapa de estaño” (91).

⁴¹² Actually, translation was also central for Dostoevsky's own work: see Leonid Grossman, *Balzac and Dostoevsky*.

fuerte en ortografía y además conozco muy superficialmente el alemán; de modo que a menudo todo lo que escribe es de mi cosecha. Me consuelo con la idea de que de ese modo añado bellezas al texto; pero ¿quién sabe? Quizá me hago ilusiones.⁴¹³ (141-142)

The “meta” effect is obvious when the passage is read next to the Russian original (that unfortunately or ironically has to be quoted in an English translation here):

Now, here we have two sheets and a bit more of German text – the stupidest sort of charlatanism, in my opinion; in short, it examines whether woman is or is not a human being. Well, and naturally it solemnly establishes that she is a human being. Cherubimov is preparing it in line with the woman question; I’m doing the translating; he’ll stretch these two and a half sheets to six, we’ll concoct a nice, frilly title half a page long, and peddle it for fifty kopecks. It’ll do! I’ll get six roubles a sheet for the translation, making it fifteen roubles in all, and I took six roubles in advance. That done, we’ll start translating something about whales; then we’ve marked out some of the dullest gossip from the second part of the *Confessions* for translation – somebody told Cherubimov that Rousseau is supposedly a Radishchev in his own way. Naturally, I don’t contradict – devil take him! So, do you want to translate the second sheet of *Is Woman a Human Being?* If you do, take the text right now, take some pens and paper – it’s all supplied – and take three roubles, because I took the advance for the whole translation, first and second sheets, so three roubles would be exactly your share. When you finish the sheet, you’ll get another three roubles. And one more thing, please don’t regard this as some sort of favor on my part. On the contrary, the moment you walked in, I already saw how you were going to be of use to me. First of all, my spelling is poor, and second, my German just goes kaput sometimes, so that I have to make things

⁴¹³ Вот тут два с лишком листа немецкого текста, – по-моему, глупейшего шарлатанства: одним словом, рассматривается, человек ли женщина или не человек? Ну и, разумеется, торжественно доказывается, что человек. Херувимов это по части женского вопроса готовит; я перевожу; растянет он эти два с половиной листа листов на шесть, присочиним пышнейшее заглавие в полстраницы и пустим по полтиннику. Сойдет! За перевод мне по шести целковых с листа, значит, за всё рублей пятнадцать достанется, и шесть рублей взял я вперед. Кончим это, начнем об китах переводить, потом из второй части «Confessions» какие-то скучнейшие сплетни тоже отметили, переводить будем; Херувимову кто-то сказал, что будто бы Руссо в своем роде Радищев. Я, разумеется, не противоречу, черт с ним! Ну, хочешь второй лист «Человек ли женщина?» переводить? Коли хочешь, так бери сейчас текст, перьев бери, бумаги – всё это казенное – и бери три рубля: так как я за весь перевод вперед взял, за первый и за второй лист, то, стало быть, три рубля прямо на твой пай и придется. А кончишь лист – еще три целковых получишь. Да вот что еще, пожалуйста, за услугу какую-нибудь не считай с моей стороны. Напротив, только что ты вошел, я уж и рассчитал, чем ты мне будешь полезен. Во-первых, я в орфографии плох, а во-вторых, в немецком иногда просто швах, так что всё больше от себя сочиняю и только тем и утешаюсь, что от этого еще лучше выходит. Ну а кто его знает, может быть, оно и не лучше, а хуже выходит... (56)

up on my own instead, my only consolation being that it comes out even better. But who knows, maybe it comes out worse instead of better...? (112)

The Spanish translation had many serious mistranslations: “рассматривается, человек ли женщина или не человек [it examines whether woman is or is not a human being]” is translated as “si la mujer es un hombre [whether woman is a man]”; “растянет он эти два с половиной листа листов на шесть [he’ll stretch these two and a half sheets to six]” is translated as “Publicaremos seis hojas con las dos hojas y media del original alemán [We’ll publish six pages with the two and a half pages of the German original]”. The part “Кончим это, начнем об китах переводить, потом из второй части «Confessions» какие-то скучнейшие сплетни тоже отметили, переводить будем; Херувимову кто-то сказал, что будто бы Руссо в своем роде Радищев. Я, разумеется, не противоречу, черт с ним! [That done, we’ll start translating something about whales; then we’ve marked out some of the dullest gossip from the second part of the *Confessions* for translation – somebody told Cherubimov that Rousseau is supposedly a Radishchev in his own way. Naturally, I don’t contradict – devil take him!]” is simply not there at all in the translation. At the end, Razumikhin says: “Во-первых, я в орфографии плох, а во-вторых, в немецком иногда просто швах, так что всё больше от себя сочиняю и только тем и утешаюсь, что от этого еще лучше выходит. Ну а кто его знает, может быть, оно и не лучше, а хуже выходит... [First of all, my spelling is poor, and second, my German just goes kaput sometimes, so that I have to make things up on my own instead, my only consolation being that it comes out even better. But who knows, maybe it comes out worse instead of better...?].” Unfortunately, this also often happened in the Spanish translation of the novel itself, which is why I called this moment meta-literary. However, I do not point this out as

criticism of the translator, but rather as the first step in tracing the effect this translation had on Arlt's work. That is why an analysis of the French translation, from which the Spanish was most likely made, is not pertinent to this work.

There are at least two evident traces of the French translation that served as an original to the Spanish translation. First, when the translator explains what "grivna" is, he says that it is "[m]onedada de diez kopeks equivalente a cuatro céntimos de franco. El rublo, que vale unos cuatro francos, se divide en diez kopeks [a ten-copek coin equivalent to four tenths of a franco]" (13). Another indicator is the fact that many of the phrases that appear in French in the Russian original, then appear in Spanish since most likely their French origin disappeared in the French translation. Here are some examples: "Так что ж? Так что ж? – повторял Свидригайлов, смеясь нараспашку, – ведь это *bonne guerre*,⁹³ что называется, и самая позволительная хитрость!.. [What of it? What of it?" Svidrigailov repeated, laughing openheartedly. "It's *bonne guerre*, as they call it, and the most admissible dodging!" (135). In the Spanish translation, "*bonne guerre*" becomes "buena guerra [good war]": "Bueno, ¿y qué? ¿Qué le sorprende? – repitió su interlocutor, riéndose con toda su alma; -- en buena guerra, como dicen los franceses, la malicia no tiene nada de ilícita [Well, and what? What surprises you? – repeated the interlocutor, laughing wholeheartedly; -- in a good war, like French people say, the malice is not at all prohibited" (tomo II, 7)⁴¹⁴. In another case "*vive la guerre éternelle*" (126) becomes "¡viva la guerra

⁴¹⁴ Sometimes, together with French there appear some Latin and Russian words in transliteration: "Ahí está el *busillis*; es indudable que el asesino se encontraba en el cuarto de la vieja cuando ellos llegaron; y que había echado el cerrojo: de seguro que no se habría escapado a no cometer Kosch la simpleza de bajar en busca del *dvornik*. Sin duda el asesino aprovechó ese momento para deslizarse por la escalera dejándolos con un palmo de narices. Kosch no cesa de santiguarse diciendo: "¡Si llego a quedarme allí, de fijo sale de repente el criminal y me mata de un hachazo!" Quiere mandar que canten un *Te Deum*. ¡Je, je, je!" (133) [В том и

eterna! [long live the eternal war!]" (310).

However, the lost French is recovered on other occasions. For instance, the Russian version says: “– Вы даже, может быть и совсем не медведь, – сказал он. – Мне даже кажется, что вы очень хорошего общества или, по крайней мере, умеете при случае быть и порядочным человеком [Perhaps you’re not a bear at all,” he said. “It even seems to me that you’re of very good society, or can at least be a decent man on occasion].” (137) The Spanish translation borrows from French: “– No lo tengo por oso – dijo Raskolnikoff; – más aún, me parece que es usted un hombre de muy buena sociedad o, por lo menos, que sabe usted ser, en llegando la ocasión, *comme il faut* [I don’t think of you as a bear – said Raskolnikov; – more than that, I seems to me that you’re a man of very good society, or at least, that you know to be proper, when the occasion comes]” (Vol. II, 9). Here is another example of the addition of French in the Spanish translation:

Cuando se está algo enfermo, los sueños suelen distinguirse por su relieve extraordinario y por su asombrosa semejanza con la realidad. El cuadro es a veces monstruoso; pero la *mise en scène* y todo lo que pertenece a la *representación*, son sin embargo, tan verosímiles, los detalles tan minuciosos, y ofrecen por lo

штука: убийца непременно там сидел и заперся на запор; и непременно бы его там накрыли, если бы не Кох сдурил, не отправился сам за дворником. А он именно в этот-то промежуток и успел спуститься по лестнице и прошмыгнуть мимо их как-нибудь. Кох обеими руками крестится: «Если б я там, говорит, остался, он бы выскочил и меня убил топором». Русский молебен хочет служить, хе-хе!..] (52). This Babelian writing will later on become a norm, as Cortázar’s 62: *Modelo para armar* clearly demonstrates with its entire paragraphs in French, with some Latin words and phrases, with some dialogs in a language that is supposed to be Tatar. We do need to note though that Dostoevsky’s polyphony does allow him as well to use a word that comes from Tatar: “Теперь в направление тоже полез; сам ни бельмеса не чувствует, ну а я, разумеется, поощряю.” (56)

improvisto una combinación tan ingeniosa, que el soñador, aunque sea un artista como Pushkin o Turgueneff, sería incapaz, despierto, de inventarlos tan bien (69).

In the Russian original, there is no word “*mise en scène*”, neither is the word “representation” [представление] italicized:

В болезненном состоянии сны отличаются часто необыкновенною выпуклостью, яркостью и чрезвычайным сходством с действительностью. Слагается иногда картина чудовищная, но обстановка и весь процесс всего представления бывают при этом до того вероятны и с такими тонкими, неожиданными, но художественно соответствующими всей полноте картины подробностями, что их и не выдумать наяву этому же самому сновидцу, будь он такой же художник, как Пушкин или Тургенев. (29)

[In a morbid condition, dreams are often distinguished by their remarkably graphic, vivid, and extremely lifelike quality. The resulting picture is sometimes monstrous, but the setting and the whole process of the presentation sometimes happen to be so probable, and with details so subtle, unexpected, yet artistically consistent with the whole fullness of the picture, that even the dreamer himself would be unable to invent them in reality, though he were as much an artist as Pushkin or Turgenev (54).]

This example leads us to the first consequence that the modifications translation introduced into Dostoevsky’s work had on Arlt’s work. The translation is replete with metaliterary vocabulary, which rarely appears in Dostoevsky’s work. In Dostoevsky’s novel, characters tell their lives. The translation tells us the novel, whose narrator tells us the story of the life of its characters. Hence, the use of the words “spectacle,” “character,” “scene,” “*mise en scène*.” For example, the word “spectacle” is repeated many times in the translation: “El muchacho, de pie de uno de los ángulos de la habitación, no pudo soportar este *espectáculo*, empezó a temblar y a dar gritos y se lanzó hacia su hermana; el espanto casi le produjo convulsiones” (36; my emphasis) [“The boy, standing in the corner of the room, could not bare this *spectacle*, started to tremble and scream and rushed to his sister; the fear almost

caused convulsions in him”⁴¹⁵] whereas the Russian original has nothing of this kind: “Мальчик в углу не выдержал, задрожал, закричал и бросился к сестре в страшном испуге, почти в припадке (15) [The boy in the corner could not help himself, trembled, cried out, and rushed to his sister in a terrible fright, almost a fit (25-26)].” Later again, the original says: “– Сейчас беспрременно падет, братцы, тут ей и конец! – кричит из толпы один любитель (31) [She’ll drop this time, brothers; it’s the end of her! One enthusiast yells from the crowd (58)].” And the translation adds: “¡No le queda mucho de vida!— observa uno de los que contemplan regocijados el bárbaro *espectáculo*. – Se acerca su ultimo momento” (74; my emphasis). [“There is not too much life left in her! – notes one of those who watch delightfully the barbaric spectacle”.] At the very end of the novel, the phrase “Он смотрел на каторжных товарищей своих и удивлялся: как тоже все они любили жизнь, как они дорожили ею! (259). [He looked at his fellow convicts and was amazed: how they, too, all loved life, how they valued it! (544-545)]” turned into “El *espectáculo* ofrecido por sus compañeros de presidio le asombraba. ¡Cómo amaban todos ellos la vida! ¡Cómo la apreciaban! (294; my emphasis) [“He was amazed by the *spectacle* that his fellow convicts presented to him. How much all of them loved life! How much they valued it!]]”

There is also an abundant use of the word “escena [scene]” in the translation whereas it was never used in the original. For example, “Одна баба берет его за руку и

⁴¹⁵ When comparing the Spanish translation with the Russian original, I include my own English translation of the Spanish version. Translation of the quotes from the Russian original is taken from Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky’s translation. When I find that the English translation has omitted a key word or phrase that appeared in the original, I include my own translation and indicate it in the footnote.

хочет увести; но он вырывается и опять бежит к лошадке (30) [A woman takes him by the hand and tries to lead him away; but he breaks free and runs back to the horse (57)]” turns into “Una mujer toma al niño de la mano y quiere apartarlo de esta *escena*; pero él se escapa y corre otra vez hacia el caballo [A woman takes the child by the hand and tries to lead him away from the *scene*; but he breaks away and runs back to the horse]” (74; my emphasis). And the phrase “– Вчерашний, – отвечала Настасья, всё это время стоявшая тут же (60) [“It is yesterday’s [soup],” Nastasya answered, who was all this time standing right here⁴¹⁶]” in Spanish becomes: “Algo queda de ayer – respondió Anastasia que no había salido de la habitación durante toda esta *escena* [“There is something left from yesterday,” Anastasya answered; she has not left the room during the entire *scene*]” (149; my emphasis).⁴¹⁷

The Spanish translator also persists in using the word “personaje [character]” to refer to Raskolnikov and other characters, in spite of its absence in the original. Here are some examples. “– Позвольте вам заметить, – отвечал он сухо, – что Магометом иль Наполеоном я себя не считаю... ни кем бы то ни было из подобных лиц, следственно, и не могу, не быв ими, дать вам удовлетворительного объяснения о том, как бы я поступил (128) [“Allow me to observe,” he answered dryly, “that I do not consider myself

⁴¹⁶ My translation; this sentence does not appear in the English translation.

⁴¹⁷ The examples are, as was said before, abundant: “Durante cinco minutos todos estuvieron muy alegres; su satisfacción les hacía reír estrepitosamente. Sólo Dunia palidecida de vez en cuando al recuerdo de la escena precedente” (tomo II, 32). And the original was: “Все радовались, через пять минут даже смеялись. Иногда только Дунечка бледнела и сдвигала брови, припоминая случившееся.” (32) Again: “Не стану теперь описывать, что было в тот вечер у Пульхерии Александровны” (151) becomes “Inútil es describir la escena que se desarrolló a la entrada de Razumikin en el cuarto de Pulkeria Alexandrovna” (Tomo II, 38). “Потом, при воспоминании об этой минуте, Раскольникову представлялось всё в таком виде.” (169) turns into “He aquí el recuerdo que esta escena dejó en el espíritu de Raskolnikoff” (84)

a Muhhamad or a Napoleon... or any such person whatsoever, and am consequently unable, not being them, to give you a satisfactory explanation of how I would act” (264-265)].” But in the translation the word “personaje” appears: “Permítame usted que le diga – respondió secamente – que yo no me creo ni un Mahoma, ni un Napoleón, ni ningún otro *personaje* de este género” (316; my emphasis). The same happens with the mysterious person that Raskolnikov encounters several times during the novel that in translation becomes “a character”: “Только что он хотел отворить дверь, как вдруг она стала отворяться сама. Он задрожал и отскочил назад. Дверь отворялась медленно и тихо, и вдруг показалась фигура – вчерашнего человека из-под земли (172) [He was just about to open the door, when it suddenly began to open by itself. He trembled and jumped back. The door was opening slowly and quietly, and suddenly a figure appeared – of yesterday’s man *from under the ground* (355-356)]” where “man” turns into “personaje [character]” in the Spanish translation: “En el momento en que se dirigía a la puerta, ésta se abrió por sí misma. El joven retrocedió espantado viendo aparecer al enigmático personaje de la vispera, *al hombre salido de debajo de la tierra*” (90).⁴¹⁸

The translator also often recurs to the word “comedia” without it being part of the original: “– Да что вы оба, шутите, что ль? – вскричал наконец Разумихин. – Морочите вы друг друга иль нет? Сидят и один над другим подшучивают! Ты серьезно, Родя? (127) [“What, are you two joking or something?” Razumikhin cried out at last. “Addling

⁴¹⁸ Here is another example: “Всё тверже и тверже укреплялась в нем мысль, что если бы действительно этот загадочный вчерашний человек, этот призрак, явившийся из-под земли, всё знал и всё видел, – так разве дали бы ему, Раскольникову, так стоять теперь и спокойно ждать?” (160). But in the translation, the word “personaje” reappears: “Si, en efecto, aquel misterioso personaje de ayer, aquel espectro salido de debajo de la tierra, lo supiese todo y lo hubiese visto todo, ¿me dejarían tanto tiempo libre?” (60).

each other's brains, aren't you? Sitting there and poking fun at each other! Are you serious, Rodia?" (263-264)]". But the translation turns it into a comedy inserting an entire phrase: "Pero, ¿qué ese so? ¿Os estáis burlando los dos? – gritó Razumikin – *Esto es una comedia* [That's a comedy]. ¡Se están divirtiendo el uno a costa del otro! ¿Hablas con formalidad. Rodia?" (313; my emphasis).

There are also words like "ficción [fiction]", "metáfora [metaphor]", "nuestro héroe [our protagonist]", "representar la farsa [to represent the farce]"; in other words, the translator constantly recurs to meta-literary language,⁴¹⁹ as in this example: "después de haber tomado diez cucharadas de te, el enfermo apartó la cabeza con un brusco movimiento, rechazó caprichosamente la cuchara y se dejó caer sobre la almohada. Esta palabra no era ya una *metáfora*. Raskolnikoff tenía ahora bajo la cabeza una buena almohada de plumas, con una funda muy limpia ["after taking ten spoonfuls of tea, the sick one moved away his head abruptly, rejected the spoon and crashed on the pillow. This word

⁴¹⁹ However, it is important to note that Dostoevsky does include a meta-writing moment as well when there appear Raskolnikov's article about a book called *Crime...*: "По поводу всех этих вопросов, преступлений, среды, девочек мне вспомни- лась теперь, – а впрочем, и всегда интересовала меня, – одна ваша статейка: «О преступлении»... или как там у вас, забыл название, не помню. Два месяца назад имел удовольствие в «Периодической речи» прочесть.

– Моя статья? В «Периодической речи»? – с удивлением спросил Раскольников, – я действительно написал, полгода назад, когда из университета вышел, по поводу одной книги, одну статью, но я снес ее тогда в газету «Еженедельная речь», а не в «Периодическую.» (122-123)

In his article, "Raskolnikoff also analyzes a psychological state of a person at the moment of committing a crime. This idea will become the base of Arlt's *El fabricante de fantasmas* where the main character kills his wife and then writes and stages a play in which the protagonist kills his wife as well. Having perceived the incongruence of Dostoevsky's realism in Spanish translations, Arlt exposes it in his play *El fabricante de fantasmas* (1936). In it, Pedro, the main character, converts his own tortured conscience after assassinating his wife. The work is evidently inspired by Dostoevsky's *Crime and punishment* which Arlt does not intend to hide. Juez in one of his conversations with Pedro says: "Usted pertenece a esa magnífica escuela que en el siglo pasado comenzó con el sagacísimo Dostoievski, el análisis de la personalidad del degenerado..." (*Teatro complete* 209). Later on he accuses the Judge of plagiarism of Dostoevsky's work: "Usted viene a mi casa plagiando el procedimiento del Juez de *Crimen y castigo*" (*Teatro complete* 211). But Pedro stages the torments, thus questioning the realism and creates the reality within the work of art.

was not a *metaphor*. Raskolnikov now had a good feather pillow under his head, with a very clean pillowcase”]” (151; my emphasis). The Russian original however simply says: “схлебнув ложек десять чаю, он вдруг высвободил свою голову, капризно оттолкнул ложку и повалился опять на подушку. Под головами его действительно лежали теперь настоящие подушки – пуховые и с чистыми наволочками [having swallowed about ten spoonfuls of tea, he suddenly freed his head, pushed the spoon away testily, and fell back on the pillow. Under his head there now indeed lay real pillows – down pillows, in clean pillowcases (121-122)]” (60). In short, “настоящие [real]” is turned into “not a metaphor.”

