

**THE AUTHOR OF THE PALIMPSEST TEXTS OR “SCRAPING  
AGAIN” THE TEXTS OF BORGES (1899-1986) TODAY  
–Through the Case of Averroes–**

Recep Alpyađıl  
*Istanbul University, Istanbul-Turkey*

---

**Abstract**

In this paper, we try to understand Jorge Luis Borges' references to the East, especially Islamic thought, by analyzing his short stories, including *Averroes' Search* and *The Enigma of Edward Fitzgerald*. This paper also attempts to conceptualize Borges' philosophical gesture. It seems that we could reconstruct his deep epistemological insights through the metaphor of *palimpsest writing*. In this way, it is supposed to answer the question of orientalism in Borges' work and clarify the difference between to be an orientalist and re-appropriating the orient. Finally, this paper critiques the “native orientalism” of Muslim thinkers in the Islamic philosophical context through the case of Borges.

Key Words: Borges, orientalism, *palimpsest writing*, the bricoleur, *Averroes' Search*, deconstruction, Derrida.

Imagine, in an Oriental library, a panel painted many centuries ago. It may be Arabic, and we are told that all the legends of *The Thousand and One Nights* are represented on its surface; it may be Chinese, and we learn that it illustrates a novel that has hundreds or thousands of characters. In the tumult of its forms, one shape –a tree like an inverted cone; a group of mosques, vermilion in color, against an iron wall– catches our attention, and from there we move on to others. The day declines, the light is wearing thin, and as we go

deeper into the carved surface we understand that there is nothing on earth that is not there.

Jorge Luis Borges (1999d: 267)

Gone too from the world, Averroes and Moses Maimonides, dark men in mien and movement, flashing in their mocking mirrors the obscure soul of the world, a darkness shining in brightness which brightness could not comprehend.

James Joyce (1960: 34)

Jorge Luis Borges is generally acknowledged as one of the greatest Spanish writers in this century. On the wider literary scene, particularly in France and the United States, he is recognized as both a modern and postmodern master. However, one thing sets Borges apart from most of his contemporaries: his fascination with philosophy, especially metaphysics. Borges displays a genuine philosophical turn of mind; that is, he can appreciate and formulate rigorous philosophical arguments. He also exhibits a profound interest in metaphysical games, hoping all the while that one of these games may turn out to be a relatively accurate description of reality. In this, he is much like his favorite philosophers, Heraclitus, Parmenides, Zeno, Leibniz, Spinoza, Berkeley, Hume, Kant, and Schopenhauer. However, this does not mean that he is a philosopher. So how should we classify Borges' legacy? This question seems to help us to answer another question. Looking at his writings, we see other names, such as al-Fārābī, Avicenna, Averroes, Ḥasan b. Şabbāh, Niẓām al-Mulk, Brethren of Purity, Zāhir, and Ibn Ḥakam al-Bukhārī, and so on. –Only in the beginning of “The Enigma of Edward FitzGerald”, Borges manages to fit over twenty names of Islamic or Arabic origin into the opening paragraph (Borges, 1999b). Does this mean he is an orientalist? Or, is there a special designation just for him? The quick and simple answer is this: when Borges refers to the philosophers, this does not mean he is a philosopher; when he refers to the East, this does not mean he is an orientalist! The main point is to understand the *deep grammar* of his writings.

There have been many books and articles written in the last several years attempting to understand Borges' corpus. Many new concepts have been introduced to capture his style: cosmopolite, postmodern, syncretic, and poststructuralist. Firstly, I will analyze some of

these concepts and then propose that the quasi-concept *palimpsest* seems most appropriate to understand the language games Borges played throughout his life. Secondly, this paper is not restricted to literary space; it is also about the philosophical space between Muslims in the “Orient”. It will be emphasized that Borges’ citation of Islamic philosophy is one means of its introduction into contemporary philosophy.

### A. A Man Who Has Many Names

Today, there are many names given to Borges. Actually, as a mystical gesture, everyone sees themselves in the mirror of Borges. Borges has not had a name such as BORGES (with capital letters). There are a lot of Borgeses in this one man, or *There Is No Borges* (Köpf, 1993). It is no longer a proper noun; hence, it is a metaphor for a genre(s).