A simple “he” is replaced with “nuestro héroe [our protagonist]”: “*Nuestro héroe no se daba cuenta de lo que hacía, pero no podía contenerse*” (202; my emphasis) (“он знал, что делал, но не мог сдержаться” (81) [he was aware of what he was doing, but could not stop himself (165)]). In another example, the word “*ficción* [fiction]” is used to say that somebody was “pretending to be sleeping”: “– А ведь я так и знал, что вы не спите, а только вид показываете, – странно ответил незнакомый, спокойно рассмеявшись” (134) [Ah, I just knew you were not asleep, but only pretending,” the unknown man answered strangely, with a quiet laugh (278)]” turns into “*Bien sabía que su sueño no era más que una ficción – respondió el desconocido con sonrisa tranquila* (332; my emphasis) [“I knew well that your sleep was no more than a *fiction*,” answered the stranger with a calm smile”].

But most importantly, in the translation, the ultimate reason of Raskolnikov’s penance is rendered as a representation of the farce of penance, whereas the Russian original says that it was Raskolnikov’s heartfelt repentance: “На вопросы же, что именно

побудило его явиться с повинною, прямо отвечал, что чистосердечное раскаяние. Всё это было почти уже грубо...” (255) [And to the question of what precisely had prompted him to come and confess his guilt, he answered directly that it was sincere repentance. There was almost crude about it all... (535-536)].” But the translation is the opposite: “Cuando se le preguntó por qué había ido a denunciarse, respondió redondamente que había representado la farsa del arrepentimiento. Todo aquello era casi cínico [When he was asked why he went to denounce himself, he answered straightforwardly that he has represented the farce of the remorse. All that was almost cynical]” (283).

Considering how this could have affected Arlt’s own writing, I suggest that the meta-literary atmosphere of the translation could have been a propitious soil for Arlt’s own meta-literary techniques.⁴²⁰ In *Los siete locos*, the main character, for example, always thinks of himself as a character from a novel or makes comments related to fiction, like this one:

Erdosain was right to say that the plan was as sharply defined as if “it had been stamped at thousands of pounds’ pressure”.

The Astrologer’s boots thumped loudly with each step, and Erdosain was already beginning to regret that the “plan” was so simple, so devoid of any literary twists and turns. He would have liked to add some extra perilous adventure, to make it less geometrically perfect.⁴²¹ (770)

⁴²⁰ See Analía Capdevila, “Sobre la teatralidad en la narrativa de Arlt”; Rose Corral, “Ficción y crónica en *Los siete locos* y *Los Lanzallamas*”; Carlos Correas, *Arlt literato*; Luis Ordaz, “Las máscaras dramáticas de Roberto Arlt”; David Russi, “Metatheatre: Roberto Arlt Vehicle toward the Awareness of an Art Form.”

⁴²¹ “No le faltó razón a Erdosain, cuando dijo que el plan era nítido “como si lo hubiera estampado en una plancha de hierro a miles de libras de presión”. Y mientras en la habitación las botas del Astrólogo resonaban sordamente en cada paso, Erdosain se lamentaba ya de que el “plan” fuera tan simple y poco novelesco. Le

Then again, we hear a reference to novels in the conversation between Erdosain and el Astrólogo:

“You’re not afraid you’ll be remorse-stricken after ‘it’ happens?”

“I think that only happens in novels. In real life I’ve done both good and bad, and in neither case have I felt the slightest joy or the least sense of remorse. I reckon that what’s called remorse is simply fear of punishment. In Argentina they don’t hang people, and only cowards...⁴²² (78).

Just before the realization of the long-planned crime, Erdosain comes home, exhausted, throws himself on his bed, and starts reflecting on the difference between this crime and the ones he read about in novels:

My heart was beating frantically like a gambler’s⁴²³ must do. In fact, I was not worried about what might happen after the crime, but even as I was on the point of committing it, I was curious to know how I would behave, what Barsut might do, how the Astrologer intended to kidnap him. Whereas novels I had read presented crime as fascinating, to me it seemed no more than a mechanical act – committing a crime is easy; it merely seems so complicated to us because we aren’t used to it, that’s all.⁴²⁴ (104)

Later, looking at the Gold Prospector, Erdosain thinks: “I am not cut out for a starring role like him, I’m one of those miserable cowards who live in the city (153).⁴²⁵ When Erdosain

hubiera agradado una aventura más peligrosa, menos geométrica” (74).

⁴²² “-¿Y usted no tiene miedo de tener remordimientos después que “eso” suceda?

-Vea, yo creo que eso solo ocurre en las novelas. En la realidad yo he hecho acciones malas y buenas y ni en un caso ni en el otro he sentido ni la mayor alegría ni el menor remordimiento. Yo creo que se ha dado en llamar remordimiento el temor al castigo. Aquí a uno no lo ahorcan, y sólo los cobardes...” (74).

⁴²³ Another implicit reference to Dostoevsky’s work.

⁴²⁴ “La emoción que puede experimentar un jugador la sentía yo en los afanosos latidos de mi corazón. En realidad no pensaba en los sucesos posteriores al delito, sino que mantenía al borde del mismo la curiosidad de saber cómo me comportaría, qué es lo que haría Barsut, de qué forma lo secuestraría el Astrólogo, y el crimen que en algunas novelas había leído se presentaba interesante; veía yo ahora que era algo mecánico, que cometer un crimen es sencillo, y que nos parece complicado a nosotros debido a que carecemos de la costumbre de él” (90).

⁴²⁵ “Yo soy menos personaje de drama que él, yo soy el hombre sórdido y cobarde de la ciudad” (123).

meets the Cripple, he consciously tries to represent a certain character he has in mind:

“That’s no great surprise to me,” Erdosain reflected, and, pleased he could remain cool and collected – like one of those bankers in the novels of Xavier de Montepin – he replied, *easing into the role he had invented for himself*: “So he’s gone mad, has he?” Then all of a sudden, realizing he could not keep up the pretence any longer, he burst out with: “D’you know something? You give me this extraordinary news, and yet it leaves me cold”⁴²⁶ (156; my emphasis)

Later on, the narrator adds: “Erdosain saw himself as a character who had lived outside the law but had now gone straight”⁴²⁷ (132). And then again: “Erdosain felt yet again that her [Hipolita’s] essence was becoming part of his life like something from a novel, something that needed to be taken care of like the knot of a necktie in the hurly-burly of a dance”⁴²⁸ (159).

The Cripple, another character, tells Erdosain that she had to read literature to find her role in life: “before I became a real prostitute, I decided to study everything about it... yes, don’t look so surprised, I read all I could get my hands on... from all the novels I read, I came to the conclusion that men thought educated women had extraordinary powers of love”⁴²⁹ (190-192). This simultaneously makes the Cripple more real than fictional

⁴²⁶ “Mi curiosidad no ha recibido ningún gran golpe – se dijo Erdosain, y satisfecho de mantenerse insensible como uno de esos banqueros de las novelas de Xavier de Montepín agregó, con la alegría interior *de poder representar la comedia del hombre impasible* –: ¿Así que se ha vuelto loco? – pero de pronto, comprendiendo que no podría prolongar ese papel, dijo –: ¿Se da cuenta usted, señora? Me da una noticia extraordinaria y sin embargo he permanecido impasible” (125; my emphasis).

⁴²⁷ “Erdosain se imaginó que era un personaje que había vivido como un bandito, pero que ya se había regenerado” (166).

⁴²⁸ “Otra vez Erdosain sentía que lo importante del personaje reaparecía en su vida como un elemento novelesco que hay que cuidar como se cuida el lazo de la corbata en el desorden de un baile” (127).

⁴²⁹ “Trabajaba como antes, todo el día, pero el trabajo se me hizo extraño... quiero decir, que mientras fregaba o hacía una cama, mi pensamiento estaba lejos y al mismo tiempo tan adentro de mí, que a

characters and brings her next to Clara Beter whose reality was fictional.⁴³⁰

Just as the translation turns Raskolnikov's penance into a represented farce, everything seems part of a great theater for Arlt's Erdosain: "His words poured out in short chunks, as hard and solid as steel. Captivated by [the theatricality of] the *spectacle*, he observed himself in an imaginary mirror, vibrant and proud"⁴³¹ (234; my addition and my emphasis). The Astrologer brings him back to reality, different from theater, after they killed Barsut, after Erdosain asked:

"Is that all?"

The Astrologer cast him a pitying glance.

"Did you really think it would be like in the theatre?"⁴³² (239)

In his play *El fabricante de fantasmas*, written several years later – in 1936 – Arlt actually puts a Dostoevskian character, Pedro, in a play in which he has to represent his own life and it is through this staging of life that the real life horror and suffering are uncovered in their true dimensions. In Escena III of the first act, Pedro, the protagonist confesses that he is a truly theatrical character, but also that theater for him is a means of exposing his personal problems to the humanity, and that as soon as he resolves those problems, he'll

momentos me parecía que si ese pensamiento se hacía más grande se me iba a reventar la piel. Pero el problema no se resolvía. Escribí a una librería preguntando si no tenía algún manual para ser una mujer de mala vida y no me contestaron, hasta que un día decidí verlo a un abogado para que me aclarara ese punto. [...] Después, antes de lanzarme a la prostitución, resolví estudiar... sí, no me mire asombrado... leía todo... había llegado a la conclusión leyendo novelas, que el hombre admitía extraordinarias facultades de amor en la mujer culta" (149).

⁴³⁰ See the first part of this chapter.

⁴³¹ "Sus palabras caían en sonidos breves, con choques sólidos de acero. Y seducido por *la teatralidad del espectáculo*, se contemplaba en un imaginario espejo, estremecido y airado" (179; my emphasis).

⁴³² "Erdosain asked: "—Y eso es todo?"

— El Astrólogo levantó hacia él una mirada burlona.

— ¿Pero se creía usted que "eso" es como en el teatro?" (183).

send all that theater to hell (*Teatro completo* 181).

The word “comedy” that plagued the translation of *Crime and Punishment* can also often be seen in *Los siete locos*. It is all a comedy for Erdosain when he climbs a tree: “His strength quickly drains away. He looks all around as if surprised at finding himself in this position, then all at once the face of the distant girl blooms in his mind like a flower. Suddenly ashamed of the *scene* he is making [literally “comedy”],⁴³³ he climbs down from the tree. He is vanquished. A broken man”⁴³⁴ (85; my emphasis).

Then the Commentator clarifies that Erdosain later on offered two possible explanations of such behavior:

Erdosain offered me two explanations for this state [literally “comedy”]. The first was that he was immensely pleased at pretending to be mad, like someone “who has drunk one glass of wine but pretends to be drunk to his friends, in order to trick them”. Erdosain gave a sad smile while he was explaining all this, and told me that when he climbed down out of the acacia he felt ashamed in the same way as someone who dresses up for Carnival and shows off in front of a group of strangers, but instead of making them laugh, elicits only a contemptuous remark. “I was so sick of myself I even thought of committing suicide, and was sorry I didn’t have my revolver with me.”⁴³⁵ (86; my addition)

“Comedia” reappears in the Astrologer’s words as well: “So, this was nothing more than a rehearsal, but some day we’ll act out the drama [literally “comedy”] for real”⁴³⁶ (142; my

⁴³³ The literal translation would be “the comedy that he was acting out.”

⁴³⁴ “Rápidamente decrecen sus fuerzas. Mira en redor casi extrañado de encontrarse en semejante posición, de pronto el semblante de la remota criatura estalla en él como una flor, e inmensamente avergonzado de la *comedia* que representa, baja de la palanta. Está vencido. Es un desgraciado” (79; my emphasis).

⁴³⁵ “Dos explicaciones me dio Erdosain respecto a esta *comedia*. La primera es que sentía un placer inmenso similar a un estado de locura, placer que comparaba “al del hombre que habiendo bebido un vaso de vino, finge que está borracho ante sus amigos, para inquietarlos”. Sonreía tristemente al dar estas explicaciones, y me manifestó que al descender de la acacia estaba avergonzado con la misma vergüenza que el desdichado que en carnaval se disfraza, preséntase ante un grupo de gente y sus gracias, en vez de hacer sonreír a los desconocidos, les arranca una frase despectiva: “Sentía tal asco de mí mismo que hasta se me ocurrió matarme y lamenté no tener el revolver encima” (79; my emphasis).

⁴³⁶ “Este no fue nada más que un ensayo... ya que representaremos la comedia en serio algún día” (115).

emphasis). And then also in the words of the Commentator: “It was later discovered that the Major was a real rather than an imaginary officer, and that he had been lying when he was playing a role [literally ‘when he was representing a comedy’]”⁴³⁷ (244; my addition). Hence a supposed farse, a presumed comedy of Arlt’s novel is its reality. It is not reality, neither it is a comedy, it is the reality the essence of which is comedy.

As the polyphony of voices in Dostoevsky was split into a multiplicity of monophonies by the translator, Arlt introduces the Commentator and says that Erdosain feels as if there exists his double, his conscience that he’s talking to⁴³⁸: “How solemn Barsut was! His hoarse questions demanded an answer. Sitting so close to him, Erdosain felt him not as another man, but as his double, a phantom with a bony nose and bronze-coloured hair who had suddenly become part of his own conscience, because Barsut was posing to him precisely the same questions as it had done in the past”⁴³⁹ (64).

The fact that in the translation there is a narrator telling a story instead of the

⁴³⁷ “Más tarde se comprobó que el Mayor no era un jefe apócrifo, sino auténtico, y que mintió al decir que estaba representando una comedia” (115).

⁴³⁸ If the Commentator can be interpreted as a parodic answer to the omnipresent narrator from the translations of Dostoevsky’s works, then “Conciencia” as a character in Arlt’s play *El fabricante de fantasmas* is almost an open laugh into Dostoevsky’s face. “Conciencia” says to Pedro, the protagonist: “Yo no soy un bufón. Te has confundido. Soy tu consciencia parlante, el ojo de tu entendimiento, lúcido cristal que no tolera el engaño. ¿Quién iba a decirme que algún día contemplaría al cuerpo que me contiene dentro de un calabozo, porque ese cuerpo ha servido de vehículo criminal a una inteligencia? (*Burlona*) Porque tú eres un criminal, Pedro. No lo dudes. Empujaste al vacío, desde la ventana de un quinto piso, a tu mujer. Jurídicamente estás catalogado como asesino” (*Teatro completo* 194). This idea is confirmed in two direct references to Dostoevsky. In one of them the judge declares: “Usted pertenece a esa magnífica escuela que en el siglo pasado comenzó con el sagacísimo Dostoievski, el análisis de la personalidad del degenerado...” (*Teatro completo* 209). A little later Pedro blasts: “(violento, poniéndose de pie): Sí, señor, usted lo sospecha. Usted viene a mi casa plagiando el procedimiento del Juez de *Crimen y castigo*” (*Teatro completo* 211). In fact, the Judge in Dostoevsky’s novel does use Raskolnikov’s article about the superior beings’ right to kill as a medium for uncovering Raskolnikov’s crime.

⁴³⁹ “¡Qué gravemente conversaba Barsut! Sus enronquecidas preguntas requerían una contestación. Erdosain lo sentía en sus inmediaciones no como a un hombre, sino precisamente como a un doble, un espectro de nariz huesuda y cabello de bronce que de pronto se había convertido en un peso de su conciencia, ya como ésta en otras circunstancias, él ahora le dirigía las mismas preguntas” (64).

character himself, many times forces the translator to name the character, instead of the original's repetition of "he" or "she" that represents a character's look at him or herself from the outside. For example, the second part of the novel starts in translation as: "*Raskolnikoff* estuvo mucho tiempo acostado [Raskolnikov had spent a long time in bed]" (113; my emphasis) though the original says: "Так пролежал *он* очень долго" (45). [He lay like that for a very long time (89)]. Although the difference seems minimal, it does imply a big change in the narrative. The Spanish version shows the outside perspective with Raskolnikov as a character. The Russian original, although it uses "he," shows the perception of Raskolnikov of himself in the past. It is him retelling the story. Hence, to say "Raskolnikoff estuvo mucho tiempo acostado" is inadmissible.

But in spite of the translation, Arlt does incorporate this duplicity in one's voice into his own writing:

Away from the station in Centenario, with a wall of fog in front and another behind him, he remembered that the next day they were going to kill Barsut. It was true. They were going to kill him. Erdosain would have liked to have a mirror to hold up so he could see his murderer's body, so incredible did it seem that he was the one (the "I") [to be him (the I)]⁴⁴⁰ who through this crime was about to separate himself from the rest of humanity.⁴⁴¹ (177)

⁴⁴⁰ I do have to insert the literal translation since Arlt brings "he" and "I" together, with no quotation marks, just like Dostoevsky did when Raskolnikov refers to himself as "he" remembering his actions.

⁴⁴¹ "Cuando se encontró solo en la calle Centenario, bloqueado de frente y a las espaldas por dos murallas de neblina, recordó que al día siguiente lo asesinarían a Barsut. Era cierto. Lo asesinarían. Hubiera querido tener un espejo frente a sus ojos, para ver su cuerpo asesino, tan inverosímil le parecía ser él (el yo) quien con tal crimen se iba a separar de todos los hombres" (139).

By introducing the Commentator and by forcing him to disclose the source of his knowledge of the slightest detail, Arlt also questions a nineteenth-century omnipresent writer:

One day I hope to write the account of how Erdosain spent those ten days. It is impossible for me to do so now, because it would require another book as long as this present one. Bear in mind that this study⁴⁴² is confined to only three days of the protagonists' actions, and that despite the space I have given myself, I can do no more than hint at their subjective states. The action will continue in another volume, to be entitled *The Flame-Throwers*. Erdosain supplied me with copious information for that second part, which will contain such extraordinary episodes as: "The Blind Prostitute", "Elsa's Adventures", "The Man Who Walked with Jesus", and "The Poison Gas Factory"⁴⁴³ (109-110; my emphasis)

Although the doubt in the veracity of any written and pronounced word is inscribed in Borges' writing as well, in Bioy Casares' *La invención de Morel* its manifestation takes on a form very similar to that one that Arlt employs in *Los siete locos*. In Casares' (*N. del E*) – notas del editor [the Editor's notes] – the protagonist's, in this case, the narrator's words are questioned and doubted. The narrator says: "Creo que esta isla se llama Villings y que pertenece al archipiélago de Las Ellice" (22) on which the Editor immediately casts a doubt in a footnote: "Lo dudo. Habla de una colina y de árboles de diversas clases. Las islas Ellice – o de las lagunas – son bajas y no tienen más árboles que los cocoteros arraigados en el polvo del coral" (22n1).

⁴⁴² The fact that he calls it "study" also brings us back to the perception of Russian realist writings as anthropological studies.

⁴⁴³ "Posiblemente algún día escribiré la historia de los diez días de Erdosain. Actualmente me es imposible hacerlo, pues no entraría en este libro otro tan voluminoso como el que ocuparán las dichas impresiones. Téngase en cuenta de que la presente memoria no ocupa nada más que tres días de actividades reales de los personajes y que a pesar del espacio dispuesto, no he podido dar sino ciertos estados subjetivos de los protagonistas cuya acción continuará en otro volumen que se llamará *Los lanzallamas*. En la segunda parte que prepare y en la que Erdosain me dió abundantísimos detalles, figuran sucesos extraordinarios como la "Prostituta Ciega", "Aventuras de Elsa", "El Hombre en compañía de Jesús y la "Fábrica de gases asfíxiantes" (89).

Arlt's work is a subtle parody of Dostoevsky's writing in translation. But it is this parody of a "serious" translation that restores the parody inscribed already in the original. Although Dostoevsky's work is always perceived as tragic and somber, Russian critics often point to the humor and parody in Dostoevsky's work. Tynianov underlines Dostoevsky's humor both in literature and in life and his great ability to turn tragic into comic:

Dostoevsky transferred also the tragic traits of the reality of life into his works, sometimes drastically changing their emotional shade into a comical one. I apologize for the heavy example, but it is that it is too convincing. Andrei Mikhailovich Dostoevsky shares the memories about his mother's tombstone: "My father let his brothers choose the inscription for the tombstone. The two decided to simply indicate her name, last name, date of birth and death. But on the backside of the tombstone they chose Kharamsin's words: "Rest in peace, lovely ashes, till the happy morning... ." And that is the inscription that was made.⁴⁴⁴

To lose irony⁴⁴⁵ in Dostoevsky means to pass by the parodic nature of his writings and his

⁴⁴⁴ Достоевский переносил и трагические черты действительной жизни в произведения, иногда резко меняя их эмоциональную окраску на комическую. Я извиняюсь за тяжелый пример, но он слишком убедителен.

Андрей Михайлович Достоевский вспоминает о памятнике над могилой матери: "Избрание надписи на памятнике отец предоставил братьям. Они оба решили, чтобы было только обозначено имя, фамилия, день рождения и смерти. На заднюю же сторону памятника выбрали надпись из Карамзина: "Покойся, милый прах, до радостного утра...". И эта прекрасная надпись была исполнена".

⁴⁴⁵ Alejandro Ariel González adscribes the erasure of the irony to the change of the genre in the process of translation. As he says in his article "Достоевский в Аргентине" ("Dostoevsky in Argentina"), there is a genre incongruence between Russian and Hispanic literature. Although there is a tendency to use *nouvelle* or a long short story or a short novel for a Russian "повесть," there is a big difference. Since a genre is defined not only quantitatively, but also qualitatively, an approximate substitution of genre, thus leads to content changes. As Alejandro Ariel González explains, many times in a Spanish translation signs of colloquial speech characteristic to the genre, get lost, such as a certain colloquial intonation, phrasal forms characteristic to a certain individual, humor, irony and sarcasm (124). In his «Повести Достоевского на испанском языке: диалог культур, недоразумение или монолог переводчика?» ("Dostoevsky's Short Novels in Spanish: The Dialogue of Cultures, Misunderstanding or the Translator's Monologue"), González also says: "On the one hand, in Spanish translations of Dostoevsky there exist a repeated phenomenon: *the loss of stylistic traits*, characteristic to his short novels, and in the first place – the trace of spoken language (the destruction of vernacular networks, ennoblement (Berman)). It seems like translators under the impression that "all that could be expected from Dostoevsky is something serious, heavy, profound [...], focus only on the content, plot and do not want in any way to pay any attention to the tropes that the author uses to express all those. In this way, in the Spanish version little is left of the humor, irony, doubts of the narrator; diminutive forms [...], idioms, characters' intonations disappear" (506).

descendance from Gogol, as Tynianov, (a fine parodist himself)⁴⁴⁶ discusses in detail in his article “Достоевский и Гоголь. К теории пародии” (“Dostoevsky and Gogol. Towards a Theory of Parody”). He argues that Dostoevsky parodies Gogol,⁴⁴⁷ along with Turgenev, and many other Russian literary classics, and parody in general keeps reappearing in his work:

Dostoevsky insistingly introduces literature into his works; seldomly his characters do not talk about literatures. Here lies, of course, a very convenient parodic trope: it is enough for a character to simply express his literary opinion for it to take in a shade of *his* opinion; if it's a comic character, the opinion will turn comic too. In *Netochka Nezvanova* Timofeev's play *Jacobo Sannazar* is parodied; In *Humiliated and Insulted* the old Ikhmenev criticizes *Poor Folk* (parodying the review in the “Northern Bee”), talks a lot about Belinsky.⁴⁴⁸

Tynianov continues with the long list of the examples of parody in Dostoevsky's work, putting a special emphasis on the importance of the parody of Gogol as some of the examples constitute entire chapters. One of the essential points for my argument in his

⁴⁴⁶ See N. Khardzheiv, "Тынянов — Пародист (“Tynianov-Parodist”).

⁴⁴⁷ “Так начинается “Дядюшкин сон” (я привел отрывки). Здесь все приемы гоголевские: одно и то же слово замыкает рядом стоящие предложения (“нуждается” -- “нуждаются”), гипербола, синонимы, расположенные в климаксе (“убить, растерзать, уничтожить”; “замято, затушено”, ср. у Гоголя: “ободрил, освежил”, “туманно и неясно” и др.), иностранные слова как комический прием (“капитальные и скандалезные вещи”, ср. у Гоголя: “поведение его чересчур становилось скандалезно”) и т. д.

Таким образом, ничто не мешает нам принять этот отрывок за стилизацию. Но под конец главы сам Достоевский обнажает пародийность, наполовину срывая пародийную маску (но только наполовину, потому что самое обнажение производится все тем же пародийным стилем) : “Все, что прочел теперь благосклонный читатель, было написано мною месяцев пять тому назад, единственно из умиления <...> Мне хотелось написать что-нибудь вроде похвального слова этой великолепной даме и изобразить все это в форме игривого письма к приятелю, по примеру писем, печатавшихся когда-то в старое, золотое, но, слава богу, невозвратное время в “Северной пчеле” и в прочих повременных изданиях” (2, 299).

⁴⁴⁸ Достоевский настойчиво вводит литературу в свои произведения; редко действующие лица не говорят о литературе. Здесь, конечно, очень удобный пародический прием: достаточно определенному действующему лицу высказать литературное мнение, чтобы оно приняло окраску *его* мнения; если лицо комическое, то и мнение будет комическим.

В “Неточке Незвановой” пародирована пьеса Тимофеева “Джакобо Санназар”; [...] В “Униженных и оскорбленных” старик Ихменев критикует “Бедных людей” (пародируя отзыв “Северной пчелы”), много говорит о Белинском; ” (1, 53).

analyzes of Dostoevsky's parody is that Tynianov thinks that Dostoevsky parodies a tragic, carefully-developed plot and this is where his grotesque originality lies.⁴⁴⁹

The loss of Dostoevsky's parody in translation had a bifurcated effect on the Argentine writers, who claimed to be following in Dostoevsky's monumental footsteps, more explicitly, the Boedo group. The writing of Castelnuovo exhibits his imitation and often exaggeration of Dostoevsky's tragic representation of the plot, that, as Tynianov showed, was a parody of the exaggerated tragedy. Thus, Castelnuovo's writing ended up being of the kind that Dostoevsky criticized through parody. Other writers however, such as Roberto Arlt turned the tragic sense of the translations of Dostoevsky back into parody, turning translation into a creative springboard for the Argentine avant-garde and bringing the two literatures closer.

That does not permit us to assign a second-rate quality to Arlt's novels in relation to Dostoevsky's work. Arlt's writing is not an imitation of Dostoyevsky's work, but rather its "*trasposición, parodia, estilización, traducción*, cuya función es, entre otras, 'literaturizante y elevadora' de la escritura" (Zubieta 19). Although Dostoevsky is the model of the Boedo group, as seen in the clear-cut dichotomy established by Roberto Mariani in his "La extrema izquierda"⁴⁵⁰ (X), one of the essays in the series of texts that

⁴⁴⁹ "Быть может, эта тонкая ткань стилизации-пародии над трагическим, развитым сюжетом и составляет гротескное своеобразие Достоевского».

⁴⁵⁰ In this text, he draws the following dichotomy:

Florida	Boedo
Vanguardia	Izquierda
Ultraísmo	Realismo
"Martín Fierro" y "Proa"	"Extrema Izquierda", "Los Pensadores" y "Claridad"
La greguería	El cuento y la novela
La metáfora	El asunto y la composición
Ramón Gómez de la Serna	Fedor Dostoiewski

open *Exposición de la actual poesía argentina (1922-1927)*, it is precisely the way Arlt employs Dostoevsky's works, that distinguishes him from the other Boedo writers, as Ana María Zubieta asserts as well:

La exaltación de Dostoyevski fue una de las banderas que agitó el grupo de Boedo del que Arlt fue contemporáneo y con el que tuvo algunas coincidencias pero, la adhesión al escritor ruso – aunque resulte paradójico –, fue uno de los aspectos divergentes entre Arlt y los boedistas; en efecto, el sentimentalismo de los escritores de Boedo se empeñó y se ostinó en una lectura de Dostoyevski centrada en la miseria, en la marginalidad de los personajes y enlazó a ellas las penurias del trabajo considerado el condensador privilegiado de la explotación y la enfermedad, de la virtud y el sacrificio. Operando de esa manera redujeron a términos de realismo-naturalismo aspectos de la narrativa dostoyevskiana totalmente alejados de esos cánones. (21)

Noé Jitrik expresses a similar thought in his anthology of Arlt's works:

eso que está poniendo en movimiento es, por lo menos, lo siguiente: una más profundizada filosofía de la angustia que puede deberle bastante a Dostoievski en un sentido bien diferente a la deuda que con el escritor ruso tienen los boedistas, digamos la veta Berdiaev que sale del mismo tronco; un sistema narrativo que no desdeña la tarea del narrador a través de “métodos” narrativos, como el del cronista que, no obstante, en su omnisciencia, rompe la verosimilitud realista. (12-13)

Horacio González Aires also notes in his Introduction to the catalog of the 2013 exhibition in the Museo del Libro y la Palabra called “Arlt en dos”:

Es fácil ver la apología del crimen como una postulación de la voluntad existencial en su prueba mayor. El hábito dostoyevskiano está siempre presente. Pero es como si Arlt lo hubiese depurado, descargado de esa orfebrería cortesana, barroca o principesca. Recordemos a Erdosain: “Entonces, después de ese silencio y vacío me sube dese el corazón la curiosidad del asesinato. Eso mismo. No estoy loco, ya que sé pensar, razonar. Me sube la curiosidad del asesinato, curiosidad que debe ser mi última tristeza, la tristeza de la curiosidad. Eso, eso mismo. Ver cómo se comporta mi conciencia y mi sensibilidad en la acción de un crimen”. Miles de lectores leyeron estos párrafos raskolnicovianos. Pero están escritos con un

despojamiento plebeyo, hijo del folletín y la mueca descarnada del arlequín descalabrado. (7-8)

Although Roberto Arlt was referred to as “little Dostoyevsky,” he didn’t just recognize the influence of Dostoyevsky on his work,⁴⁵¹ but also tried to adapt his works to the reality of Argentina that often puts his work on the borderline with a parody.⁴⁵²

Arlt’s work illustrates the ability of art to arrive at one destination in spite of the detours imposed by translation. However, it does not diminish the importance of translation. Translation, as illustrated above, is one of the of tools and elements of Arlt’s innovative writing. It is also Dostoevsky’s Spanish translator, not Dostoevsky, whose language constructed the ideas that reappeared in Arlt’s work. Some of the quotes from Dostoevsky’s novel were born in translation. Twice in his novel, Arlt says that Erdosain feels separated from the rest of the people. One, that has been quoted earlier, is undoubtedly an implicit quote of Dostoevsky:

Cuando se encontró solo en la calle Centenario, bloqueado de frente y a las espaldas por dos murallas de neblina, recordó que al día siguietne lo asesinarían a Barsut. Era cierto. Lo asesinarían. Hubiera querido tener un espejo frente a sus ojos, para ver su cuerpo asesino, tan inverosímil le parecía ser él (el yo) quien con *tal crimen*

⁴⁵¹ Speaking about her father’s theater, Mirta Arlt notes Dostoyevsky’s trace in it as well, along with other big influences:

“Los poetas, dramaturgos y novelistas de su vida anterior están juntos a él, porque cuando hay que crear se crea: “Dios o el diablo están junto a uno dictándole inefables palabras” como él diría.

“Por eso, y a riesgo de repetir lo sabido, podemos rastrear en su teatro la influencia de Dostoiewski (*Crimen y castigo* sobre todo) y, a través del ruso, la dominante sombra de Nietzsche, con su doctrina de superhombre, y Poe, con su parodójico deleite por las conductas morbosas, y Freud, con su necesidad de desenmascarar el subconsciente” (*Prólogos* 79-80). Later Mirta calls *El fabricante de fantasmas* “la más dostoienskiana de sus obras” and explains that the play “[p]arte de que cierta élite puede prescindir de normas y moral. Pedro, en la cárcel, y en diálogo con su conciencia, no acepta el remordimiento e insiste: “¿Por qué no? ¡He matado a mi mujer! ¡Y bien! ¿Qué hay? Otro hombre se golpearía la cabeza...” Pero Pedro no. Pedro, como Raskolnikov, piensa que el crimen le permitirá realizarse en la vida” (*Prólogos* 92-93).

⁴⁵² Zubieta compares parody to stylitization, since in the two “el autor habla por la palabra de otro pero introduce una orientación interpretativa contraria; la palabra sirve de arena de lucha a dos voces cuya fusión es imposible. Las voces se enfrentan con hostilidad y la percepción de la palabra del otro es fuerte y marcada” (23).

se iba a separar de todos los hombres. [...] Tenía ahora la sensación de que su alma se había apartado para siempre de todo afecto terrestre. (139; my emphasis)

[Away from the station in Centenario, with a wall of fog in front and another behind him, he remembered that the next day they were going to kill Barsut. It was true. They were going to kill him. Erdosain would have liked to have a mirror to hold up so he could see his murderer's body, so incredible did it seem that he was the one (the "I") [to be him (the I)] who through *this crime was about to separate himself from the rest of humanity. [...] He felt as though his soul had finally become detached forever from any human emotion.*] (177-178; my emphasis)

It looks as if he copied from the translation of Dostoevsky's novel:

Se realizaba en él un fenómeno completamente nuevo, sin precedentes hasta entonces. Comprendía, o más bien, cosa cien veces peor, sentía que en lo sucesivo *estaría separado para siempre de la comunidad humana*, que toda expansion sentimental como la que había tenido un momento antes, más todavía, que toda la conversación le estaba prohibida, no solo con los empleados de la comisaría, sino hasta parientes más próximos. Jamás había experimentado sensación tan cruel. (131-132; my emphasis)

However, the Russian original reveals that this idea of separation from humanity is the translator's fruitful creation:

С ним совершалось что-то совершенно ему незнакомое, новое, внезапное и никогда не бывалое. Не то чтоб он понимал, но он ясно ощущал, всю силу ощущения, что не только с чувствительными экспансивностями, как давеча, но даже с чем бы то ни было ему уже нельзя более обращаться к этим людям, в квартальной конторе, и будь это все его родные братья и сестры, а не квартальные поручики, то и тогда ему совершенно незачем было бы обращаться к ним и даже ни в каком случае жизни; он никогда еще до сей минуты не испытывал подобного странного и ужасного ощущения. И что всего мучительнее – это было более ощущение, чем сознание, чем понятие; непосредственное ощущение, мучительнейшее ощущение из всех до сих пор жизнью пережитых им ощущений. (52)

[What was taking place in him was totally unfamiliar, new, sudden, never before

experienced. Not that he understood it, but he sensed clearly, that it was no longer possible for him to address these people in the police station, not only with heartfelt effusions, as he had just done, but in any way at all, and had they been his own brothers and sisters, and not police lieutenants, there would still have been no point in his addressing them, in whatever circumstances of life. Never until that minute had he experienced such a strange and terrible sensation. And most tormenting of all was that it was more a sensation than an awareness, and idea; a spontaneous sensation, the most tormenting of any he had yet experienced in his life.] (103)

This same idea of isolation from the rest of the humanity reappears in the Spanish version of *Crime and Punishment*: “La situación de Raskolnikoff era muy extraña; parecía que una especie de niebla le envolvía y aislaba del resto de los hombres” (181; my emphasis). However, Dostoevsky simply says: “Для Раскольникова наступило странное время: точно туман упал вдруг перед ним и заключил его в безвыходное и тяжелое уединение [A strange time came for Raskolnikov: it was as if fog suddenly fell around him and confined him in a hopeless and heavy solitude (439)]” (210). Although the idea is there in the original, it is its repeated wording in the translation and reappearance in Arlt’s work that calls one’s attention and turns translation into a creative field and a field for creation. Translation also becomes the space for effectuation of a change.⁴⁵³ Although it is Borges⁴⁵⁴ who is considered the writer who revolutionized the question of brevity in Argentine literature,⁴⁵⁵ we see the budding of it in Arlt’s negotiation with the length of

⁴⁵³ More about the change in Arlt’s work and the work of the Argentine writers from 1920 to 1930, in Lauren Juárez, “El modo fantástico.” *Roberto Arlt en los años treinta*.

⁴⁵⁴ More on the relation between Borges and Arlt in Jorge B. Rivera, “Borges esquina Arlt. Trayectoria y confluencias de un entrañable tema de nuestra literatura”; Fernando Sorrentino, “Borges y Arlt: las paralelas que se tocan.”

⁴⁵⁵ María Kodama attributes the concision of Borges’ texts to two things: the fact that he had to dictate them in order for them to be written down and the fact that he grew up hearing and speaking English: “una cosa es escribir y otra es dictar. Dictar obliga a una gran concisión. La prosa de Borges tiene una concisión que antes no tenía la prosa española. Y esa concisión viene del inglés que le enseñó la abuela, que le leía en inglés, le hablaba en inglés” (“Borges y Kodama: Postdata a un idilio, “para toda la eternidad, más un día”).

Russian novels.⁴⁵⁶ Arlt makes a parody out of Raskolnikov's wordy and lengthy speeches by making the narrator note:

In my retelling of this episode, I have omitted to mention that when Erdosain got carried away, he would circle around his central "*idea*"⁴⁵⁷ with a torrent of words. In the grip of a slow frenzy which as he spoke gave him the feeling of being *extraordinary rather than a useless nobody*,⁴⁵⁸ *he had to exhaust every last possibility of expression*. I had no doubt he was telling the truth. What confused me was the question I kept asking myself: where did this man get the strength from to bear the sight of himself like this for so long? It seemed his whole vocation was to look into himself, to analyse what was going on inside him, as if the very *accumulation of details* could convince him he was really alive. I insist: *a dead man blessed with the power of speech could not have said more than Erdosain did*, to persuade himself he was not in fact dead.⁴⁵⁹ (65-66; my emphasis)

This comic criticism of the length of Dostoevsky's novels stems, however, from the novel itself. Raskolnikov notes at the very beginning that he talks too much and that is why he cannot do anything else (I first quote the Spanish translation here as that is what Arlt had read):

hablo demasiado... Tal vez por el hábito adquirido de monologar con exceso no hago nada... Verdad es que con la misma razón podría decir que es a causa de no hacer nada por lo que hablo tanto. Un mes completo hace que he tomado la costumbre de monologar acurrucado durante días enteros en un rincón, con el espíritu ocupado con mil quimeras. Veamos: ¿por qué me doy esta Carrera? ¿Soy capaz de *eso*? ¿Es serio *eso*? No, de ningún modo; patrañas que entretienen mi

⁴⁵⁶ See Ricardo Piglia, "Roberto Arlt: una crítica de la economía literaria." *Los libros*.

⁴⁵⁷ This is an implicit reference to Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment* in which Raskolnikov constantly goes back to the *idea*.

⁴⁵⁸ An echo of Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment*.

⁴⁵⁹ "En el curso de esta historia he olvidado decir que cuando Erdosain se entusiasmaba, giraba en torno de la "*idea*" eje con palabras numerosas. Necesitaba agotar todas las posibilidades de expression, poseído por ese frenesí lento que a través de las frases le daba a él la conciencia de ser un hombre extraordinario y no un desdichado. Que decía la verdad, no me cabía duda. Lo que muchas veces me confundió fue la pregunta que a mí me hice: ¿de dónde sacaba ese hombre energías para soportar su espectáculo tanto tiempo? No hacía otra cosa que examinar, que analizar lo que en él ocurría, como si la suya de detalles pudiera darle la certidumbre de que vivía. Insisto. Un muerto que tuviera el poder de conversar no hablaría más que él, para cerciorarse de que en apariencia no estaba muerto" (66).

In this passage Arlt comes close to Macedonio when he doubts fictitious characters' "realism" in a humorous way. See Chapter 2 of this dissertation.

imaginación, puras fantasías.⁴⁶⁰ (5-6)

[I babble too much, however. That's why I don't do anything, because I babble. However, maybe it's like this: I babble because I don't do anything. I've learned to babble over this past month, lying in a corner day in and day out, thinking about... cuckooland. Why on earth am I going now? Am I really capable of *that*? Is *that* something serious? No, not serious at all. I'm just toying with it, for the sake of fantasy. A plaything! Yes, a plaything, if you like! (3-4)]

Talking about the Dostoevsky-Arlt relation, we should not forget that this does not give Arlt's work a secondary quality in relation to Dostoevsky's. First of all, looking at literary relationships through a prism of influences, we would then have to call Dostoevsky's own writing secondary in relation to Balzac. As Leonid Grossman points out, there is a lot in Dostoevsky's writing that he borrows from the French writer. Even his first published work was a translation of Balzac's *Eugénie Grandet* that came out two years before his own *Poor People*. For Grossman this translation became a "narrow gateway to the world of art of Dostoevsky" as it was a literary finding for Dostoevsky that turned into a creative catalyst (*Dostoevsky's Poetics*).⁴⁶¹ He adds that Raskolnikov's ideas were openly borrowed from European philosophers, a fact that is clearly indicated in the text: "Вы видите, что до сих пор тут ничего особенно нового. Это тысячу раз было напечатано и прочитано [You see that up to here there hasn't been anything new. This has been written and said a thousand times]," says Raskolnikov. Also, Grossman points out that Dostoevsky's characters differ from others in their sharp bluntness. Tolstoy,

⁴⁶⁰ "я слишком много болтаю. Оттого и ничего не делаю, что болтаю. Пожалуй, впрочем, и так: оттого болтаю, что ничего не делаю. Это я в этот последний месяц выучился болтать, лежа по целым суткам в углу и думая... о царе Горохе. Ну зачем я теперь иду? Разве я способен на это? Разве это серьезно? Совсем не серьезно. Так ради фантазии сам себя тешу; игрушки! Да, пожалуй что и игрушки!" (3).

⁴⁶¹ On the relation of Dostoevsky's work with the work of Balzac, see also Donald Fanger, *Dostoevsky and Romantic Realism: A Study of Dostoevsky in Relation to Balzac, Dickens, and Gogol*.