He was always interested in the relationship between the *one* and the *many*, and for him, these words were interchangeable, substitutional concepts. He set up a dynamic between the One and the Many through references to one plot with many permutations. A single, definitive plot has implications for a singular, determined world with little opportunity for choice. The multiple permutations offer a world of unlimited possibilities. The fact that all philosophies must give expression to opposing points of view also emphasizes that this world allows for multiple, competing perspectives, rather than exclusive, monistic visions. It has implications for a discourse on ideas and freedom of expression as well (Frisch, 2004). He takes his power from being nothing and everything together.

He never restricted himself to only one context, and thus, he was always interested in all context/s. Some think that this man is *out of context* and separated from the world. Here the *language of Tlön* in “Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius”, a famous story by Borges, could be useful for understanding this strange man’s unusual style. In Tlön, Borges write that,

Philosophies are much like the nouns of the northern hemisphere; the fact that every philosophy is by definition a dialectical game, ... has allowed them to proliferate. There are systems upon systems that are incredible but possessed of a pleasing architecture or a certain agreeable sensationalism. The metaphysicians of Tlön seek not truth, or even plausibility –they seek to amaze, astound. In their view, meta-

physics is a branch of the literature of fantasy. They know that a system is naught but the subordination of all the aspects of the universe to one of those aspects— anyone of them” (Borges, 1964c: 10).

It seems that Borges gives some clues about his writing style, such as a dialectical game, a proliferation, and systems upon systems. In this regard, to understand Borges, we need different concepts, may be quasi-concepts. It is possible to conceptualize Borges’ gestures some postmodern idioms.

### **i. The Syncretic**

The Borgesian notion of syncretism is closely associated with the concept of the world as a mental universe. Borges forms his philosophical edifice by drawing on several trends of idealism as envisioned by Plato, Berkeley, Hume and (mainly) Schopenhauer, as well as on Eastern philosophy. He is fundamentally skeptical regarding the existence of a supernatural, metaphysical power. In other words, the Borgesian syncretist machine can be irreverent toward traditions, ideologies and all sorts of narratives for the simple reason that, in essence, they are all fictional (Kefala, 2007: 69). However, this is a different kind of idealism, which Borges’ narrative challenges to a singular, encompassing vision of the world. His idealism subverts the sense of a fixed reality and the ultimate, objective authority of sensory data in defining objective truth. Once one acknowledges the aesthetic futility of capturing “truth” through objectivity and mimesis, the options for literature open up.

Borges’ syncretist aesthetics contaminate the objective language of truth with the subjective language of deceit, and vice versa. Essay and fiction plunge into each other, blurring the limits between objectivity and subjectivity, between the real and the imaginary. In short, the very structures that irony and fantasy serve, by definition, as they both confront the latter with a declared *this* and an alluded *more than this* –they suspend a solidified reality. With his syncretist aesthetics, Borges challenges and enriches (Kefala, 2007: 85). “I’ve spent many years of my life studying Chinese philosophy”, says Borges,

for instance, especially Taoism, which interests me very much, but I’ve also studied Buddhism and am interested in Sufism. Therefore, all this has influenced me, but I don’t know to what extent. I’m not sure whether I’ve studied these religions and Oriental philosophies because of their effect on my thoughts and actions, or from an imagina-

tive point of view, for literary reasons. But I think this may happen with every philosophy. Except for Schopenhauer or Berkeley, no philosopher has ever given me the sensation that I was reading a true or even probable description of the world. I've looked at metaphysics rather more as a branch of fantastic literature. For instance, I'm not sure whether I'm a Christian, but I've read a great many books on theology for the sake of their theological problems –free will, punishment, and eternal happiness. All these problems have interested me as food for my imagination (Borges, 1998: 57).

This quote provides some aspects of the syncretic character of his legacy. For Borges, in the end, the human mind itself, the archetypal craftsman (Daedalus) creates the world interminably by constructing and deconstructing –or, better yet, by translating narratives through the syncretist processes of thinking. Eventually, Borges confirms a simple and basic truth: human civilization has never emerged (and never will emerge) from parthenogenesis. Instead, it results from the syncretist processes of literary, ideological and cultural machines whose mechanisms of hybridization and translation become explicit in peripheral countries like Argentina and Turkey –countries that are by definition situated on the delta of diverse times and heterogeneous traditions (Kefala, 2007: 112).

## ii. The Bricoleur

The *bricoleur*, building his interpretation on uncertain grounds, should nevertheless recognize the political significance of his work. The bricoleur's reading, which assumes no monolithic truth as its center, should contest the very notion of such truth. Building multiple interpretations on unstable grounds while alternately using and resisting the codes of Western logic (codes such as order, cause and effect, and closure) requires an energetic engagement with the text, a keen sense of its complex and contradictory possibilities. The assumption that the text is a space where author and reader interact serves as the bricoleur's useful, if uncertain, foundation (Carter, 2000).

It could be said that Borges made a bricolage without knowing it. It appears that his mind always works as a bricoleur. "Bricolage" in the Borges' dictionary means *Infinity Plus One*. In this regard, *The Thousand and One Nights* is just another name for bricolage. *The Passion of an Endless Quotation* is a form of bricolage that acknowledges that the possibilities of multiple narrative progressions could

be found in Borges (or vice versa) (Balderston, 1993; Block de Behar, 2003).

It is possible to Borges, but that is not the main goal of this paper. In particular, I am interested in the name “Orientalist”. In other words, is there any name an orientalist” be added to the names of Borges? Certainly there are some oriental elements in Borges; however, it is uncertain whether Borges is an “Orientalist”. Some scholars see Borges as an Orientalist (Kushigian, 1991). According to Ian Almond,

What we do find in the stories Borges has set in an Islamic context is that each text displays a different attitude toward Islam itself. Borges’ tales actually form a collection of multiple genres, where the narrator of each story confronts and relates his Islamic content in a different voice: patronizing, incomprehending, sympathetic, informative, and cynical. This means that in any of Borges’ several stories concerning Islam –“The Mirror of Ink”, “A Double For Mohammed”, “The Enigma”, “The Masked Dyer”, “The Zahir”, and “Averroes’ Search”– a very specific set of Western metaphors for Islam is being used, one that connects the tale concerned to an equally specific genre of Oriental studies/literature (Almond, 2004: 438; Almond, 2007).

Nonetheless, in this context, it seems that calling Borges as an “Orientalist” is an inappropriate way to read and understand him; at least, this is not fair to his legacy. Hence, it is necessary to find a new concept to understand his perspective toward the Orient. The next section will offer some reasons for this and will propose an Oriental concept, the palimpsest.

### **iii. A Name for the Names: Palimpsest**

It seems that the concept of palimpsest encapsulates the exact connection of Borges with the East. It is well known that the palimpsest is related to old texts. A palimpsest is a manuscript page from a scroll or book that can be scraped off and used again. That is, one could read other texts in the surface of the same papyrus; however, the others are no longer clear. This reading, if there is a reading, is transformed into another. It seems that Borges’ texts, in this regard, have a palimpsest character, and the experience of reading his palimpsest texts is unique. When we are reading him, we recognize that there is always another level or levels behind the visible text. If we go further, again, we see one more level, and so on. Borges himself re-

fers also to this concept of the palimpsest in his texts. In “Pierre Menard, Author of the Quixote”, we read, “I have reflected that it is permissible to see in this ‘final’ Quixote a kind of palimpsest, through which the traces –tenuous but not indecipherable...” (Borges, 1964b: 44).<sup>1</sup>

Gérard Genette, in his book, *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree*, conceptualizes Borges’ point like this:

That duplicity of the object, in the sphere of textual relations, can be represented by the old analogy of the palimpsest: on the same parchment, one text can become superimposed upon another, which it does not quite conceal but allows to show through. It has been aptly said that pastiche and parody “designate literature as a palimpsest”. This must be understood to apply more generally to every hypertext, as Borges made clear concerning the relation between the text and its foretexts. The hypertext invites us to engage in a relational reading, the flavor of which, however perverse, may well be condensed in an adjective recently coined by Philippe Lejeune: a palimpsestuous reading. To put it differently, just for the fun of switching perversities, one who really loves texts must wish from time to time to love (at least) two together (Genette, 1997: 398-399).