Turguenev, Chekhov and Goncharov's characters are vaguer and softer. What we see in Dostoevsky has foreign roots: it goes back to the Anglo-French adventure novel. In Balzac's work, Dostoevsky found not only the shapes of the plots and characters that were still forming in his mind, but also whole phrases that had already been written in French by Balzac.⁴⁶²

This process is demonstrated in the content of Arlt's novels, but in regards to language, Arlt imitates not Dostoevsky's writing, but the translations of his work. He parodies them and through this, gets closer to the original because irony, polyphony and polysemy are lost in translation. This way he creates a new literature: "La adición transformadora, la superación y la crítica desencadenan una literatura nueva, alejada de los módulos vigentes canonizados e iniciadora de un nuevo ciclo dentro de la literatura argentina" (Zubieta 68-69). Moreover:

Con la inserción de personajes marginales y actuales (eliminación de cualquier matiz heroico), con la creación de un universo de ficción en el que la realidad histórico-social se transparenta velada y deformada, aceptando la filiación dostoyevskiana pero transformándola de modo que de ella se admiten elementos que sirven predominantemente como soportes constructivos, Arlt se coloca en una posición contestataria en relación al grupo de Boedo poniendo de manifiesto que "escribir mal" (de lo que se lo acusó repetidamente) no es tener un "mal estilo" más o menos plagado de metáforas sino que es una práctica significativa que poco tiene que ver con el mal empleo de una palabra o con un neologismo aventurado por su conformación. (Zubieta 45)

Russian writers' so-called writing "sin gusto" (in translation) helped Arlt to get rid of pompousness of the language that became fundamental for the Boom novel. In Arlt

[h]ay una conciencia de estar rompiendo con el lenguaje afectado, la palabrería inútil, la retórica pomposa, y en este sentido es un iniciador más de la característica

⁴⁶² Grossman presents a close comparative textual analysis to demonstrate this.

fundamental de la “nueva novela”, la degradación del lenguaje como primer paso hacia la renovación y revitalización de la literatura. Arlt no tenía ni capacidad ni deseos de escribir con la grandilocuencia de los posmodernistas de su tiempo, e hizo virtud de sus defectos, abriendo el camino al estilo directo, preciso, crudo e irregular. (Goštautas 140)

In “Roberto Arlt: Direct from Buenos Aires’ Underbelly”, Kate Bowen echoes Goštautas, establishing a link between Arlt’s writing and the coming of age of the “boom” novel:

In saturating his work with a language that was as grossly urban as his themes, Arlt wrote with deliberate disregard for the rules knowingly observed by other authors. But whilst his unpolished colloquial writing came under fire from some, it was undoubtedly a refreshing move away from the middle-class literature exemplified by the Argentine writers of the same time.

Citing the changing of ideas as a reason to reject literary tradition, he made little effort to ‘linger over embroidery’, presenting a case for language being something that is constantly evolving, as though it were living.

It was this attitude that gained him the respect of a new generation of writers, who saw him as a proponent of anti-establishment anti-literary writing.

Julio Cortázar, author of the Argentine ‘anti-novel’ and the big name to have emerged from the Latin American literature boom of the 1960s regarded Arlt as a master, whilst award-winning writer Ricardo Piglia and ‘mass novelist’ César Aira have also cited him as particularly influential. (Bowen)

Arlt also participated in the rethinking and reconstruction of realism that was discussed in the previous chapter. For Eduardo Romano, his realism is distinct in that through his descriptions, he creates a phantasmagoric atmosphere, a sort of Brechtian estrangement, that baffles the readers accustomed to the realist way of creating an illusion of reality (148). In *Roberto Arlt en los años treinta*, Laura Susana Juárez also points out that in Arlt’s plays transpires a certain preference of “the poetics of irreality, estrangement and the rupture of the realist verosimilarity”.⁴⁶³ In his work, especially his later plays, Arlt rethinks the limits of fiction and reality the way Macedonio does, which also constitutes one of the foundations

⁴⁶³ “las poéticas de la irrealidad, del extrañamiento y de las rupturas del verosímil realista” (43).

of Borges' writing (Juárez 44).⁴⁶⁴

The frightening part of this realism lies not only in its ability to reflect the present, but also in its ability to predict the future. Timerman in his *Prisoner without a Name, Cell without a Number*, draws a parallel with Dostoevsky and notes that Arlt actually predicted the Dirty War in his *Los siete locos*:

For a long while one could presume, with goodwill and a measure of liberalism, that Lenin had forecast Russia's future and the Socialist structure in conformance with the way in which it was materializing. Stalin's death, Khrushchev's speech at the 20th Party Congress, and information about the existence of the Gulags all indicated that the more logical point of reference for the Russian reality might still be Dostoyevsky. Something similar transpired in Argentina: suddenly all information and inquiries regarding its history and its present, all predictions as to its future, crystalized in a relatively short book, a curious novel of the late 1920s by Roberto Arlt, entitled *The Seven Madmen*. (12)

According to the planned development of the plot of Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazovs*, Aliosha Karamazov was supposed to kill the Tsar. In the novel, it is Dostoevsky's death in February of 1881 that prevented the Tsar's death. Several days after Dostoevsky's death, Alejandro II was killed in a terrorist attack. This event and the Revolution that unfolded continued in accordance with Dostoevsky's predictions according to Berdiayev (Lobos XXII). His novel *The Demons* also predicts with great detail

⁴⁶⁴ Later on in her thesis Laura Juárez defines the genre of Arlt's writing as *fantasy*: "En este sentido, si las novelas de Arlt tampoco son "realistas", (aunque no por ello sean decididamente "fantásticas") y están atravesadas, como sostiene Analía Capdevila, por "fracturas y distanciamientos" de lo verosímil (o del realismo) que se promete al lector en las primeras páginas ("en la voz narrativa, en la construcción del personaje y en la figuración descriptiva de los espacios"), podría decirse que en estas obras se trataría, como analiza esta autora, de un tipo de textos que incorpora elementos de la vanguardia, tanto expresionista como futurista, cruzado con rasgos vinculables a los modos de lo fantástico tradicional (como las alucinaciones, las ensoñaciones, los dobles, por ejemplo, en la construcción de la subjetividad de Erdosain o del resto de los personajes) que también quiebran la narración realista, aunque no se resuelven en relatos fantásticos. En este sentido, a diferencia de las novelas, en los cuentos que aparecen en los años treinta se trataría, en cambio, de un *fantasy* que involuciona o que "atrás" en relación a lo que el mismo Arlt ya había escrito, porque vuelve al modernismo, al decadentismo y al relato maravilloso" (132n5).

the events of the Russian revolution.⁴⁶⁵

Arlt himself noticed this prophetic ability of his novel, as he was writing it:

La organización de la sociedad secreta, aunque parezca un absurdo, no lo es. Hace quince días, telegramas publicados en distintos diarios, dieron noticias de la detención en Estados Unidos de los miembros de una sociedad secreta que se llamaba “La Orden del Gran Sello”. Los propósitos de los sujetos afiliados a esta sociedad, eran idénticos a los que se atribuyen a los personajes de mi novela. Es decir, que no he hecho nada más que reproducir un estado de anarquismo misterioso latente en el seno de todo desorientado y locoide. (qtd. en *Para leer a Roberto Arlt*)

In another instance he feels forced to include a “Nota del Autor” to underline the fact that he was not copying or making fun of the real events, but that reality was copying his literature, as if to make fun of it:

Esta novela fue escrita en los años 28 y 29 y editada por la editorial Rosso, en el mes de octubre de 1929. Sería irrisorio entonces, creer que las manifestaciones del Mayor han sido sugeridas por el movimiento revolucionario del 6 de septiembre de 1930. Indudablemente, resulta curioso que las declaraciones de los revolucionarios del 6 de septiembre coincidan con tanta exactitud con aquéllas que hace el Mayor y cuyo desarrollo confirma numerosos sucesos acaecidos después del 6 de septiembre. (*Arlt en dos* 113)

Arlt’s work thus gives origin to a new Argentine literature and reality by drawing parody out of Russian literature translations.⁴⁶⁶ This statement acquires even more importance when we take into consideration Abelardo Castillo’s recognition of the fundamental role Arlt played in Argentine literature:

en la Argentina, desde hace cincuenta años, no hay casi escritor que no le deba algo a Arlt. Onetti, Cortázar, Sabato, el Marechal de *El banquete de Severo Arcángelo*, toda mi generación – con resultados lamentables a veces –, han ido casi fatalmente a parar a Arlt. También Borges. Algún crítico ya ha denunciado con vehemencia policíaca lo que el propio Borges admitió con sosegada naturalidad: el cuento “El indigno”, de *El informe de Brodie*, es apenas la reescritura de uno de los temas de

⁴⁶⁵ More on Dostoevsky’s historic intuition in Alex De Jonge. *Dostoevsky and the Age of Intensity*, Secker & Warburg, 1975; in Rene Fueloep-Miller. *Fyodor Dostoevsky: Insight, Faith, and Prophecy*. Scribner, 1950.

⁴⁶⁶ See Mario Goloboff. *Genio y figura de Roberto Arlt*.

El juguete rabioso, un homenaje a Arlt. [...] Arlt escribía mal – cuando escribía mal⁴⁶⁷ – porque se había propuesto lúcidamente escribir bien. Y cuando realmente escribía bien, lo que hoy entendemos por escribir bien, fundó, con Borges y Marechal, un modelo de prosa argentina que es el origen de la mejor narrativa de nuestros días. (*Aguafuertes porteñas*)

He writes that Ricardo Piglia Arlt “is the only truly modern writer that Argentine literature has produced in the twentieth century” (*Artificial Respiration* 130).⁴⁶⁸ He argues that modern Argentine literature dies with the death of Arlt and “lo que sigue es un páramo sombrío” (*Respiración artificial* 127). His writings establish the base for the “nueva narrativa”⁴⁶⁹ of Cortazar, Fuentes, and Cabrera Infante.⁴⁷⁰ His four novels “han marcado un hito entre la novela tradicional de su tiempo y la ‘nueva novela’ que le iba a seguir. Hay que considerarlo como un escritor de transición” (Goštautas 146). As can be clearly seen, translation had its role in the development of the form and the narrative tools of Arlt’s novel.

However, the account would not be complete without at least touching upon its political thought. In *Los siete locos*, references to Lenin are frequent. Although Arlt’s

⁴⁶⁷ Juan Ángel Jurista in the Prologue to *Seis problemas para don Isidro Parodi* says that “Borges y en general todo el grupo Sur despreciaban [a Roberto Arlt] por su descuido idiomático”. More on the issue in “El amor brujo: la novela ‘mala’ de Roberto Arlt”, in Graciela Montaldo, et al. *Irigoyen, entre Borges y Arlt.*; Roberto Arlt. “¿Cómo quieren que les escriba?”, in Roberto Arlt. *Aguafuertes porteñas: cultura y política.*

⁴⁶⁸ “es el único escritor verdaderamente moderno que produjo la literatura argentina del siglo XX” (*Respiración artificial* 130).

⁴⁶⁹ See “Cómo se escribe una novela”, in Roberto Arlt. *Obra Completa*, Vol. 2, Buenos Aires, Carlos Lolh e, 1981; Laura Juárez, Laura. “Las aguafuertes de Roberto Arlt: el itinerario de un desplazamiento en la imagen de escritor y en la poética de la novela”, in Vázquez, María Celia y Pastormerlo, Sergio (comp.) *Literatura argentina. Perspectivas de fin de siglo*, Actas del X Congreso Nacional de Literatura Argentina, Eudeba, 2001, pp. 283-292; José Luis de Diego. “Arlt y los setentas”, in *Boletín/9*. Del centro de estudios de teoría y crítica literaria, Rosario 2001; Noé Jitrik. “1926, año decisivo para la narrativa argentina” in *Escritores argentinos*. Dependencia o libertad, Ediciones del Candil, 1967; Blas Matamoro. “Güiraldes, Arlt y la novela educativa” in *Cuadernos Hispanoamericanos*, 432, 1986: pp. 61-69.

⁴⁷⁰ For more opinions about Arlt’s role in the Argentine literature and a full bibliography, see Omar Borr e’s *Roberto Arlt y la crítica, 1926-1990: Estudio, cronología y bibliografía.*

intelligence and sharp perception of the present allowed him to evaluate Lenin's position, the translation and the choice of articles to translate and publish in *Claridad* helped to create a space in which Lenin's ideas could inspire the "locos" of Arlt's novel. Translation is part of the texture of thought about Lenin that different characters repeat throughout the novel. For example: "He [Erdoesain] drew close to the Astrologer's house his heart pulsing with renewed enthusiasm, repeating to himself like a haunting refrain Lenin's phrase: 'What kind of a revolution is this if we don't shoot anyone'" (114-115).⁴⁷¹ Just one look at the piece called "Opiniones sobre Lenin" published in *Claridad*'s issue 199 on January 25, 1930 shows how translation played into the creation of this idea (77). The tyranny of the Revolution was exposed much more openly in Latin America than in Russia. For example, next to Barbusse's quote we find the quote of Herman Keyserling exposing the violence of Lenin's regime: "Todos los espíritus supremos han sido realistas, como Lenin. Yo no apruebo los especiales métodos terroristas de Lenin; si acudió a ellos, si tuvo que acudir a ellos fué porque su espíritu era en alto grado satánico" (24). Today Khomizuri's "Ленин о терропе (цитаты без комментариев)" (*Lenin on Terror (Quotes with no Comments)*) exposes Lenin's violence through Lenin's own words. For example: "Принципиально мы никогда не отказывались и не можем отказываться от террора. Это – одно из военных

⁴⁷¹"[Erdoesain] [a]vanzaba ahora hacia la quinta del Astrólogo con el corazón batiente de entusiasmo, repitiéndose la frase de Lenin, como una musiquita llena de voluptuosidad: ¡Qué diablo de revolución es ésta si no fusilamos a nadie!" (96). This is very similar to Dmitry Shlapentokh's way of describing Trotsky's vision of the Russian revolution, which in its turn is echoed in the American way of propagating their "brand of capitalism" (5): "In a curious way, neo-conservatives' view on promoting American capitalism as the omega of world history, with the help of the bayonets of the American army, are similar to Trotsky's idea of promoting world-wide revolution and the Soviet brand of socialism. This was also seen, if not as the omega of world history, at least as the sure path to the "end of history" – communism by the bayonets of the Red Army" (5).

действий, которое может быть вполне пригодно и даже необходимо в известный момент сражения, при известном состоянии войска и при известных условиях” (Ленин, ПСС, т. 5, с. 7), (May 1901). In *Los siete locos* Barsut also says: “Who is going to make the social revolution if it’s not the swindlers, the wretched, the murderers, the cheats, all the scum that suffer here below without the slightest sign of hope? Or do you reckon it’s the penpushers and the shopkeepers who are going to make the revolution?” (14).⁴⁷² The idea and its phrasing are very similar to Lenin’s words that appeared in “Opiniones sobre Lenin”:

Imbéciles, charlatanes e idiotas, ¿creéis que la historia se hace en los salones, donde los demócratas de alcurnia fraternizan con los titulados liberals, donde los abogadillos provincianos de ayer aprenden pronto a besar ilustres manitas de señora?

¡Imbéciles! ¡Charlatanes! ¡Idiotas! La historia se hace en las trincheras, donde, bajo la insensate presión de la locura bélica, el soldado clava su bayoneta en el cuerpo del official y escapa a su pueblo natal para incendiary la casa señorial.

Tamaña barbaridad os disgusta. Entonces no os acaloréis, os responde la historia: soportadlos. No son más que meras consecuencias de todo lo que ha sido. ¿Os imagináis que la historia se hace en vuestros comités? ¡Tontería! ¡Garrulería! ¡Fantasía! ¡Cretinismo! La historia, esto puede probarse, ha escogido en este momento el palacio de la danzarina Kchesinskaya, la primera mujer del primer zar, como su laboratorio de preparación. Y allí, desde aquel edificio, simbólico para la vieja Rusia, ella prepara la liquidación de todo nuestro Petersburgo zarista, de la nobleza burocrática, de la corrupción y desvergüenza de la burguesía y de los “junkers”. Aquí, al palacio de la primera bailarina imperial, han venido a montones los delegados rusos de las factorías, con los mensajeros grises, llenos de cicatrices, piojosos, de las trincheras, y de aquí van a salir las neuvvas palabras proféticas que volarán por todo el país.⁴⁷³ (23)

⁴⁷² “¿Quiénes van a hacer la revolución social, sino los estafadores, los desdichados, los asesinos, los fraudulentos, toda la canalla que sufre abajo sin esperanza alguna? ¿O te crees que la revolución la van a hacer los cagatintas y los tenderos?” (31).

⁴⁷³ The original says: «Вы, дурачки, хвастунишки и тупицы, думаете, что история делается в салонах, где выскочки-демократы амикошонствуют с титулованными либералами, где вчерашние замухрышки из провинциальных адвокатов учатся наскоро прикладываться к сиятельнейшим ручкам? Дурачки! Хвастунишки! Тупицы! История делается в окопах, где охваченный кошмаром военного похмелья солдат всаживает штык в живот офицеру и затем на буфере бежит в родную деревню, чтобы там поднести красного петуха к помещицъей кровле. Вам не по душе это варварство? Не прогневайтесь, —

The translation is very close to the original, but the colloquial style is rendered as neutral. It is significant here that the words are not exactly Lenin's, but instead are from Trotsky as he relates Lenin's words in his *About October*.

It is not in vain that Lenin's thought is inscribed into the base of the ideas of the seven "locos".⁴⁷⁴ Lenin himself was called "loco" in the same issue of *Claridad* that also calls him "el hombre más grande de nuestra edad" (the quote is by Barbusse). It is supposedly Gorky's words that are quoted in the same "Opiniones sobre Lenin":

Canto un himno a la *locura* de los bravos, y entre ellos, Wladimir Lenín es el primero y el más *loco*. Para mí, personalmente, Lenín [sic] no es solamente una perfecta y asombrosa encarnación de la voluntad tendida rígidamente hacia un punto determinado, que nadie antes que él osara contemplar prácticamente; sino también a mis ojos su figura es la de un justo, uno de esos hombres casi legendarios, de voluntad y genio monstruosos que surgen inopinadamente en la historia rusa, tales como Pedro el Grande, Miguel Lomonosov, León Tolstoy y otros de la misma envergadura. Pienso que semejantes hombres sólo pueden germinar en esta Rusia, cuyas costumbres e historia traen continuamente a mi espíritu el recuerdo de Sodoma y Gomorra. A mi ver, Lenín [sic] es un héroe de leyenda, es el hombre que arranca de su pecho el ardiente corazón para iluminar con su llama la ruta que conduce a los hombres fuera del abyecto caos contemporáneo, lejos del pantano pútrido y sangriento del "estatismo" sofocante y descompuesto. (23)

The article from which this quote was taken was originally published in 1920 in the journal "Коммунистический Интернационал" (*Kommunistisches Internacionale*), no. 11. It said:

These lines talk about the person who had the fearlessness [required] for starting the process of the pan-European social revolution in the country, where a

отвечает вам история: чем богата, тем и рада. Это только выводы из всего, что предшествовало. Вы воображаете всерьез, что история делается в ваших контактных комиссиях? Вздор, лепет, фантазмагория, кренинизм. История – да будет ведомо! – выбрала на этот раз своей подготовительной лабораторией дворец Кшесинской, балерины, бывшей любовницы бывшего царя. И отсюда, из этого символического для старой России здания, она подготавливает ликвидацию всей нашей петербургско- царской, бюрократически- дворянской, помещичье-буржуазной гнили и похабины. Сюда, во дворец бывшей императорской балерины стекаются закоптелые делегаты фабрик, серые, корявые и вшивые ходоки окопое и отсюда они развозят по стране новые вещие слова».

⁴⁷⁴ On the question of madness and politics, see Horacio González, *Art, política y locura*.

significant percentage of peasants wanted to be petty bourgeoisie – no more than that. This is a fearlessness many consider *insanity*. I began my work as an agitator of the revolutionary mood by glorifying the *audacity* of the courageous.

There was a moment when a natural sympathy for the people of Russia forced me to consider this audacity almost a crime. But now, when I see that the people are much more capable of a patient suffering, than of conscious and honest work, I again glorify the sacred *audacity* of the courageous. Out of all of them, Vladimir Lenin is the first and the most *audacious*.⁴⁷⁵ (my emphasis)

Gorky in this passage uses two different words: “безумие” and “безумство”, which have different connotations. The first can be interpreted as insanity, but also recklessness; the second has the meaning of insanity and is used metaphorically to express great courage and audacity. It is not quite the same as “locura,”⁴⁷⁶ but rather audacity, that turns the negative connotation into a positive and, even, superlative.⁴⁷⁷ Nevertheless, Lenin did not quite appreciate Maksim Gorky's 1920 article. It was not republished until 1924, after Lenin's death, and even then it appeared with many changes. In it, the word “locura” was removed, but in the definite version that circulates now the phrase that Lenin is the most «безумный» (audacious) of all the brave ones does not exist any more, in spite of the fact that Lenin's wife says that Lenin reconsidered this article just before his death. Thus, translation again promoted so-called cultural contraband as it allowed it to enter the Latin American canon, even as it was forced to disappear in the Soviet one. The story of this

⁴⁷⁵ “В этих строках шла речь о человеке, который имел бесстрашие начать процесс общеевропейской социальной революции в стране, где значительный процент крестьян хотят быть сбитенькими буржуями - не больше этого. Это бесстрашие многие считают *безумием*. Я начал свою работу возбудителя революционного настроения славой *безумству* храбрых.

Был момент, когда естественная жалость к народу России заставила меня считать безумие почти преступлением. Но теперь, когда я вижу, что этот народ гораздо лучше умеет терпеливо страдать, чем сознательно и честно работать, - я снова пою славу священному *безумству* храбрых. Из них же Владимир Ленин - первый и самый *безумный*” (my emphasis).

⁴⁷⁶ González, Horácio. *Retórica y locura: Para una teoría de la cultura argentina*.

⁴⁷⁷ According to my mother who grew up in Uzbekistan in the 60s-70s, even they would still repeat Gorky's famous phrase at school and in songs: «я снова пою славу священному *безумству* храбрых”.

article reflects the intricacies of the relationship between politics and literature in Russia; translation manages here to capture and freeze the historical moment that was to be quickly reframed and reshaped and in this way plays a significant role in the formation of Argentine literature.

Lenin becomes a prototype of el Astrólogo for Arlt. This can be first perceived through a subtle comment: “The Thug was smoking; Erdosain examined the Astrologer's *mongoloid* features”⁴⁷⁸ (142; my emphasis). This is curious because Lenin is also always presented as having some traces of Mongolian. Already in 1920, Gorky, in the mentioned above article, describes Lenin's face as of a mongolian type: «И на лице монгольского типа горели, играли эти острые глаза неутомимого охотника на ложь и горе жизни, горели прищуриваясь, подмигивая, иронически улыбаясь, сверкая гневом.” These Mongolian features are also highlighted in the book *Lenin* by Antonii Ossendovskii (Антоний Оссендовский) in which he describes Lenin in his mausoleum:

His yellow, parchment-like skin would make his Mongolian features stand out even more; [...] It could seem that the tomb of the severe Tamerlan was moved from Asia right here, to Moscow, which for an entire century was under the rule of the Mongol Chiguis-khan's descendants, half-Tatar Moscow princes, and finally, at the beginning of the XX century – there here is a half-Mongol going back in his thoughts to the endless Asian steppes, into the wild gorges with the nesting in them hordes, that only know destruction...⁴⁷⁹

This Mongolian aspect⁴⁸⁰ is exaggerated on the cover of the issue of *Claridad* of the año 7,

⁴⁷⁸ “Fumaba el Rufián y Erdosain espiaba el mongólico semblante del Astrólogo” (115).

⁴⁷⁹ “Желтая, пергаментная кожа еще больше подчеркивала монгольские черты лица; [...]

Могло показаться, что гробница грозного Тамирлана была перенесена из сердца Азии сюда, в Москву, где правили в течение целого столетия потомки монгола Чингис-хана, полутатарские князья московские, и, наконец, в XX веке – полумонгол, мысленно возвращающийся в необъятные азиатские степи, в дикие горные теснины с гнездящимися в них ордами, знающими только уничтожение...” (Chapter XXXVI)

⁴⁸⁰ In the contemporary literature, this acquires a full comic sense, for example, in José Miguel Varas' *Cuentos*

issue 175 (fig. 3).

At the end, in the chapter called “The Wink,” Erdosain openly tells Astrólogo about his resemblance to Lenin: “Erdosain stared for a second at the other man’s broad face. He grinned and said:

“D’you know you look like Lenin?”

And before the Astrologer could reply, he was gone”⁴⁸¹ (243-244).

In general, as Horacio González says, there is a political theology of operetta in Arlt’s work with the goal of presenting a fable of power “con una escritura desquiciada e inverosímil, que genera una gracia que deja un sustrato de duda” (*Arlt en dos* 10). It is in this way that all political thought had to be adapted to the Argentine reality of the time, since this mixture of discourse was really what circulated in Argentina.

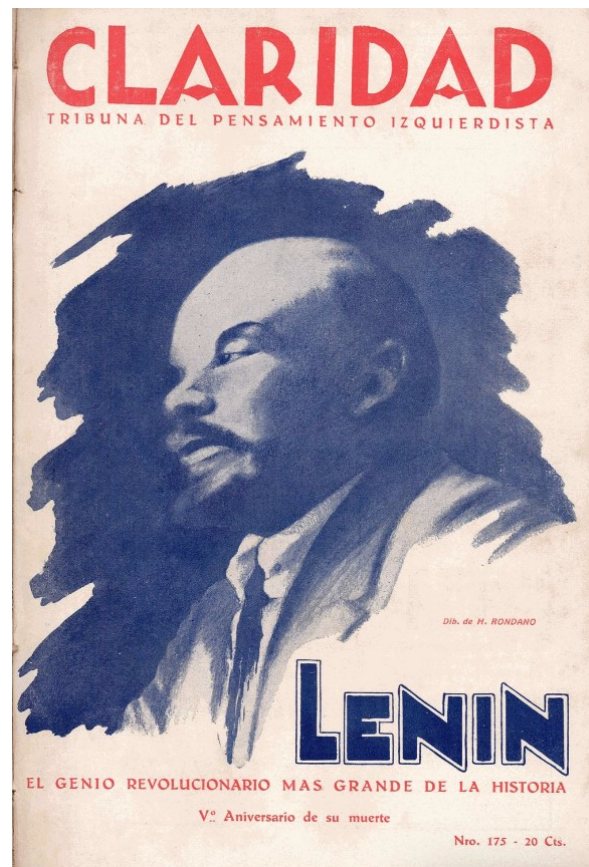


Figure 3. One of the Claridad’s covers with Lenin, no. 175, 26 Jan. 1929.

For example, although anarchists and communists differ in their views and never wanted to work together within Russia, outside of the Soviet Union, in order to fight the common

de ciudad. Where one of the characters says: “Lenin era tártaro” (52).

⁴⁸¹ “Erdosain fijó un segundo los ojos en el semblante romboidal del otro, luego sonriendo burlescamente, dijo: – ¿Sabe que usted se parece a Lenin – Y antes de que el Astrólogo pudiera contestarle, salió” (185).

enemy, capitalism, they would cooperate:

...because of the common hostility to capitalism, socialists and anarchists are on the whole reluctant to play into the hands of the capitalist enemies of Soviet Russia. Both defend Soviet Russia against capitalist attacks while condemning it bitterly for its forcible suppression of opposition. The communists on their side, while repressing anarchist and socialist activities in Russia, help defend them in capitalist countries when they are attacked for revolutionary or working-class activities.

The differences in the communist attitude inside Russia and outside are accounted for by the practical necessities of the tactics making for revolution and the responsibilities of a government based on such a revolution. (Baldwin qtd. in Kropotkin *Anarchism* 9).

The same unification of antagonistic forces happened in Latin America in concerning religion as well. Although talking about Mexico, mexican writer Margo Glantz, in her “La (su) nave de los inmigrantes”, does illustrate a case very similar to the Argentine one: “Una transmutación se ha producido: la separación forzada que en Rusia se establece, esa división entre cristianos rusos y judíos rusos [...]”⁴⁸² desaparece al tocar la tierra mexicana. Aquí rusos judíos y rusos cristianos, rusos socialistas y rusos blancos, se sienten unidos por el idioma, las costumbres, la comida del país que han abandonado” (14). Moreover, those Orthodox Russians would learn yiddish and Jewish traditions: “los rusos blancos, los aristócratas, los antisemitas tradicionales, se mezclan con sus antiguos enemigos y, no sólo eso”⁴⁸³, – she quotes her mother, – *hasta los rusos no idish compraban pollo y lo mataban*

⁴⁸² I take out here the words of Margo Glantz’s mother that the Mexican writer beautifully weaves into her essay and that present a first-hand account of the experience of the Jewish Russian living next to Orthodox Russians: “porque no somos rusos-rusos, cristianos, no teníamos que decir que éramos judíos, ellos sabían, no es cosa que tengamos que decirlo” (qtd. in *El imaginario judío en la literatura de América Latina: Visión y realidad*, 14).

⁴⁸³ An echo of this can be heard in Alicia Borinsky’s poem “mi mejor amiga es antisemita”:

nos tiene asco pero le gustan nuestras cosas
a solas codicia el oro la cebolla del guiso los sillones
tapizados el acné de mi hermano el auto que cree que nos
compraremos diplomas y falta de diplomas codicia y
desprecia envidia y quiere recuperar todo lo que le falta
acusa nos dice usurpadores pule su acento y las joyas de su

con el shoijet, pues en México, sabes cómo mataban así... ahogándolos... a los pollos, (hace un ademán) retorciéndoles el pescuezo, sí hasta rusos, rusos, compraron pollo y fueron con el shoijet” (14).

Thus, *Los siete locos* can be seen as “una caja de resonancia de discursos realmente existentes” (*Arlt en dos* 17), revealing “un imaginario de la revolución compuesto por los discursos fascistas y comunistas que circulaban en ese entonces en el campo intelectual” (*Arlt en dos* 15). We find a great example of it in Herrera’s *Arlt, Borges y Cía.* – “Mussolini’s 1919 political discourse: “Nosotros nos permitimos el lujo de ser aristocráticos y democráticos, conservadores y progresistas, reaccionarios y revolucionarios, legalistas e ilegalistas, según las circunstancias de tiempo y lugar, del ambiente en el que estemos constringidos a vivir y actuar” (169). It was a mix of conservatives, militarists, nationalists, socialists, liberals, and radical anarchists, perfectly described in the famous words of el Astrólogo: “no sé si nuestra sociedad será bolchevique o fascista⁴⁸⁴. A veces me inclino a creer que lo mejor que se puede hacer es preparar una ensalada rusa que ni Dios la entienda” (*Arlt en dos* 15) or when Erdosain says: “Seremos bolcheviques, católicos, fascistas, ateos, militaristas, en diversos grados de iniciación” (*Arlt en dos* 106). In Leopoldo Torre Nilsson’s film *Los siete locos* based on Arlt’s novel

abuelita ya lo sabemos pero igual decimos hola cómo le
va qué tal la familia no no faltaba más pase que no me
importa esperar un poco total en la cola uno se divierte
habla con los amigos pase pase pase sírvase compartamos
el pan el veneno la vida el aire de todos los días

⁴⁸⁴ For more on the relation between Arlt’s work and fascism, see José Amícola. *Astrología y fascismo en la obra de Arlt*, 1994. His relation with communism: Aricó, José, “La polémica Arlt-Ghioldi. Arlt y los comunistas” in *La Ciudad Futura*, no. 3, diciembre de 1986; Gorini, Juan José (seudónimo de David Viñas), “Arlt y los comunistas” in *Contorno*, no. 2, May 1954. A general work on his relationship with politics: Horacio González, *Arlt. Política y locura*, Colihue, 1996.

one of the representative scene is when el Astrólogo is talking about revolution, invoking Soviet spirits, while we can hear Church bells in the background. As the introduction to *Arlt en dos* says,

El lector arltiano ya conoce estas frases la tesis de los milagros apócrifos y de las mentiras metafísicas, que están tomadas en gran medida de Dostoievsky, con el estilo compositivo de Arlt, echando todos los leños a su caldera, haciendo un brebaje un poco astrológico, con vivaces plagios de la literatura de los desesperados pero elevándolos a la altisonante función de hacer “ver y escuchar” a los lectores un conjunto de esparadrapos que estremecen y parecen chistes. (*Arlt en dos* 12)

We see such a “Russian-salad” mixture not only at the level of society, but inside of an individual as well. At the end of *Los siete locos* we read about Erdosain: “Héroes de todas las épocas sobrevivían en él. Ulises, Demetrio, Aníbal, Loyola, Napoleón, Lenin, Mussolini, cruzaban ante sus ojos como grandes ruedas ardientes, y se pedrían en un declive de la tierra solitaria bajo un crepúsculo que ya no era terrestre” (179). For Arlt himself, the ideal revolutionary, the ideal modern day hero can be expressed in the formula: Macbeth + Don Quijote = Lenin (Piglia, *Assumed Name* 106).

The formula returns us back to the anthropophagic nature of Argentine literature, the fight of the so-called literary barbarians against the academic and epistemic colonialism. In her Prologue to *Novelas completas y cuentos de Roberto Arlt*, Mirta Arlt calls him “‘bárbaro’ ganado por la cultura subdesarrollada del país que conquista” (*Prólogos a la obra de mi padre* 52). Abelardo Castillo in *La Nación*⁴⁸⁵ calls him “el

⁴⁸⁵ “El mito del bárbaro y sus ecos”, *La Nación*. April 19, 2000. <http://www.lanacion.com.ar/214255-el-mito->

bárbaro desdichado y genial.” And through his barbarian, cannibalistic appropriation of the canon, he conquers the countries that establish that same canon, even the canon made by Russians, who being “bárbaros” tried to revolutionize the world. “Esos rusos, no es por decirlo, pero cuando salen buenos, son bárbaros. Bárbaros. Qué me dicen? Una pobrecita maestra de la escuela metida toda la vida en su casa, revolucionando al país con su talento,” says Coronel from César Tiempo’s *Clara Beter*.

When we read Vladimir Sorokin’s “Dostoevsky-Trip” (1997) today, it can be said that Latin America, with the help of translation, was able to continue the literary tradition that in Russia was interrupted by censorship and retaken only after the fall of the Soviet Union. In Sorokin’s play, seven characters are severely addicted to a drug, called literature, each one being on a different author: one on Flaubert, another on Gogol, etc. They come to a dealer who offers to them one drug to share, called Dostoevsky. After they try it, each character turns into a character from Dostoevsky’s *The Idiot*: Nastasya Philippovna, Count Myshkin, Ganya Ivolgin, Varya Ivolgina, Lebedev, and Ippolit. Although the text starts with replicas taken directly from one part of the novel, it soon turns into an absurd situation with the main trait of each of the characters being overly exaggerated. If, in the novel, Nastasya Philippovna burns one hundred thousand roubles, she starts burning all the banks in the world and then creates a big machine that goes through the world and burns down all of its cities. If for Rogozhin, Nastasya Philippovna supposedly embodies all the women in the play, he wants to inseminate all the women in the world. Myshkin in the novel stands out for his sincerity and empathy; in the play he feels all the pain of the world, literally, by

del-barbaro-y-sus-ecos.

connecting violin cords to his nerves and making all the offended, humiliated, suffering homeless children play the cords. In spite of seemingly all-bounding empathy at the base of the project, he ends up hating all of these children for their inability to play well the violin of pain he has created.

Arlt's parody of Dostoevsky, in spite of being a parody, ends up not merely reflecting, but even forecasting Argentina's reality. Similarly, the absurdity of the exaggerated characters in Sorokin's play does not seem so absurd or exaggerated anymore when we hear stories in the last part of the play which, if not based on true known stories, must have been taken from the Russian reality, being too horrible to be the author's invention. Among them is a story of the twins who were trying to survive the Siege of Leningrad. In order to get some food, they work for a man, with a nickname Рыба (Рыба), who sends them to cut asses off of the cadavers. One twin is equipped with a knife for those who have just died; the other has a saw for older cadavers who have already frozen. In order to get food, they had to bring at least two butts per day. After delivering them, the man and a woman working for him would turn them into ground meat for cutlets to be sold as meat cutlets. Although it is presented as one of the hallicunative effects of the drugs, we as readers know, but would prefer not to, that it is more real than we want it to be.

In the end, we understand that all this was part of an experiment of the chemist who says that it proved the fact that Dostoevsky in its pure form has a lethal effect and that it has to be diluted with Stephen King.⁴⁸⁶

⁴⁸⁶ ХИМИК. Достаточно. (Закуривает.) Как говорит мой шеф - экспериментальная фаза завершена. Теперь можно с уверенностью констатировать, что Достоевский в чистом виде действует смертельно. ПРОДАВЕЦ. И что делать?

Sorokin’s play connects us back not only to Arlt, but to Macedonio himself. The world of Dostoevsky in Sorokin’s play is an open hallucination. The very title reflects that: “trip” in the drug-related jargon means “an experience of a trip provoked by a drug.” The exaggerated hallucination that it provokes in the characters is exactly the effect that Macedonio feared in the Realism. Sorokin’s characters become those characters that Macedonio considered sick. The two ways out proposed by Macedonio: to be real characters (recognize one’s own fictionality) or leaving the fiction and confine oneself to the limits of one’s life – are also demonstrated in Sorokin’s play. After the climax point of the absurd hallucinations, the characters turn to telling the horrors of their real life. On the other hand, the chemist proposes to mix Dostoevsky with King, thus leaning towards exposing the fictionality of the horrors. In Arlt’s characters, too, we read “la necesidad de que la novela sea como la vida – brutal y linda, escabrosa y nítida, angustiada y feliz, humillada y soberbia – es decir, real y opuesta a la ‘novela’ como se la entiende en su definición tradicional. Sus personajes cuando, cuando tratan de ser como de novela, fracasan porque dejan de adaptarse a la realidad” (118).

Both Sorokin and Arlt’s works stem from the original chaos that Dostoevsky’s novels contained. They destroy the masterpieces to reconstruct them; and Arlt doubly so:

ХИМИК. Надо разбавлять.

ПРОДАВЕЦ. Чем?

ХИМИК (задумывается). Ну... попробуем Стивеном Кингом. А там посмотрим.

[CHEMIST. Enough. (*Lights up a cigarette.*) Like my boss would say – the experimental phase is over. We can certify now with absolute certainty that Dostoevsky in its pure form has a lethal effect.

SELLER. And what should we do?

CHEMIST. He should be diluted.

SELLER. With what?

CHEMIST. (*pauses to think*). Well... let’s try with Stephen King first. Then we’ll see].

his is a destruction/reconstruction in the second degree, the destruction of/construction from a destroyed/reconstructed by the translation work. Lamborghini says:

La necesidad de tal ejercicio de destrucción y re-construcción del modelo para darle una nueva forma, tiene relación con la idea de darle una nueva vida; la idea de que liberado de su corset escritural conocido, vuelva a su caos original revelando lo que detrás de ese corset (sobre todo el de la sintaxis) pudiera todavía ocultar; la revelación de su otro yo o yo es y, con ello, sus nuevas posibilidades de seguir siendo y no quedar reducido a un arquetipo-estereotipo. (Ares, “Entre la reescritura y la parodia”)

It is then through Arlt’s rewriting of Dostoevsky that he finds Dostoevsky’s original chaos.

CONCLUSION: ON COUNTERFEIT COINS AND BAD TRANSLATIONS: THE “FAKE” CREATORS OF “REAL” CHANGE

“The counterfeit coin could just as well, perhaps, be the germ of several day’s wealth for a poor little speculator.”

Charles Baudelaire, “Counterfeit Money”

The dissertation starts with the two men in a restaurant and a fake Russian alphabet. The conclusion, as a mirror image of the introduction, also brings in two men and a false coin from Jacques Derrida’s discussion of Charles Baudelaire’s “Counterfeit Money.” Just as Cortázar’s fake Russian alphabet in the mirror produces a breach with it, the possible of creating a new language, the counterfeit coin in Baudelaire’s story creates the possibility not only for an event in the life of the beggar who receives the coin, but for the narrative itself. Just as Cortázar’s mirror revealed a simulacrum of reality, the counterfeit coin reveals a simulacrum of “real” money,⁴⁸⁷ of reality and of literature.⁴⁸⁸ Baudelaire’s counterfeit coin serves here as a powerful analogy for the “bad translations” analyzed in my dissertation, and Derrida’s analysis of the story permits us to evaluate the findings of the dissertation in a broader context.

As a contribution to the field of Translation Studies, my dissertation calls for a re-evaluation of the aim of analyzing a translation in comparison with its original text. When Derrida focuses on the counterfeit coin, he does not aim to evaluate the moral value of

⁴⁸⁷ “The circulation of the counterfeit money can become true capital. Is not the truth of capital, then, inasmuch as it produces interest without labor, by *working all by itself* as we say, counterfeit money? Is there a real difference here between real and counterfeit money once there is capital? And credit? Everything depends on the act of faith” (Derrida, *Counterfeit Money* 124).

⁴⁸⁸ “This text by Baudelaire deals, in effect, with the relations among fiction in general, literary fiction and capitalism, such as they might be photographed acting out a scene in the heart of the modern capital” (Derrida, *Counterfeit Money* 124).

passing a fake coin. Baudelaire himself is not interested in the possible negative consequences of the act, quite unlike Tolstoy, who in his “Forged Coupon” (1903) details the entire set of consequences brought about by the use of counterfeit money, ranging from a robbery to an assassination and a turn to Christianity. Instead, both Baudelaire and Derrida see the use of counterfeit currency as creating a possibility for change. The counterfeit coin that one of the friends gives to the beggar would “create an event in this poor devil’s life” (qtd. in Derrida 120): he will either turn it into “real” money or he will be caught and sent to prison. Likewise, avoiding the cliché of simply calling the early Spanish translations of Russian literature bad, my dissertation demonstrates how those supposedly bad translations contributed to changing the course of Argentine literature in the first half of the twentieth century. Just as one of the possibilities that the counterfeit coin generated was to turn fake money into real, the “bad translation” participated in the creation of the so-called “good” literature.