The notion of the palimpsest seems a key concept for understanding Borges, if there is any key concept. Thus, we should respond to his palimpsest texts with palimpsest readings.

In this context, we return to our main question: whether he could be called an Orientalist. It seems that the accusation that Borges is an Orientalist results from overlooking the palimpsest aspect of his writings. If the reader reduces Borges to only one dimension, the real significance of his texts disappears, and this would be an incorrect reading of Borges. I will detail this point through Borges’ famous story, *Averroes’ Search*.

---

<sup>1</sup> In “Shakespeare’s Memory”, on the other hand, De Quincey says, “Man’s brain is a palimpsest. Every new text covers the previous one, and is in turn covered by the text that follows –but all-powerful Memory is able to exhume any impression, no matter how momentary it might have been, if given sufficient stimulus” (Borges, 1964b: 248).

## B. Averroes' Search: Destruction of the Destruction

In the well-known story *Averroes' Search* (*La Busca de Averroes*), Borges cites Averroes, a Muslim philosopher from Spain, as a Greek sage.

This Greek, fountainhead of all philosophy, had been bestowed upon men to teach them all that could be known; to interpret his works as the ulema interpret the Koran was Averroes' arduous purpose. Few things more beautiful and more pathetic are recorded in history than this Arab physician's dedication to the thoughts of a man separated from him by fourteen centuries (Borges, 1964a: 149).

The story imagines the difficulty of Averroes, the famed Arabic commentator on Aristotle, in explaining the concepts of tragedy and comedy. Averroes' difficulty was that these concepts could not be expressed in Arabic; hence, no appropriate word existed in Averroes' culture:

The night before, two doubtful words had halted him at the beginning of the *Poetics*. These words were *tragedy* and *comedy*. He had encountered them years before in the third book of the *Rhetoric*; no one in the whole world of Islam could conjecture what they meant. In vain he had exhausted the pages of Alexander of Aphrodisia, in vain he had compared the versions of the Nestorian Hunain ibn-Ishaq and of Abu-Bashar Mata. These two arcane words pululated throughout the text of the *Poetics*; it was impossible to elude them (Borges, 1964a: 149).

Our main aim is not to summarize the story or to analyze it but to understand Borges' essential gesture in this story through the story itself. At the end of *Averroes' Search*, Borges seems to give to us a clue: "I felt, on the last page, that my narration was a symbol of the man I was as I wrote it and that, to compose that narration, I had to be that man and, to be that man, I had to compose that narration, and so on to infinity. (The moment I cease to believe in him, 'Averroes' disappears)" (Borges, 1964a: 155). According to Almond, "Borges seems to have stumbled upon Edward Said's main point: that whenever Westerners write about the 'Orient', they invariably end up writing about themselves –their fantasies, their longings, and their failures. It is a realization that triggers the interruption of the tale– as soon as Borges understands the Orient he is trying to describe is nothing but his own, he stops writing about it" (Almond, 2004: 451-



452). In this regard, he always wrote about himself through the other. Is this enough reason to call Borges an Orientalist? For Almond, yes:

The Oriental teller of tales, the moral admonisher, the detached, Western chronicler and historical “expert”, the anti-Mohammedan satirist, the eccentric dabbler, the student of the esoteric, and finally, the Orientalist biographer who suddenly realizes the biography he is writing is nothing other than his own. Nevertheless, a certain number of recurring characteristics seem to manifest themselves throughout Borges’ Islamic stories (Almond, 2004: 452).

This criticism may be true in a certain sense. This critical approach to Borges, if we do not forget the remarks about the palimpsest character of Borges’ writing, is more serious. However, Borges is always a comic and tragic writer. Borgesian irony incessantly decontextualizes and recontextualizes narratives of all sorts. The process of writing as endless irreverent readings and re-readings of multiple texts is set in the realm of irony where the writer meditates on, attacks or satirizes texts, including his own. In this regard, to call Borges an orientalist is entirely alien to his genre. In this regard, Almond is entirely missing the point.