It is not giving a coin, but giving a *counterfeit* coin, that generates Baudelaire’s story and becomes the very essence of the narrative. Demonstrating how “bad translations” seeped into the fabric of Argentine literature, my dissertation brings elements traditionally cast aside by the translation field into the center of the research. Mediated translations that passed through French, German, Italian, or English cut the access of Spanish-language translators to the original form of the literature, forcing them to concentrate more exclusively on its content. Although Russian writers were consequently perceived as lacking in artistic talent, it also created a model of less elaborated language that communicated the message more directly. This was the direct and dry language of the

translations that form the basis for a new language of Argentine literature, effectuating the long-needed break from the language of the Spanish metropole.

By means of a close comparison of the supposedly “bad” translation of *Crime and Punishment* with the original, and a subsequent comparative analysis of the translation with Roberto Arlt’s *Los siete locos*, my dissertation illustrates how the language of the translations is woven into Argentine literature, how mistranslations and creative liberties by translators provided Argentine writers with the vocabulary and ideas for their own creations. For example, the idea of Erdosain’s separation from humanity stemmed from a mistranslation of Dostoevsky’s words describing the fog enveloping Raskolnikov in his delirious thoughts. Also, the idea of Lenin as the prototype for the Astrologer in *Los siete locos* comes from the mistranslation of the word *безумие* as «locura» (craziness-insanity) in one of Gorky’s articles.

My dissertation also demonstrates the special conditions in which translation finds itself in Latin America, which in a sense forces it to diverge from source texts. “During the process of translation, the imagery of the writer is always on stage” (Santiago 34). In other words, a translation re-presents the translator’s reading of the text. Silviano Santiago notes that in Latin America, when the dominated writer reads the dominating literature “[t]he words of the other present themselves as objects that fascinate his eyes, his fingers, and the writing of the second text becomes partially the story of a sensual experience with foreign signs” (34). Although Santiago talks about writing a second text in the gaps of the first, translation becomes that second text as well. The translation as reading is reflected in the abundance of the meta-language (the scene, the character, the episode) which

“contaminates” the writer’s own writing at the level of vocabulary, as well as of the structure of the text. The third text—the one influenced by the writing of the translator—then inherits the meta-writing and the characters imagine being on the stage of the original work in the sense that Erdosain imagines himself a character from Dostoevsky’s novels and compares his actions to the actions of the characters in those novels.

Another contribution of this dissertation to the field of Translation Studies lies in its focus on mediated translations, the so-called “mirrors of a mirror,” “clones from codes,” or “products of a telephone game.” For Derrida, the counterfeit coin is also “a copy of a copy” since it copies the simulacrum, symbol, and representation that is a “real” coin. In this double-copying it assumes the state of “being without being” turning into a phantasm. That, however, is precisely what gives it its power: “The phantasm is recognized as having the power, at least the power and the possibility – without any controlling certitude, without any possible assurance – of producing, engendering, giving” (161). Rather than being recognized for their power, mediated translations get tagged as bad *a priori*, and thus not even worthy of serious analysis. But like the counterfeit coin, their power lies in their doubled possibilities to influence, engender, and produce change in the literature with which it will come into contact.

Many such translations, while crossing the Atlantic with an almost inevitable stop in Europe, for all intents and purposes lose their author (not the writer of the source text, but the author of the translation). The translation, being authorless, in some way achieves the state that Foucault called for in his essay “What is an Author?” – a response to Roland Barthes’ *Death of the Author*. Foucault exclaims: “[i]t is not enough [...] to repeat the

empty affirmation that the author has disappeared. [...] Instead, we must locate the space left empty by the author's disappearance, follow the distribution of gaps and breaches, and watch for the openings this disappearance uncovers" (209). It is in those empty places that the knowledge and discourse appropriated by the translator is re-inserted into circulation and ex-appropriated in the public domain, the domain of humanity. Mediated translations, or "authorless texts," left discourses open for "free circulation, the free manipulation, the free composition, decomposition and recomposition of fiction" (221), thus helping to "reduce the great peril, the great danger with which fiction threatens our world" (221).

Being at the crossroads of Translation Studies and Post-Colonial Studies, this dissertation, in addition to questioning of the idea of the author, also calls into question the idea of originality, as does the counterfeit coin. It is no wonder that Derrida chooses the following quote by Poe as an epigraph to this chapter: "...no more than the truism that there can be no counterfeit where there is no genuine – just as there can be no badness where there is no goodness – the terms being purely relative. But *because* there can be no counterfeit where there is no original, does it in any manner follow that an undemonstrated original exists? What right should we have to talk of counterfeit at all?" (108). Following Borges, Genette, and Poe among others, and leaving the idea of the original behind, this dissertation treats bad translations as carefully as it does good ones, for as the counterfeit coin demonstrates, their power and creative potential can be even greater.

This special power, the marginal positions of translation in the literary hierarchy and Latin American literature in relation to Latin America, and the very nature of the process of translation – consisting of appropriating a text from one culture with its own set

of rules and subjugating it to the rules of another, all together make translation a perfectly anthropophagic weapon, a clever mechanism for balancing the influence of the dominating culture and the creativity of the dominated one. A close analysis of the translations in this dissertation reveals how through the translation and organization of texts translated in Spain, Argentine writers devoured Russian literature as a precursor to constructing their own. My study exemplifies the quote by Paul Valéry as referred to by Santiago: “nothing more original, more intrinsic to itself than feeding on others. But it is necessary to digest them. The lion is comprised of ingested sheep” (32), demonstrating how translation digested Russian literature, simultaneously exposing that digested sheep within the lion of Russian literature.

This anthropophagic appropriation is part of Argentine writers’ use of translation in the fight against epistemic colonialism. My translation rejects two commonplaces regarding this fight. First, it demonstrates that the fight is not necessarily loud and visible, as Santiago says: “to speak, to write, means to speak against, to write against” (31). The examples of fragmentation and the analysis of the selection process show that the fight can be silent and, in fact, a silent struggle sometimes proves to be more effective. Second, analyzing the work of two Russian translators, Alejo Abutcov and Benjamin Abramson, who found a haven in Argentina after fleeing Russia before or during the Revolution, were in the forefront of the fight against epistemic colonialism through direct translations or through the manipulation or correction of translations done in Spain, a fight that today’s direct translators in Argentina claim to be undertaking.

As a contribution to Post-Colonial Studies, this dissertation also participates in

reshaping the model of criticism and analysis based on the idea of influences, suggesting a different method for studies in comparative literature, while answering Silviano Santiago's question: "If, through their writings, ethnologists have succeeded in resurrecting dismantled cultures as artistic objects of richness and beauty, how, then, should the contemporary critic present the complex system of works that have been explained up until now through a traditional and reactionary critical methodology, whose only originality is to be found in the study of sources of influence?" (31). By focusing on translations as a space between two cultures, we can dismantle this traditional system of influences, for translation is a product of at least two literatures and cultures. Anything taken from translations and incorporated into the literature of a target language and culture has been already produced by this literature in the very act of translation.

My research shows that studying literary and cultural exchanges through translation, as well as examining the relation of Latin American literature to Europe through the prism of Russian literature, can help provide an alternative to the system of influences and hierarchies in the study of comparative literature, thus helping to resolve another of Santiago's dilemmas:

if we restrict ourselves to the appreciation of our literature in relation to European traditions, taking as our point of departure comparative literature's ethnocentric principles of source and influence, then we will be emphasizing little more than the dependent character of our own repetitive and redundant elements. The singling out of duplication is doubtlessly useful but, nevertheless, ethnocentric, and aims at accentuating the all-powerful course of dominant cultural production in those peripheral societies that have been defined and configured by it. In the end two similar parallel products will have been constituted, but will nevertheless present two major disjunctures, for they will be both responsible for the process of hierarchization that diminishes the value of the dominated society's cultural production (60).

My research, thus, proposes a model that participates in the “deconstructive process within comparative literature that will facilitate avoiding comparison of works from atop a homogenous historic-cultural terrain” (62).

This dissertation works as an inversion in terms of originality and influence between Latin America, Europe, and Russia. “America is transformed into a copy, a simulacrum that desires to be increasingly like the original, even though its originality cannot be found in the copy of the original model” (29). Santiago finishes his idea saying: “but rather in an origin that was completely erased by the conquerors” (29). My dissertation shows that both Europe’s and Russia’s originality was found in Latin America. Firstly, as Haroldo de Campos says, baroque had to cross the Atlantic to find its authenticity. Secondly, the tradition of parody and humor that was cut short in Russia was reinstated in Latin America more than half a century before it was possible in Russia, which the dissertation shows by looking at the parody in Roberto Arlt’s *Los siete locos* and Sorokin’s *Dostoevsky-Trip*.

In the field of Comparative Literature, and more specifically of Russian-Argentine literary exchanges, this research corrects the generally accepted idea that Russian literature had a big influence on Argentine literature and that Buenos Aires is Dostoevskian, demonstrating that the development of Argentine literature was not shaped by the influence of Russian writers, but rather by the different manners of appropriating the translations of Russian literature and of appropriating the literature through translation. Through an analysis of the publishing market and of the selection process, my dissertation revises the idea that it was long novels and classical writers that were translated and read in Latin

America in 1920s-1930s. In fact, it was mostly short works published in magazines, many by marginal writers little known in Russia due to censorship or prohibitions by the Soviet regime. As a matter of fact, the research reveals a particular interest in the marginal within the Russian literature as reinforcement when denouncing Latin American writers' own marginal state in relation to Europe, speaking through the voices of Russian writers. In selecting and translating Russian works, there was a clear attempt to overturn the dichotomy between "civilization" and "barbarism" in which "civilization" – represented by the Russian classics – appears to be "higher" than the "barbaric," as a way of pressuring European "civilization" to reconsider that "barbarism," revealing an understanding of Santiago's observation:

The truth of ethnocentric colonizing universality is doubtlessly to be found in the metropolis, whereas, as Anthropology shows us, the paradoxical truth of differential universality is located in peripheral cultures. In fact, on the periphery, colonized texts proudly achieve an encyclopedic synthesis of culture, a generous whole in which the dominated is merely an insignificant appendix to the general movement of civilization. (63)

Uncovering the links through which one margin translates the other, finding the Spanish translations of works prohibited in Russia, revealing epistemic detours and direct exchanges between Russia and Latin America that shaped Argentine literature and the political thought it expressed, this research also contributes to the field of epistemology, revealing other, marginal and contraband ways in which knowledge is produced and circulated.

In Baudelaire's story, it is the counterfeit coin that reveals the simulacrum of the institution of money:

The circulation of the counterfeit money can engender, even for a "little speculator," the real interest of a true wealth. Counterfeit money can become true capital. Is not the truth of capital, then, inasmuch as it produces interest without labor, by *working all by itself* as we say, counterfeit money? Is there a real difference here between real and counterfeit money once there is capital? And credit? Everything depends on the act of faith" (124).

This simulacrum of money is more directly revealed in Gorky's 1913 (1927)⁴⁸⁹ play of the same name "Фальшивая монета" (*The counterfeit Coin*) when one of the protagonists, Natasha, is asked by a counterfeiter to guess which of five coins is counterfeit. "All of them are counterfeit or all are real. I don't know,"⁴⁹⁰ she replies, to which the counterfeiter responds: "You see. Sometimes you think that there are no real ones. Or better, there are no counterfeit ones. But this particular one was declared counterfeit."⁴⁹¹

Since everything that happens takes place in the narration in Baudelaire's story, according to Derrida, together with the revelation of the simulacrum of money, the story also reveals the simulacrum of literature, essential for its very existence. Through belief, a simulacrum passes for nature, but "[t]here is no nature, only effects of nature: denaturation or naturalization. Nature, the meaning of nature, is reconstructed after the fact on the basis

⁴⁸⁹ The first version was finished in 1913, but Gorky continued to work on the play for many years, eventually producing five different versions.

⁴⁹⁰ "Все фальшивые или все настоящие. Я не знаю" (Gorky, *The Counterfeit Coin*).

⁴⁹¹ "Вот видите. Иногда думаешь, что настоящих вовсе нет. То есть – фальшивых нет. Но – эта признана фальшивой" (Gorky, *The Counterfeit Coin*).

of a simulacrum (for example, literature) that it is thought to cause. [...] *It extends credit*" (170). According to Derrida, "by putting on stage a naturalist and sententious narrator, by exhibiting the fiction of the naturalization of literature, Baudelaire [...] inscribes perhaps this naturalization in an institution called literature. Perhaps, then, he reminds us of literature's institutionality, but as an institution that can only consist in passing itself off as natural" (169). "Bad translations" also participate in this dismantling of the institution of reality. Just as counterfeit money reveals the institutionality of counterfeiting currency, "bad translations" reveal the counterfeit nature of translation, of literature, of any discourse, of reality.

By having created a distorted version of Russian realism and by creating an incongruence between Realism and the reality that it supposedly represented, those "bad translations" of Russian literature, like the counterfeit coin, revealed the simulacrum of both realism and reality that helped lead to a rethinking of Latin American realism. The mediated translations turned Russian realism into a description of reality and its details —with no elaboration of form—simultaneously emphasizing and exaggerating its tragic side. Both these translations and the imitations of supposedly Russian realism by the members of the Boedo group, revealed the incongruence and the simulacrum that realism is built on, allowing the Florida group to parodize it and to rethink the notion of realism. All this was produced by "bad" translations and counterfeit money.

The counterfeit coin helps us understand the idea of illegality, the contraband into which translation was transformed, which permitted its producers and users to carry material across borders, material that was to become illegal in its place of origin. It is the

counterfeit coin that opens up the range of possibilities that makes the narrative possible. Its very illegality has power. Also, for Derrida it is the secret that is essential for the creation of the narrative: “But what are we saying when we say that a character in fiction forever takes a secret with him? And that the possibility of this secret is readable without the secret ever being accessible? That the readability of the text is structured by the unreadability of the secret, that is, by the inaccessibility of a certain intentional meaning” (152). The fact that the works I analyze in my dissertation were either translated from a language inaccessible to the majority of the readers, or by passing through another language, made the original even more distant and inaccessible. Along with the fact that some works were prohibited in Russia, but were published in Latin America, this brings into play the idea of a secret, a catalyst of speculation, creativity, criticism, parody. Derrida specifically notes that there is no sense in knowing the truth – the secret *is* the essence of literary fiction.⁴⁹² Although in my dissertation I demonstrate the supposed truth that “bad translations” conceal elements of their source texts (a fact made evident by comparing the source and target texts), it also affirms that the source text for “bad translations” in some sense did not matter. What matters is the literature they were able to create as their legacy.

It is in this critical space of suspicion, of curiosity, that the new Argentine literature was conceived. Through the numerous examples that populate this critical space, my

⁴⁹² “Here we touch on a structure of the secret about which literary fiction tells us the essential or which tells us, in return, the essential concerning the possibility of a literary fiction. If the secret remains undetectable, unbreakable, in this case, if we have no chance of ever knowing whether counterfeit money was actually given to the beggar, it is first of all because there is no sense in wondering what actually happened, what was the true intention of the narrator’s friend and the meaning hidden “behind” his utterances” (153).

dissertation argues against Santiago's idea that in Latin America "[t]here are two major dislocations, then, one temporal (the backwardness of one culture in relation to the other), the other qualitative (the lack of originality of a dominated society's cultural production)" (60). I would also add a quantitative dislocation to this list, as Latin American culture seems to always receive reduced phenomena, cut off at the root before being passed along. This dissertation shows that in many cases Latin America was receiving things earlier and in a fuller version than in Europe, even than in their country of origin. But Latin American cultural production is also richer for the reason indicated by Santiago: "If one avoids the demands of a strict internal economy of the work, then the decolonized text is seen paradoxically as the richest of the two, precisely because it *contains within itself a representation of the dominant text and a response to that representation within its very fabrication*" (63).

Having turned to European thinkers and literary critics to frame this conclusion, I am conscious that I am failing where the translators and the writers discussed in my dissertation succeeded in their fight against epistemic colonialism. However, for a one-phrase summary of my dissertation's contribution to the field of Post-Colonial Studies, I'd like to quote Chacal's poem "Rimbaud," which repeats:

todo poeta é um traficante de armas

traficante de armas

u

m

todo poeta é

(155).

If all poets traffic in contraband, translators do so doubly, for being on the margins of literature, they have more power: they are able to smuggle words across borders, words already illegal or soon to be, but words wrapped in another language and therefore less likely to be intercepted.

Moreover, a translator has a larger variety of “weapons at her disposition.” One of these weapons is the visual context, a topic left uncovered in this research. Even though many of the translations published in *Claridad* and *Los Pensadores* were versions produced in Spain, the visual context into which they were inserted in Argentina did affect the way Russian works were perceived. Moreover, the utilization of similar visual designs for both Russian works and for those written by Argentine authors played its role in the establishment of continuity between the two. For example, there is an evident similarity between the design of the title of Roberto Mariani’s “Los rateros” and the translation of Arcadii Averchenko’s short story “Baby-sitter,” turned in translation into “Un drama sensacional” (figs. 4, 5). Both were published in *Los Pensadores*, the first on March 10, 1925 (no. 107) and the second in the following issue, no. 108, on March 24 of the same year. This visual similarity, the title change, and the alterations introduced by translation, create an affinity hardly possible in the analysis of the two works within the limits of the original context and language. Roberto Mariani’s “Los rateros” tells a story of three friends, Virgilio, Barullo, and el Pibe. The last two “didn’t even have clothes to wear. Torn and worn out espadrilles; torn and worn out underwear; torn and worn out shirts; new, or almost

new, scarf on the neck; and a deformed flat cap. And everything dirty.”⁴⁹³ In the first part



Figure 4. Arcadio Averchenko, “Un drama sensacional,” published in *Los Pensadores*, no. 107, 10 Mar. 1925



Figure 5. Roberto Mariani, “Los rateros,” published in *Los Pensadores*, no. 108, 24 Mar. 1925

el Pibe talks about days gone by when he worked at a newspaper in Buenos Aires and was sent to Flores, to the apartment of a woman who was trying to seduce him. In the second part, the three unsuccessfully try to rob the house of “los turcos,” but el Pibe is gravely injured in the attempt. Roberto Mariani belonged to this “alternative zone” (Ojeda & Cabrone 6) between Boedo and Florida that was discussed earlier. And although he, like Roberto Arlt, also participated in the “resemantization of realism” (Ojeda & Cabrone 42), this particular story is closer to the writing of Castelnuovo than that of Arlt in both its erotic and exaggeratedly tragic content and its non-innovative form.

Arcadii Averchenko, in his turn, was considered the “King of Laughter” in Russia. In this particular story Misha Samatoja, the protagonist, in an attempt to rob a house, has to play a game of an imaginary robbery with a little girl left alone at home by her nanny. In spite of the fact that much of the humor of his short story “Baby-sitter” does not pass

⁴⁹³ “[n]o tenían ropa siquiera. Alpargatas rotas y viejas; bombachas rotas y viejas; camisas rota y vieja; pañuelo nuevo, o casi nuevo, al cuello; y gorra inglesa deformada. Y todo sucio” (*LP*, no. 107).

the filter of translation, being originally woven into its style and vocabulary, the plot still makes the reader laugh. The translation compared to the original evinces the same tendencies as were demonstrated in the analysis of the translations in the previous chapters. For example, the elevated style in the description of Samatoja, which seems ironic in Russian, is reproduced literally in the translation. “Samatoja era un hombre resuelto y que casi siempre obraba por inspiración” [Samatokha was a determined man who almost always acted on inspiration] (*LP*, no. 107) in Russian reads as follows: “Будучи принципиальным противником строго обоснованных, хорошо разработанных планов, Мишка Саматоха перелез невысокую решетку дачного сада без всякой определенной цели.” [Being resolutely against rigorously justified and meticulously thought-out plans, Mishka Samatoha climbed over the metal fence around the dacha garden without any particular plan in mind] (Averchenko). The same happens with «Так как Саматоха был голоден, то усилие, затраченное на преодоление дачной ограды, утомило его» [“Since Samatokha was hungry, the effort he expended climbing over the fence made him feel tired”] (Averchenko); it was transformed into “Samatoja tenia hambre y cuando tenia hambre se sentía enemigo encarnizado de la propiedad” [Samatokha was hungry and when hungry he was a fierce enemy of private property] (*LP*, no. 107).

The simplicity and colloquiality of Averchenko’s style are turned into verbosity and solemnity: “сочувственно сказала девочка, подходя ближе” [the girl said with compassion, coming closer] (Averchenko) becomes “La niña, en cuyos ojos se pintaba la compasión más tierna, avanzó algunos pasos” [The girl in whose eyes there appeared the most tender compassion, took several steps forward] (*LP*, no. 107). The translated phrase

“En los ojos de Vera pintáronse el asombro y la indignación” [Vera’s eyes showed surprise and indignation] (*LP*, no. 107) is simply added to the text that in Russian mainly consisted of almost pure dialog with barely any description.

At the end, Samatokha tries to steal a doll in a park full of nannies and children in order to send it as a gift to Vera, but the nannies and children catch him and get the doll back. The story ends with Samatokha grumbling: «Get involved with a wench – and you are sure to run into some trouble.»⁴⁹⁴ If not for the last phrase we would think that the moral of the story is that a robber will always end up robbed. But it turns out that the gist is that to keep your life in order, you must stay away from women, even six-year-old ones. The moral of the Spanish version is decidedly different. Its happy ending – Samatokha does give Vera a doll – indicated the robber’s transformation and the author’s idyllic hope for a better future, whereas the Russian story does not leave the reader with any reason for hope. The sentimentalism of the Spanish version transpires in the very title “Un drama sensacional” changed from the Russian simple title «Нянька» (“Nanny”).