In this context, the right question should be this: why does translation ultimately emerge as the *modus operandi* of Borges’ syncretist aesthetics? Borges seems to have dedicated his whole life to translating, transferring and dislocating the most heterogeneous and heteroclitic narratives to relocate them within his syncretic textual edifice. According to Kefala, the infinite possibilities of translation as falsification and the invention of what is essentially untranslatable are also what make Borges stop writing about (translating) Averroes. Borges cannot literally translate Averroes because he knows as little about him as Averroes knew about the Aristotelian terms; he therefore translates (“imagines”) his Averroes in the same way Averroes translated (“imagined”) the terms “tragedy” and “comedy”. The act of cultural translation equates Borges with his Averroes inasmuch as Borges principally invents him through his own cultural experience. Hence, “The terms ‘tragedy’ and ‘comedy’ are exactly what is untranslatable in Averroes’ translation of Aristotle but also *what is a fertile ground for Borges as an irreverent translator of the interstitial space of the orillas*. In one word, translations, cultural difference opens up the possibility for infinite reworkings, distortions, falsifications” (Kefala, 2007: 109). In this regard, Borges sees his own tragedy and com-

edy in Averroes. The tragedy is this: there is no exact and correct translation. The comedy is that there is no end to translation. From this perspective, neither Borges nor Borges' Averroes will ever finish the translation of Achilles.

There are more sophisticated readings of the same story by Floyd Merrell, who proposes some connections between Borges' story and Kuhn's and the other radical philosophers' version of incommensurability (Merrell, 1991: 74-76). The primary message of *Averroes' Search* is that there is no context-neutral standpoint from which one can consider the translation "objectively". Rather, all translations take place within a particular context or from a particular point of view. This echoes Nietzsche's observation that every great philosophy is, in effect, autobiography and that there is no knowing which is not perspectival. This theme is reinforced throughout much of Borges' work by the narrator's assertion that he will do his best to refrain from interpretation and by his subsequent failure to carry out his promise (Bossart, 2003: 13). This does not mean "he is a relativist" or another name like that; on the contrary, this is the way to create new concepts and philosophies that are not Eurocentric.

### **C. The Question of "Native Orientalism" in Islamic Thought and Not Able to Make Philosophy Today: The Case of Precursors and Successors**

Ironically, Almond is missing his own orientalism when he accuses Borges of being an orientalist. Being an orientalist is different from being a Westerner! It is a way of seeing, thinking, creating, and so forth. There is an ongoing, extensive discussion between Muslim thinkers and academic orientalists: is there any philosopher after Averroes in the Islamic world? This is a tragic and comic question in the Borgesian sense. I believe that to ask this question is itself a kind of orientalism. Here it is very important to mention a passage from *Averroes' Search*, which differentiates Borges' position from orientalism. He writes:

Averroes, prefiguring the remote arguments of an as yet problematical Hume ... (Borges, 1964a: 150).

The question here is this: how many scholars manage to mention the name of Hume when they refer to Averroes from the East? Borges is always trying to translate one context into another and to quote the Orient in a non-orientalist context, assuming there is a suitable con-

text in the palimpsest text (Kristal, 2002; Waisman, 2005). Sometimes, he is anachronistic; but to avoid being orientalist, what we need is exactly this anachronism, translation and quotation. Making philosophy is synonymous with translation, or philosophy is itself infinite translation. The main question of *Averroes' Search* is translation, whereas today, Muslim thinkers forget the main gesture of their precursors: translation. Instead of blaming Borges for orientalism, we should consider his translation process. For example, in the same story, Borges refers to Averroes' *Tabāfut al-tabāfut* as *Destruction of the Destruction* (Averroes, 1960). This translation is more accurate as *The Incoherence of the Incoherence* (Averroes, 1954). If orientalist Muslim thinkers had not forgotten the processors' philosophical gesture, philosophy as a translation, philosophy in today's world would be different. For example, some papers suggest that Borges is a precursor of deconstruction or that Derrida is a successor to Borges. On the other hand, Derrida also refers to Averroes, in addition to Borges. So if the main issue is translation, is there any "beside"/translation of Averroes today in Islamic world? Yes, we have a right to criticize oriental figures in Borges, but we have no right to reduce Borges only to the orb of the Orient.<sup>2</sup>