Analyzing the visual context in which Russian literature was presented in Argentina can provide another layer of understating the mechanisms of translation and adaptation that were taken up by *Los Pensadores* and *Claridad*.

This investigation opened more roads for Russian-Argentine artistic and literary relations to be explored than it actually managed to explore. To continue the research, I will turn next to “Russian Tango.” In César Tiempo’s unpublished play *Clara Beter*, the

⁴⁹⁴ «Свяжись только с бабой – вечно в какую-нибудь историю втяпаешься» (Averchenko).

Coronel and Débora, the mother of the protagonist Lea, both yell at her to stop singing, and the Coronel adds: “If she sang from time to time it wouldn’t be a big deal at all. But that she sings in Russian, in Russian.”⁴⁹⁵ But Débora does not agree with him: “If she sang in Russian, I would be the first one to encourage her to continue. What do you have against Russian songs? Ochi chorni (she hums). Gorachi Bublichi (she hums).”⁴⁹⁶ The fact that César Tiempo decides to insert this song calls for special attention for several reasons. First, “Ochi chorni” is one of the best-known Russian romances and the link between Russian romance and Argentine tango also passes through translation. Secondly, it is a romance with roots that lead to Ukraine. Although unknown to many Russians, its refrain comes from a poem written by Ukrainian poet Evgueny Grebinka in 1843. What calls for even more attention is Débora’s, or shall we say César Tiempo’s, parody of Grebinka’s poem: the line that follows, “Gorachi Bublichi,” is a transliteration of «горячие буублики» (hot bagels), clearly different from the original.

Investigating Russian film translation will be a valuable addition to the present research. It will require a thorough investigation of the archives of the Buenos Aires movie theater Cosmos⁴⁹⁷ and the subtitles of the Russian films shown. To continue in the field of the performing arts, an analysis of the double translation of theater – the actual written translation of Russian theater into Spanish and the subsequent staging, a translation of text into actual performance, – is another propitious field of work for understanding of the

⁴⁹⁵ “Que cantara de vez en cuando no sería nada. Pero cantar en ruso, en ruso” (SCT).

⁴⁹⁶ “Si cantara en ruso sería yo la primera en alentarla para que siga. Qué tiene usted que decir de las canciones rusas? Ochi chorni (Tararea). Gorachi Bublichi (Tararea)” (SCT).

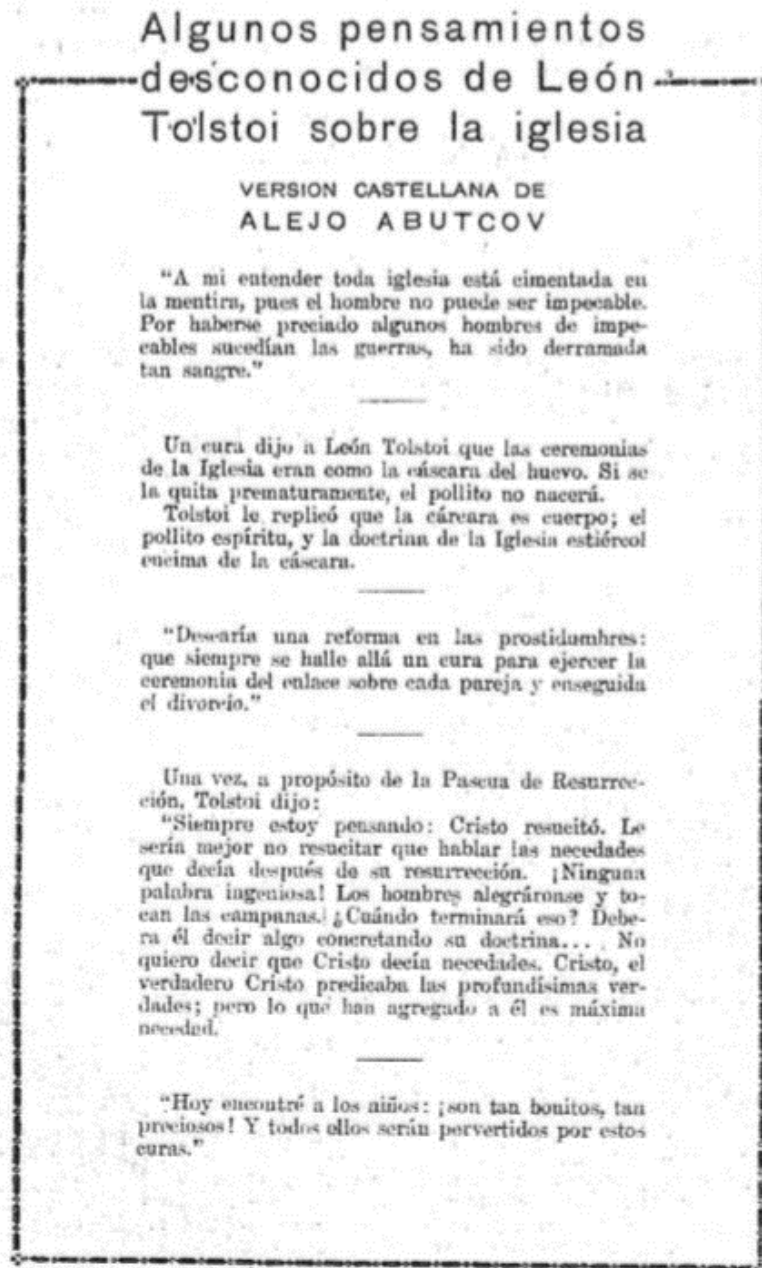
⁴⁹⁷ See note 163 of this dissertation.

process of constructing the image of Russian translation in Argentina.

Finally, translation, being simultaneously at the margins of cultures, literatures, countries, and at the center of their inter-actions, allows us to bring the marginal into the center. Revealing translation as a fundamental element of all expression, then, points to the margins as a place where the key to understanding can be found.

APPENDIX A: Examples of Translations of Russian works published in
Claridad and *Los Pensadores*

- I. "Algunos pensamientos desconocidos de León Tolstoi sobre la Iglesia"
("Some of Lev Tolstoy's Unknown Thoughts Regarding Church"),
translated by Alejo Abutcov, published in *Claridad*, no. 4, October 1926.



- I. "Los escitas," translated by Llinás Vilanova, published in *Claridad*, no.197, 28 Dec. 1929.

LOS ESCITAS

VOSOTROS sois millones. Nosotros somos legiones, legiones!
¡Intentad, pues, combatirnos!
¡Sí, nosotros somos los Escitas, los Asídicos
de ojos fieros y ávidos!

¡Para vosotros los siglos — para nosotros una hora!
Esclavos sumisos,
fuimos la barrera entre dos razas hostiles,
entre Mongolia y Europa.

Durante siglos el ruido de vuestras viejas fraguas
ahogó el estruendo de nuestras avalanchas
y nos espantasteis como os espantaron a vosotros
los terremotos de Lisboa y Messina.

Durante siglos observasteis, ávidos, el Oriente,
su perfume intenso y mortal. . .
¡Qué podremos nosotros ahora si vuestro esqueleto cruje
bajo nuestras plantas pesadas y firmes!

Estamos acostumbrados a colocar a la carrera
la brida a los caballos más veloces
a doblarles el recio espinazo
y humillar a los brutos rebeldes.

¡Venid a nosotros los horrorizados de la guerra!
¡Venid a nuestros brazos pacíficos!
Antes que sea demasiado tarde: ¡Abajo las armas!
¡Comaradas! ¡Seamos hermanos!

¡Si no, nada tenemos nosotros que perder!
¡También conocemos la perfidia!
¡Durante siglos seréis todos malditos
por vuestros seniles y enfermos descendientes!

Frente a la bella Europa, en nuestros bosques y campos
iremos a incitar las hordas salvajes
y les enseñaremos
nuestra turba de asídicos.

¡Venid en busca nuestra! ¡Venid al monte Ural!
Nosotros cedemos plaza al combate
de vuestras máquinas de acero, donde vibra el Integral,
contra nuestras hordas mongólicas y salvajes.

Pero nosotros no seremos más vuestro escudo,
nosotros no iremos más a la batalla,
contemplaremos con ojos ávidos
cómo os batís a vida o muerte.

No nos moveremos cuando el Huno salvaje
saquee los bolsillos de los cadáveres;
incendie las ciudades, convierta las iglesias en establos
y ase sobre el fuego la carne de sus hermanos blancos.

Por postrera vez: ¡despierta viejo mundo!
Por postrera vez: a una fiesta paternal
hecha de paz y de trabajo
la lira bárbara te llama.

ALEJANDRO BLOK.

Tradujo M. Ll. Vilanova.

II. "The Scythians," translated by Kurt Dowson, published in *International Socialism*, no. 6, Autumn 1961.

'Panmongolism – fierce the word may seem, yet how I love its sound'
Vladimir Solovyev

Millions are you – and hosts, yea
hosts, are we,
And we shall fight if war you want,
take heed.
Yes, we are Scythians – leafs of the
Asian tree,
Our slanted eyes are bright aglow with
greed.
Ages for you, for us the briefest space,
We raised the shield up as your
humble lieges
To shelter you, the European race
From the Mongolians' savage raid and
sieges.
Ages, yea ages, did your forges'
thunder
Drown even avalanches' roar.
Quakes rent Messina and Lisbon
asunder –
To you this was a distant tale – no
more.
Eastwards you cast your eyes for
many hundred years,
Greedy for our precious stones and
ore,
And longing for the time when with a
leer
You'd yell an order and the guns
would roar.
This time is now. Woe beats its wings
And every adds more humiliation
Until the day arrives which brings
An end to placid life in utter
spoliation.
You, the old world, now rushing to
perdition,
Yet strolling languidly to lethal brinks,
Yours is the ancient Oedipean mission

We love the flavour and the smell of
meat,
The slaughterhouses' pungent reek.
Why blame us then if in the heat
Of our embrace your bones begin to
creak.
We saddle horses wild and shy,
As in the fields so playfully they
swerve.
Though they be stubborn, yet we press
their thigh
Until they willingly and meekly serve.
Join us! From horror and from strife
Turn to the peace of our embrace.
There is still time. Keep in its sheath
your knife.
Comrades, we will be brothers to your
race.
Say no – and we are none the worse.
We, too, can utter pledges that are
vain.
But ages, ages will you bear the curse
Of our sons' distant offspring racked
with pain.
Our forests' dark depths shall we open
wide
To you, the men of Europe's comely
race,
And unmoved shall we stand aside,
An ugly grin on our Asian face.
Advance, advance to Ural's crest,
We offer you a battleground so neat
Where your machines of steel in
serried ranks abreast
With the Mongolian savage horde will
meet.
But we shall keep aloof from strife,
No longer be your shield from hostile

To seek to solve the riddles of a
sphinx.
The sphinx is Russia, sad and yet
elated,
Stained with dark blood, with grief
prostrate,
For you with longing she has looked
and waited,
Replete with ardent love and ardent
hate.
Yet how will ever you perceive
That, as we love, as lovingly we yearn,
Our love is neither comfort nor relief
But like a fire will destroy and burn.
We love cold figures' hot illumination,
The gift of supernatural vision,
We like the Gallic wit's mordant
sensation
And dark Teutonic indecision.
We know it all: in Paris hell's dark
street,
In Venice bright and sunlit
colonnades,
The lemon blossoms' scent so heavy,
yet so sweet,
And in Cologne a shadowy arcade.

arrow,
We shall just watch the mortal strife
With our slanting eyes so cold and
narrow.
Unmoved shall we remain when
Hunnish forces
The corpses' pockets rake for plunder,
Set town afire, to altars tie their
horses,
Burn our white brothers' bodies torn
asunder.
To the old world goes out our last
appeal:
To work and peace invite our warming
fires.
Come to our hearth, join our festive
meal.
Called by the strings of our Barbarian
lyres.
30 January 1918

- III. "El sol y el viento," published in *Claridad*, no. 138, 10 Jul. 1927.

EL SOL Y EL VIENTO

El sol y el viento discutían cual de los dos era más fuerte.

La discusión fué larga, porque ninguno de los dos quería ceder.

Viendo que por el camino avanzaba un caballero, acordaron probar sus fuerzas, desarrollándolas contra él.

—Vas a ver — dijo el viento — cómo con sólo echarme sobre él, desgarró sus vestidos.

Y comenzó a soplar cuanto pudo.

Pero mientras más esfuerzos hacía el viento más oprimía el hombre su abrigo, gruñendo contra aquél, pero caminando, caminando siempre.

El viento encolerizado, descargó sobre el viajero lluvia y nieve; pero el hombre no se detuvo.

Comprendió el viento que no era cosa posible arrancarle el abrigo. Sonrió el sol, mostróse entre dos nubes, recalentó la tierra, y el pobre caballero que se regocijaba con aquel dulce calor, quitóse el abrigo y se lo echó al hombro.

—Ya ves — dijo el sol al viento — con el bien se obtiene más que con el mal.

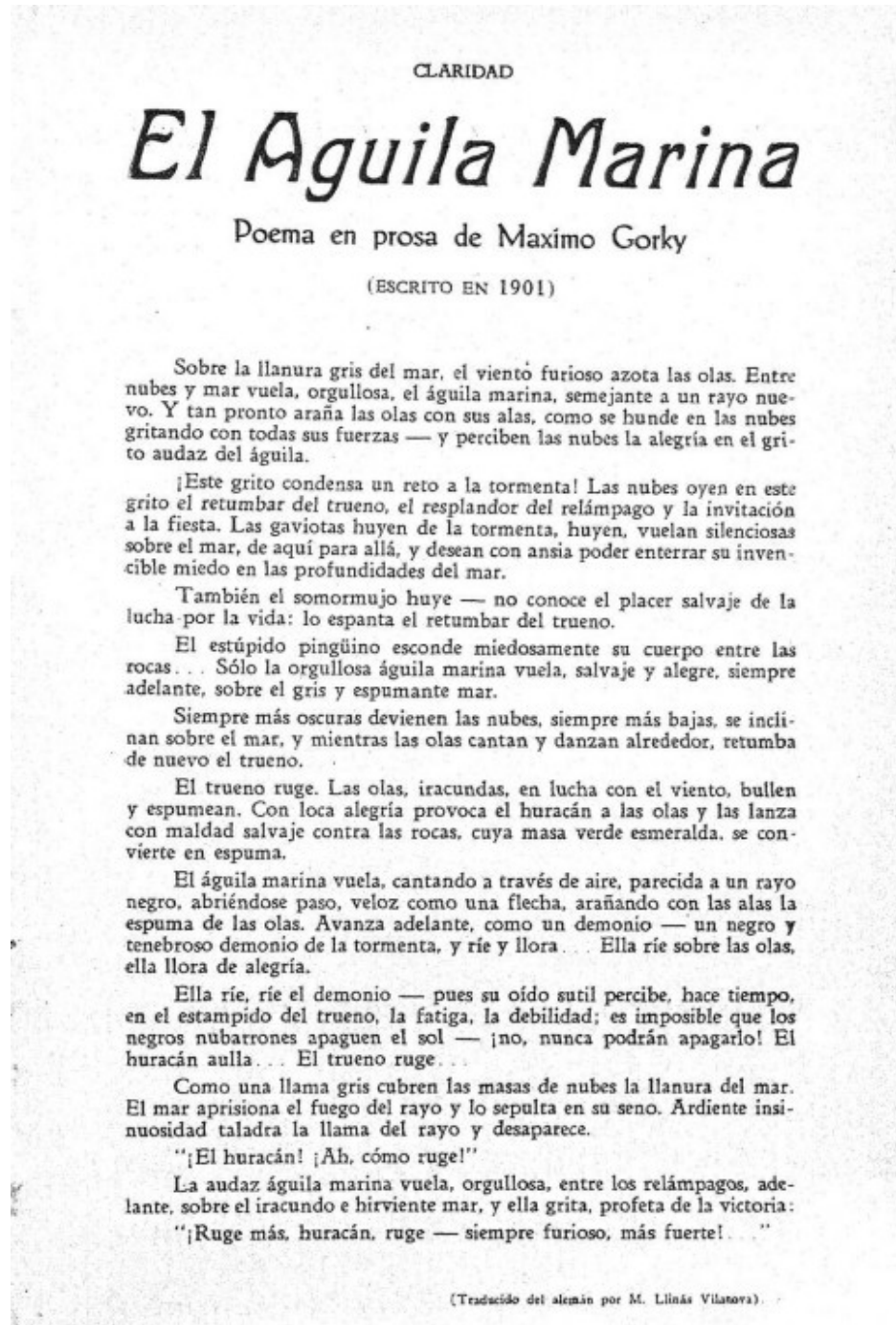
León Tolstoy.

- IV. L.N. Tolstoy, "Солнце и ветер" («The Sun and the Wind»), *Azbuka*, 1872.

Заспорили солнце с ветром, кто прежде человека раздеет. Стал ветер сдувать с человека платье. И шапку рвет, и платье распахивает, а человек все только крепче шапку надвигает да запахивается. Так и не раздел ветер человека. Взялось солнце. Только припекло – распахнулся человек, сдвинул шапку. Еще припекло солнце – и вовсе разделся человек.

[The sun and the wind decided to see who would be the first one to strip a man bare. The wind began to blow away the man's garb, to tear at his hat, to throw open his garb, but all the man does is to pull down his hat even tightly, wrapping himself deeper into his garb. So, the wind could not strip the man bare. The sun took over. Just barely warmed up – the man's garb is thrown open and the hat's moved to the side. The sun added heat – the man's at once undressed].

- V. Maksim Gorky, "El águila marina," translated by Llinas Vilanova, published in *Claridad*, no. 156, 14 Apr. 1928.



VI. Maksim Gorky, "La canción del Albatros," published in *Claridad*, no. 312, Apr. 1937.

CLARIDAD

La Canción del Albatros

SOBRE la nivea llanura del mar, el viento amontona las nubes. Entre las nubes y el mar vuela orgulloso el Albatros, semejante a un relámpago negro.

Ya rozando las olas con sus alas, ya atravesando las nubes como una flecha, el Albatros no cesa de gritar. Y las nubes escuchan un himno de alegría en los gritos audaces del ave.

¡Estos gritos expresan su sed de tempestad!

Las nubes perciben en estos gritos la fuerza de la cólera, la llama de la pasión y la seguridad de la victoria.

lucha por el Derecho —en este caso la revolución contra la opresión—, a más de ser una necesidad es una obligación ineludible para el pueblo. Los que desconocen su suprema potestad deben encontrar la sanción condigna en la insurrección que los avienta para asegurar la libertad y los demás derechos populares. Por lo demás, "la emancipación de los trabajadores ha de ser obra de los trabajadores mismos".

E L I O M. A. C O L L E

Buenos Aires, abril de 1937.

(1) Ver "La lucha por el derecho" y "El fin en el derecho", de von Ihering.

(2) R. Mondolfo: "Feuerbach y Marx". Cap. IV.

(3) Hobbes: "Leviatán". — Rousseau: "El contrato social" y "La desigualdad entre los hombres".

(4) Decimos negando, porque Rousseau, que fué quien cristalizó definitivamente esta teoría del contrato social, sostiene el derecho popular a la revolución.

(5) A. Posada: "Derecho Político".

(6) L. von Haller: "Restauración de la ciencia política".

(7) Guseplowicz: "Estado de Derecho y socialismo" y "Compendio de Sociología".

(8) Treumann: "Los monstruos". 1903.

(9) J. Locke: "Tratado del gobierno civil".

(10) Rousseau: "La desigualdad entre los hombres". Parte 2ª.

(11) León Duguit: "Traité de Droit Constitutionnel". T. 3, y "La résistance à l'oppression", p. 790 y ss.

(12) Bluntschli: "Derecho Público Universal". T. 1, pág. 128.

(13) Daniel Antokoletz: "Doctrina de los gobiernos "de facto". Jurisp. Arg. T. 34.

(14) J. González Calderón: "Derecho Constitucional".

(15) Dr. Alfredo Colmo: "La revolución en la América Latina". 1933. Cap. X.

Las gaviotas gimen ante la tempestad. Gimen y se balancean sobre las olas, buscando esconder en el fondo del mar su horror ante la tempestad.

Los somorgujos también gimen. Para ellos no es dable concebir la delicia del combate por la vida. Y el retumbo de las olas les asusta.

El tonto pingüino esconde tímidamente su cuerpo pesado entre las rocas.

Tan sólo el Albatros orgulloso vuela libre y soberano sobre el mar, cubierto de blancas espumas.

Se oye el retumbo del trueno. Gimen las olas coronadas de espuma, en pugna formidable con el viento. De pronto he aquí que el viento ciñe la procesión de las olas con sus robustos brazos y colérico las arroja con toda su fuerza contra los duros peñascos, donde las masas líquidas se hacen polvo y se rompen en salpicaduras de esmeralda.

El Albatros, más hermoso todavía, entre gritos rubrica el espacio y como flecha se hunde en el seno de las nubes, rozando las crestas espumosas de las olas con sus alas.

El Albatros vuela como un demonio —el orgulloso y negro demonio de la tempestad—, y solloza y grita.

¡El Albatros ríe de las nubes tempestuosas, sollozando de alegría!

El Albatros —atento demonio— ya percibe la fatiga de la cólera del trueno y adivina que las nubes no podrán ocultar ya más, por completo, el sol. ¡No, no lo ocultarán!

El viento aúlla, retumba el trueno...

Como una llama azul las bandadas de nubes flamean sobre los abismos del mar. El aprisiona las flechas de los relámpagos y las hunde en sus abismos. Y como si fuesen serpientes de fuego, los relámpagos se retuercen y se apagan.

¡La tempestad! ¡Pronto tronará la tempestad!

Y así, más orgulloso todavía, el orgulloso Albatros vuela soberano y atrevido entre una fiesta de relámpagos, sobre el mar que coléricamente retumba.

Y el Profeta de la victoria grita:
"¡Qué ruja la tempestad! ¡Más fuerte!
¡Más fuerte!"

MÁXIMO GORKI.

VII. Maksim Gorky, “Песня о буреветнике,” published in Zhizn, no.4, 1901.

Песня о буреветнике

Над седой равниной моря ветер тучи собирает. Между тучами и морем гордо реет
Буреветник, черной молнии подобный.

То крылом волны касаясь, то стрелой взмывая к тучам, он кричит, и — тучи слышат
радость в смелом крикептицы.

В этом крике — жажда бури! Силу гнева, пламя страсти и уверенность в победе
слышат тучи в этом крике.

Чайки стонут перед бурей, — стонут, мечутся над морем и на дно его готовы спрятать
ужас свой пред бурей.

И гагары тоже стонут, — им, гагарам, недоступно наслажденье битвой жизни: гром
ударов их пугает.

Глупый пингвин робко прячет тело жирное в утесах... Только гордый Буреветник
реет смело и свободно над седым от пены морем!

Всё мрачней и ниже тучи опускаются над морем, и поют, и рвутся волны к высоте
навстречу грому.

Гром грохочет. В пене гнева стонут волны, с ветром споря. Вот охватывает ветер стаи
волн объятые крепким и бросает их с размаху в дикой злобе на утесы, разбивая в
пыль и брызги изумрудные громады.

Буреветник с криком реет, черной молнии подобный, как стрела пронзает тучи, пену
воли крылом срывает.

Вот он носится, как демон, — гордый, черный демон бури, — и смеется, и рыдает...

Он над тучами смеется, он от радости рыдает!

В гнече грома, — чуткий демон, — он давно усталость слышит, он уверен, что не
скроют тучи солнца, — нет, не скроют!

Ветер воет... Гром грохочет...

Синим пламенем пылают стаи туч над бездной моря. Море ловит стрелы молний и в
своей пучине гасит. Точно огненные змеи, вьются в море, исчезая, отраженья этих
молний.

— Буря! Скоро грянет буря!

Это смелый Буреветник гордо реет между молний над ревушим гневно морем; то
кричит пророк победы:

— Пусть сильнее грянет буря!..

VIII. Maksim Gorky, "Song of the Stormy Petrel," *Selected Short Stories*, 1955.

High above the silvery ocean winds are gathering the storm-clouds, and between the clouds and ocean proudly wheels the Stormy Petrel, like a streak of sable lightning.

Now his wing the wave caresses, now he rises like an arrow, cleaving clouds and crying fiercely, while the clouds detect a rapture in the bird's courageous crying.

In that crying sounds a craving for the tempest! Sounds the flaming of his passion, of his anger, of his confidence in triumph.

The gulls are moaning in their terror--moaning, darting o'er the waters, and would gladly hide their horror in the inky depths of ocean.

And the grebes are also moaning. Not for them the nameless rapture of the struggle. They are frightened by the crashing of the thunder.

And the foolish penguins cower in the crevices of rocks, while alone the Stormy Petrel proudly wheels above the ocean, o'er the silver-frothing waters.

Ever lower, ever blacker, sink the stormclouds to the sea, and the singing waves are mounting in their yearning toward the thunder.

Strikes the thunder. Now the waters fiercely battle with the winds. And the winds in fury seize them in unbreakable embrace, hurtling down the emerald masses to be shattered on the cliffs.

Like a streak of sable lightning wheels and cries the Stormy Petrel, piercing storm-clouds like an arrow, cutting swiftly through the waters.

He is coursing like a Demon, the black Demon of the tempest, ever laughing, ever sobbing--he is laughing at the storm-clouds, he is sobbing with his rapture.

In the crashing of the thunder the wise Demon hears a murmur of exhaustion. And he knows the storm will die and the sun will be triumphant; the sun will always be triumphant!

The waters roar. The thunder crashes. Livid lightning flares in stormclouds high above the seething ocean, and the flaming darts are captured and extinguished by the waters, while the serpentine reflections writhe, expiring, in the deep.

It's the storm! The storm is breaking!

Still the valiant Stormy Petrel proudly wheels among the lightning, o'er the roaring, raging ocean, and his cry resounds exultant, like a prophecy of triumph--

Let it break in all its fur.

XI. Vladimir Mayakovksky, "La guerra y la paz" ("War and Peace"), published in *Claridad*, no. 232, 13 Jun. 1931.

CLARIDAD

LA GUERRA Y LA PAZ

(Fragmentos)

¡Nerón!
¡Salud!
¡Quieres?
Un espectáculo de la más grande arena:
Hoy
luchan
de nación a nación
16 selectos gladiadores.

Te retorcerás cual ardilla en la jaula
cuando tus restos averiguen:
Hoy

el mundo
entero es un Coliseum,
y las olas de todos los mares
lo tapizaron con su terciopelo.

El oro de los esclavos,
Los endrinos bigotes de los magyares,
Las impenetrables manchas de los negros,
De todos los terrestres hemisferios
hileras de multitudes el desfile,
Y allí,

donde los Alpes
calentando al ocaso
acarician el hielo de la mejilla del cielo
cual una galería de nubes
avizoran los aviadores.

Y la tierra
y las nubes
y el aire están removidos.

¿A dónde dirigire mi acelerado paso?
El alma enloquecida
a punto de saltar, ora:
¡Guerra!
¡Basta!
¡Apaciguales tú!
¡Ya desnuda está la tierra!

Jadea mi pecho...
Una cosa grave:
¡voy a la casa de Dios!
La puerta del paraíso
de nubes blindada
con la culata despedazo.

Tiemblan los ángeles.
Les compadezco.
El óvalo de sus caras
supera apenas a una pluma.
"¿Dónde están
los dioses?"
—Huyeron,
todos huyeron
y Saboor
y Buda
y Alah
y Jehová!

El quinto día
en el cráneo perforado
los trenes curvan sus curvas...
En el podrido vagón

para cuarenta personas,
sólo cuatro piernas.

Tradujo B. H. VLADIMIRO MAIAKOVSKY.

Ha muerto Miranda Klix

CON profundo pesar, ante la impotencia de luchar contra ese "alguien" que nos acecha en cada paso de la Vida, desconcertados, vamos a dar a nuestros lectores la infortunada noticia: Ha muerto Miranda Klix; uno de los jóvenes cuentistas de más porvenir en nuestras letras y que CLARIDAD contó entre sus más asiduos colaboradores.

Parecería que la Fatalidad se cerniese sobre la



nueva generación de nuestros escritores. Ayer fué a Gustavo Riccio, al que en pleno fervor poético, cuando su personalidad se iba afilando en un grado de superación, nos lo arrebató la muerte. Hoy es a Miranda Klix, que lo sorprende en un rincón de Córdoba, donde se había trasladado con fines de salud, después de dar a la opinión pública su primer libro: "Cara de Cristo". Libro que tuvo la virtud de llamar la atención a la crítica más autorizada del país; pese a la discrepancia de opiniones formuladas, el libro nos reveló un inquietante temperamento y un don asimilativo en el autor que cuajaría en una obra futura, cuando la experiencia acumulara más vida en esa atormentada y joven existencia que fué la de Miranda Klix.

Vayan, pues, con el sincero dolor que nos embarga en la hora, los más sentidos pésames a la familia del malogrado amigo.

APPENDIX B: César Tiempo's Correspondence

- I. Benjamín Abramson's letter to César Tiempo in which he sends his translation of Gorky's controversial article and asks him to publish it in *Claridad*.

CT421
Bs. As., 14/4/30
Caro Zeitlin:

Para empezar curiose
por correo una traducción de un
punto de vista de M. Gorky, muy
interesantes, por cierto, según Salas.

Se trata de una opinión
de Peschkov sobre un asunto
que ha originado ~~una~~ cambio de
ideas, a veces violento y ~~sereno~~,
entre los intelectuales ^{sov.} de nuestro
relieve y prestigio.

Como se ve por lo sus-
tentado por Gorky, el rebate
ese criterio "grave" y agudo
de los hombres "serios", y
afirma que en la cuestión
de la educación de los niños
es imprescindible "entretenerlos".

Si Ud. considera que el
artículo puede tener interés
para los lectores de "R. V." publíquelo
con una nota suya (que son de
por sí bastante "sobrosas").

BTT

II. Fragment from Benjamín Abramson's letter to César Tiempo's from Moscow.

C. Tiempo,

Moscú, 29/1/33. 17^{to} año del
Rev. (29/1/33). —

Mi querido aeda:

¡Pob fin, una carta suya! Acabo de recibir la del 21 de Sept., primer día de la primavera. Es que "don Simón no tiene suerte": su carta llegó bien a Moscú, pero el dichoso de la "kvartira" (pese a los millones y millones de metros cuadrados de viviendas para obreros y empleados que se construyen en esta ciudad de las ex-40 veces 40 iglesias, y ahora tantas y tantas veces facultades para obreros y campesinos, uno tendría que ser un dichoso detentador de centenares de dólares para obtener un tugurio), ya le digo el feliz "pudiente" con kvartira a donde me parecía factible enfilar mi intercambio epistolar, resultó un perfecto "mascalzone". Su carta, ¡tan luego la suya!, se "le había metido en un ignoto "ugol" (rincón, pues la decantada "kvartira" consta de una sola pieza con muchos rincones), sin que él pueda dar con ella. Y yo, impotente, pese a mi ira olímpica, volvía unxx día y otro en busca "de la amada", intuyendo que ha de ser algo "tiemponiano". Y nada... Aquella, o mejor dicho, aquel "sobre con membrete de reclame de modas", según el susodicho feliz dueño de la "kvartira", no aparecía. Pero, hoy, día 29 de este invierno moscovita, que hasta ahora nos mimaba con temperaturas de unos 8-14 bajo cero, comenzando recién ahora a tomar revancha (y digo 29, pues aquí ignoramos en absoluto el nombre del día, ya que el calendario marca: "1-er día de la "piatidnevka", 2º día etc.", habiendo desaparecido para siempre jamás aquello de "domingo, lunes", en vísperas del último día de la última "piatidnevka", los cinco días de trabajo, en oposición a los designios del "tata Jehová" que tuvo que yugar 6 días para crear este valle de lágrimas... para el capitalismo agonizante) me empilcho y, desafiando los pocos grados de bajo cero y los "bondis" (esto es un capítulo aparte; ah, si Vd. viera los "bondis"! Parece que le he escrito algo acerca de esas "carrozas de tutti". Yo los he llamado aquí en un pequeño artículo "sandwicheras". Y bien se merecen este apodo), a despecho de una larga dola cabe el N^oA, que ahora, después de la reforma de corta data, corre...veloz, me enfilo de nuevo a la casa "internacionalnaia", y ¡oh, milagro!, al ir a buscar un tomo de la enciclopedia, se asoma el sobre... Toda la familia ha leído y releído la carta de "los pagos queridos". Imagínese lo ansiosos que andábamos todos con motivo de las noticias prppaladas por aquí sobre la intentona "liguista", malbaratada. Aquí se decía que hubo muertos y heridos en cantidad. Pero, gracias a Allah, aquello terminó en aguas de borraja.

Acabo de recibir una carta de nuestro amigo de la "rubaschka", me refiero a Vig., en la que él me dice muchas cosas, pero nada de cartas ni de libros para mí. Desde que estoy en Moscú, recibí de él un par de tarjetas postales. El calla en absoluto con respecto a los libros y revistas. Y bien, ya le ajustaremos algún día las cuentas. Supongo que Vd. habrá recibido todos mis envíos: cartas, libros, etc. Y también ya tendrá mi nueva dirección. En este preciso instante, me entregan un paquete enviado por Vilanova: dos ~~xxxx~~ números de ~~xxxx~~ y uno de Actualidad. Resulta que él, don Elías, el mesías, el redentor de los oprimidos y vejados, se apartó de la grey "actualidadiana". Yo, claro está, estoy excluido de la lista de los colaboradores, por más que les he enviado un sinnúmero de fotos, notas etc.

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Scholarship, Alpha Kappa Alpha Educational Advancement Foundation, 2013

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PUBLICATIONS

“Maiakóvski em Cuba: A Visão dos Trópicos em *Minha Descoberta da América, Sou Cuba, Tristes Trópicos e Hitler, Terceiro Mundo*,” in *Alea: Estudos Neolatinos* (under review).

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Review of the NETA Annual Conference Keynote Speech, Arthur Goldhammer’s

“Distilling 38 Years of Experience: Reflections on Life as a Translator,” *New England Translators Association Newsletter*, Spring 2015.

<http://www.netaweb.org/resources/Documents/BoD%20Minutes/Summer%202015%20NETA%20News%20v2.pdf>.

TRANSLATIONS AND INTERPRETING

Proofreading and Transliteration from Russian, *Mundo de sonho e catástrofe: o desaparecimento da utopia de massas na União Soviética e nos Estados Unidos*, [Dreamworld and Catastrophe: The Passing of Mass Utopia in East and West], by Susan Buck-Moss, Tran. Ana Luiza Andrade, Rodrigo Lopes de Barros and Ana Carolina Cernicchiaro (forthcoming).

Assistance with Research and Translation of Portuguese-language Sources for the Chapters on Brazil from *On Behalf of the People: Professional Movements, Politics, and the Struggle for Access to Healthcare and Medicine*, by Joseph Harris (forthcoming).

English-into-Portuguese Translation of “American Accent on the Go” Application, by Ann Bartholomew.

English-into-Russian Translation of “Home Video,” by Jennifer De Leon, One City One Story Project, *Boston Book Festival*, Fall 2015.

<http://www.bostonbookfest.org/attend/1c1s>.

English-into-Russian Translation of “Sublimation,” by Jennifer Haigh, One City One Story Project, *Boston Book Festival*, Fall 2014.

Simultaneous Interpreting (Russian to English) of the “Talk by Pavel Grushko, Senior Translator of the Film *I am Cuba*,” Boston University, Fall 2013.

Portuguese-into-Russian Translation of *Antiterápias*, by Jacques Fux (in progress)

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Boston University, Boston, Massachusetts

Courses taught:

Advanced Spanish “Spanish through Performance: The Theater of Everyday Life”
(Third-year course), Spring 2016

Intermediate Spanish I, Fall 2013

Elementary Spanish II, Fall 2012

Elementary Spanish I, Fall 2011, Summer 2012 & 2013

Intermediate Portuguese II, Spring 2014, Spring 2015

Intermediate Portuguese I, Fall 2016

Intensive First-Year Portuguese, Spring 2013

Elementary Portuguese I, Fall 2012

Lectures in courses:

“On Susan Buck-Morss’ *Dreamworld and Catastrophe: The Passing of Mass Utopia of East and West*” in a Graduate Course “Testing Literature”, Fall 2016.

“Dictatorship, José Agrippino de Paula and *Cinema Marginal* in Brazil” in Introduction to Brazilian History and Culture, Fall 2015.

Lectures on *Cien años de soledad*, Eva Perón, “Pierre Menard, autor del *Quijote*,” and “Ruinas circulares” by Jorge Luis Borges in: Twentieth Century Spanish American Literature, Spring 2015.

“Favela, its History and Art,” in Topics in Portuguese Language and Culture, Fall 2014.

“El Pianista by Juan Goytisolo,” in The Spanish Novel and Civil War, Spring 2013.

Teaching Assistant, Discussion Sections Leader:

The Nature of Inquiry, Kilachand Honors Interdisciplinary Course. Explores how we investigate nature, art, society and their interconnections. Teaching Assistant for Profs. Borinsky, Dellheim, Kaufman, Fall 2014, Fall 2015

Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge, Massachusetts

Elementary Portuguese, Winter 2014, Winter 2015, Fall 2016

STUDY ABROAD TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Boston University: Argentina Cultural Studies Program, Universidad de Palermo, Buenos Aires, Argentina, June-August 2015; June-August 2016. Senior Program Assistant, Spanish Instructor

INVITED LECTURES AND WORKSHOPS

“Demo of the First Day of Portuguese,” in the Department of Romance Studies Teaching Demonstrations, September 2016

AEGE (Asociación de Estudiantes Graduados de Español) Grant Writing Workshop, Fall 2015

“Intercambios culturales y políticos entre Rusia y Argentina entre los 20 y 30,” in the Junta de Estudios Históricos de Mendoza, Argentina, August 2015

“Literatura rusa y traducción en la Argentina,” organized by el Ateneo “Nuestra América,” el Centro de Literatura Comparada y la Subsecretaria de Extensión Universitaria, Facultad

de Filosofía y Letras de la Universidad Nacional de Cuyo, Mendoza, Argentina, August 2015

“O uso das *Crônicas Brasileiras* na aula de Português” (“On the Use of *Crônicas Brasileiras* in a Portuguese Class”), *Crônicas Brasileiras* as a Pedagogical Tool, Boston University, Spring 2015

“Dostoievskian” Buenos Aires: Russian Literature Translation and its Influence on the Argentine Avant-Garde,” part of The Translator’s Voice, a series of readings sponsored by the New England Translators Association, March 2015

“Teaching Ideas for a First Day of Foreign Language Class,” in the Departmental Pedagogical Workshops: *Ideas for Teaching*, Romance Studies Department, Boston University, September 2013

PEER-REVIEWED CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS AND PANELS

“Russian Literature’s “Asian Face” in Latin America: When the Margins Translate the Margins,” The American Literary Translators Association (ALTA) conference. Oakland, California, October 2016

“Translation as Collaboration: Coalescing Languages, Advancing Cultures”, panel chair and a presenter of “Russian Literature for Argentine Avant-Garde: Translation, Imitation, Parody,” The New England Translators Association (NETA) annual conference. Boston, Massachusetts, UMass Boston, May 2016

“Best Practices in Foreign Language Teaching: Developing Intercultural Competence,” panel collaborator, Northeast Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (NECTFL) annual conference, New York City, New York, February 2016

“Cannibals’ War on Epistemological Colonialism: Literature and Translation in Latin America,” panel chair and a presenter of “Abutcov, Abramson, Tiempo: Guiding, Translating, and Writing Russian Literature in Argentina,” The Northeast Modern Language Association (NEMLA), annual convention. Hartford, Connecticut, University of Connecticut, March 2016

“*Claridad: Entre la literatura rusa y la vanguardia argentina*” (“*Claridad: Between Russian Literature and Argentine Avant-Garde*”), *Jornadas sobre la Historia de las Políticas Editoriales en la Argentina*, Biblioteca Nacional. Buenos Aires, Argentina, July 2015

“Borges, Foucault, Bertolucci: A Visual Universe,” Boston University Scholars Day. Boston, Massachusetts, Spring 2014

“What Do We See When We Read?: A Visual Reading of Borges,” NEMLA annual conference, Harrisburg, PA, Spring 2014

“Entre la épica y los romances: algunas consideraciones sobre un análisis comparativo entre las *byliny* y la épica española” (“Between Epics and Romances: Some Considerations About a Comparative Analysis of *Byliny* and Spanish Epics”), Kentucky Foreign Languages Conference. Lexington, KY, Spring 2014

“Beyond Borders: Revolutionary Politics and Aesthetics,” panel chair and a presenter of “Vallejo y Picasso: en humanidad su arte, en arte su guerra” (“Vallejo and Picasso: In Humanity is their Art, In Art is Their War”), NECLAS (New England Council of Latin American Studies). Wheaton College, Norton, MA, Fall 2013

“Culture and Communities: Creative Use of Technology in Beginning Spanish,” Massachusetts Foreign Languages Association (MaFLA), annual conference. Sturbridge, MA, Fall 2013

“The Unreal Reality Bridging the Continents: Magical Realism in Russian and Latin American Literature,” Carolina Conference on Romance Literatures, UNC, Chapel Hill and at UTEP, El Paso in Congreso de Literatura Mexicana Contemporánea, Spring 2012

LANGUAGES

Russian native speaker.

Spanish near-native fluency.

English near-native fluency.

Portuguese near-native fluency.

French intermediate-low reading and aural proficiency.

German elementary reading proficiency.

Latin elementary reading proficiency.

Tatar (a Turkic language) elementary aural proficiency.