There are many examples of this situation in the corpus of Borges. This is the most challenging one: in the "The Enigma of Edward Fitzgerald", Borges writes:

The case invites speculations of a metaphysical nature. Umar professed (we know) the Platonic and Pythagorean doctrine of the soul's passage through many bodies; centuries later, his own soul perhaps

<sup>2</sup> In this context, his connection with Schopenhauer, which is very different from the others, should be mentioned. In the history of philosophy, Schopenhauer seems unique among the Western philosophers when he refers to the East. His impact on Borges is very important. "There is one German writer that I would like to speak about", says Borges, "And I think I spent most of my life reading and rereading him –at first in English and now in German. And that writer is, as you may have guessed, Arthur Schopenhauer. I think that if I had to choose one philosopher, one metaphysician, I would choose Schopenhauer. Or if not, I suppose I would fall back –and be very happy about it– on Berkeley or on Hume. So you see that I'm quite old-fashioned. But I think of Schopenhauer as belonging to the 18<sup>th</sup> century. I think his irony and his pleasant style –and the word 'pleasant' means much to me– belong rather to the 18<sup>th</sup> than to the 19<sup>th</sup> century" (Borges, 1998: 80). If Borges' relationship with Schopenhauer is more fundamental, Schopenhauer's gesture toward the orient was the same.

was reincarnated in England to fulfill, in a remote Germanic language streaked with Latin, the literary destiny that had been suppressed by mathematics in Nishapur. Isaac Luria the Lion taught that the soul of a dead man can enter an unfortunate soul to nourish or instruct it; perhaps, around 1857, Umar's soul took up residence in FitzGerald's. In the *Rubāiyāt* we read that the history of the universe is a spectacle that God conceives, stages, and watches; that notion (whose technical name is pantheism) would allow us to believe that the Englishman could have recreated the Persian because both were, in essence, God or the momentary faces of God (Borges, 1999b: 368).

If we forget the palimpsest dimension of this text, maybe, it could be very hard to understand this quote. However, if we consider *his translation style*, we should ask, through this passage: today, whose soul was reincarnated in Borges to fulfill the literary destiny of the orient? As is well known, Borges' concept of history is cyclical, and according to this insight, there is no privileged time or thinking. Cyclical events reach back toward a mythical conception of time, a sense that certain rhythms and patterns reappear regularly. Thus, they challenge the concept of a definable universal history, the notion that all history is moving in a predictable and undeniable direction. East and West belong to the same universe; all writings belong to the same palimpsest, parchment, or God.<sup>3</sup> It seems that Borges' insight deconstructs the Eurocentric view of philosophy. It does not belong to the Greek or the Muslim or to Babylon or Europe. It is always born and born again. This is the question of precursors and successors, which are very important concepts for Borges and are related to the concept of the palimpsest. A palimpsest text is a text that has a precursor.

Today, we can learn many lessons from Borges' gestures toward his precursors. In the age of oblivion, we need to remember Borges' remembrance of his precursors. In *Kafka and His Precursors*, Borges writes:

The word "precursor" is indispensable to the vocabulary of criticism, but one must try to purify it from any connotation of polemic or ri-

<sup>3</sup> Again, he refers to the al-Aṭṭār, a Persian of the Sufi sect, when he criticizes Stevenson's movie. He says, "Beyond Stevenson's dualist parable and closer to the Conference of the Birds, which Farīd al-Dīn al-Aṭṭār composed in the twelfth century (of the Christian era), we may imagine a pantheist film, whose numerous characters finally become One, who is everlasting" (Borges, 1999c: 261).

valry. The fact is that each writer creates his precursors. His work modifies our conception of the past, as it will modify the future. In this correlation, the identity or plurality of men doesn't matter. The first Kafka of "Betrachtung" is less a precursor of the Kafka of the gloomy myths and terrifying institutions than is Browning or Lord Dunsany (Borges, 1999a: 395).

If we ignore his *precursors*, there is no Borges or Kafka: "Kafka's idiosyncrasy is present in each of these writings, to a greater or lesser degree, but if Kafka had not written, we would not perceive it; that is to say, it would not exist" (Borges, 1999a: 395).

The term *precursor* is more meaningful with the term *successor*. Borges is constituted by his precursors; today, his legacy is carried on by his successors. Jacques Derrida, as a good successor to Borges (González-Echevarría, 1986; Rodríguez, 1990),<sup>4</sup> refers to this point: "– And on the subject of the *et cetera* in the Chinese encyclopedia, let us remind ourselves that Borges entitled 'Et cetera' a set of short texts he added to a second edition of *A Universal History of Infamy*: "In the 'Et cetera' section, I have added three new texts..." (Derrida, 2000: 284). In the language of Borges and Derrida, "Etcetera" means "dissemination" by way of the infinite "and ... and ..." or by way of infinite successors. From this point of view, there was a "before"/previous to him, and there will be an "after" him. He was between these two orbs; hence, today, the task entirely belongs to us. If you wish, you could cut the "to say AND", and call him an orientalist. Or you could go on this manner of translation and try to find new successors to him. It seems that the last one is more appropriate for his legacy. Today, we are face to face with a reality like that of *becoming Borges* or *Averroes*. In this becoming, there is no repetition or imitation, but there are always new moments. In this regard, *becoming Borges* or *Averroes* means reproducing them in every context from the new, by scraping again/translating the texts of *Borges* or *Averroes* today.

---

<sup>4</sup> It should be remembered that Umberto Eco's *The Name of the Rose*, a novel on the tragic/comic, has some cabbalistic affinity between Jorge and Borges (de Lailhacar, 1990). Also, it seems to me that Orhan Pamuk is one of the successors of Borges.

## Toward a Conclusion

Why Averroes? Why has history produced many different Averroeses? It is possible to see Averroes as a heretic or as a firm believer in the East and the West. It could not be an accidental event to see Averroes in Raphael's *The School of Athens*, *Divine Comedy*, *Ulysses* or in some texts of Derrida today. The power of philosophy of Averroes lies in its infinite translatability and infinite contexts, including palimpsest. The main question of *Averroes' Search* was the question of translation; Borges was a translator, not in a pejorative sense, but in a philosophical sense – a very old job of Hermes. In conclusion, Borges, as a palimpsest writer and translator, never lived *The Anxiety of Influence*. In his palimpsest literature, there are lessons for the East and the West, sometimes tragic, sometimes ironic. Certainly, it goes beyond being an Orientalist.<sup>5</sup>

## REFERENCES

- Almond, Ian (2004), "Borges the Post-orientalist: Images of Islam from the Edge of the West", *Modern Fiction Studies*, 50/2, 435-459.
- \_\_\_\_\_ (2007), *The New Orientalists: Postmodern Representations of Islam from Foucault to Baudrillard*, (London & New York: I. B. Tauris).
- Averroes (1954), *Tabafut al-tabafut (The Incoherence of The Incoherence)*, 2 vols., trans. with an int. and notes by Simon van den Bergh, (London: Luzac & Company).
- \_\_\_\_\_ (1961), *Destructio Destructionum Philosophiae Algazelis in the Latin Version of Calo Calonymos*, (ed. with an int. by Beatrice H. Zedler; Milwaukee: Marquette University Press).
- Balderston, Daniel (1993), *Out of Context: Historical Reference and the Representation of Reality in Borges*, (Durham: Duke University Press).
- Block de Behar, Lisa (2003), *Borges: The Passion of an Endless Quotation*, trans. with an int. by William Egginton, (Albany: State University of New York Press).
- Borges, Jorge Luis (1964a), "Averroes' Search", *Labyrinths: Selected Stories & Other Writings*, (New York: New Directions Publishing Corporation).

<sup>5</sup> This work was supported by the Scientific Research Projects Coordination Unit of Istanbul University (n. 3521).

- \_\_\_\_\_ (1964b), "Pierre Menard, Author of the Quixote", *Labyrinths: Selected Stories & Other Writings*, (New York: New Directions Publishing Corporation).
- \_\_\_\_\_ (1964c), "Flön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius", *Labyrinths: Selected Stories & Other Writings*, (New York: New Directions Publishing Corporation).
- \_\_\_\_\_ (1998), *Conversations*, (ed. Richard Burgin; Jackson: University Press of Mississippi).
- \_\_\_\_\_ (1999a), "Kafka and His Precursors", *Selected Non-fictions*, trans. Esther Allen, Suzanne Jill Levine & Eliot Weinberger, (ed. E. Weinberger; New York: Viking).
- \_\_\_\_\_ (1999b), "The Enigma of Edward FitzGerald", *Selected Non-fictions*, trans. Esther Allen, Suzanne Jill Levine & Eliot Weinberger, (ed. E. Weinberger; New York: Viking).
- \_\_\_\_\_ (1999c), "Two Films", *Selected Non-fictions*, trans. Esther Allen, Suzanne Jill Levine & Eliot Weinberger, (ed. E. Weinberger; New York: Viking).
- \_\_\_\_\_ (1999d), "Prologue", *Selected Non-fictions*, trans. Esther Allen, Suzanne Jill Levine & Eliot Weinberger, (ed. E. Weinberger; New York: Viking).
- Bossart, William, H. (2003), *Borges and Philosophy: Self, Time, and Metaphysics*, (New York: Peter Lang Publishing).
- Carter, Christopher Scott (2000), *The Rhetorical Bricolage of Jorge Luis Borges*, (MA thesis; Louisville: University of Louisville).
- Derrida, Jacques (2000), "Et Cetera", trans. Geoff Bennington in Nicholas Royle (ed.), *Deconstructions: A User's Guide* (New York: Palgrave), 282-305.
- Frisch, Mark (2004), *You Might Be Able to Get There from Here: Reconsidering Borges and the Postmodern*, (Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press).
- Genette, Gérard (1997), *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree*, trans. Channa Newman and Claude Doubinsky, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press).
- González-Echevarría, Roberto (1986), "Borges and Derrida", *Jorge Luis Borges*, (ed. Harold Bloom; New York: Chelsea House Publishers).
- Joyce, James (1960), *Ulysses*, (London: The Bodley Head).
- Kadir, Djelal (1973), "Borges the Heresiarch Mutakallimun", *Modern Fiction Studies*, 19/3, 461-468.

- 
- \_\_\_\_\_ (1993), *The Other Writing: Postcolonial Essays in Latin America's Writing Culture*, (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press).
- Kefala, Eleni (2007), *Peripheral (Post)modernity: The Syncretist Aesthetics of Borges, Piglia, Kalokyris and Kyriakidis*, (New York: Peter Lang Publishing).
- Köpf, Gerhard (1993), *There Is No Borges*, trans. A. Leslie Willson, (New York: George Braziller).
- Kristal, Efraín (2002), *Invisible Work: Borges and Translation*, (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press).
- Kushigian, Julia A. (1991), *Orientalism in the Hispanic Literary Tradition: in Dialogue with Borges, Paz, and Sarduy*, (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press).
- Lailhacar, Christine de (1990), "The Mirror and the Encyclopedia: Borgesian Codes in Umberto Eco's *The Name of the Rose*", *Borges and His Successors: The Borgesian Impact on Literature and the Arts*, (ed. Edna Aizenberg; Columbia: University of Missouri Press), 155-179.
- Moran, Dermot (1994), "The Destruction of the Destruction: Heidegger's Versions of the History of Philosophy", in Karsten Harries and Christophe Jamme (eds.), *Martin Heidegger: Politics, Art and Technology*, (New York: Holmes & Meier Publishers), 175-196.
- Merrell, Floyd (1991), *Unthinking Thinking: Jorge Luis Borges, Mathematics, and the New Physic*, (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press).
- Monegal, Emir Rodríguez (1990), "Borges and Derrida Apothecaries", *Monegal Borges and His Successors: The Borgesian Impact on Literature and the Arts*, (ed. Edna Aizenberg; Columbia: University of Missouri Press), 128-138.
- Waisman, Sergio Gabriel (2005), *Borges and Translation: The Irreverence of the Periphery*, (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press).