

# Reflections on Plagiarism in Jorge Luis Borges's Works

The case of Pablo Katchadjian's *El Aleph engordado*

---

Florencia Sannders (LMU Munich)

In 2009, the Argentinian author Pablo Katchadjian published *El Aleph engordado*, (*The Fattened Aleph*), a rewriting of Borges's classic short story "The Aleph", from 1945.<sup>1</sup> As Katchadjian explains in a postface, his intervention consisted in "fattening" Borges's 4000-word text by adding 5600 more, without changing even a single full stop or comma of the base text: "el texto de Borges está intacto pero totalmente cruzado por el mío" (2009: 50).<sup>2</sup>

What seemed to be a very legitimate and even 'Borgesian' literary experiment resulted in scandal when, in 2011, Maria Kodama — Borges's widow and the owner of his intellectual property rights — claimed that by re-writing Borges's text and publishing it without asking her permission, Katchadjian had committed an act of plagiarism, and she initiated legal proceedings against him.<sup>3</sup>

This essay revolves around two main points. First, it aims to show how a new literary practice of experimentation on a classic text can be discredited as plagiarism via a predication of 'unoriginality' that derives from outdated aesthetic canons. Secondly, it highlights two different discourses that appear as irreconcilable in this

---

1 | The year of its first publication in *Revista Sur*.

2 | "Borges's text is intact but totally criss-crossed by mine" (my translation).

3 | The case was dismissed in the first instance, but was reviewed in a court of appeal. Katchadjian now faces the possibility of an oral trial. This is not the first time Kodama has accused an author of plagiarism; in fact, it seems to be her *modus operandi* when a writer dares to experiment with Borges's work. For example, in 2011 she also pressed charges against the Spanish writer Agustín Fernández Mallo for his book *El hacedor (de Borges)*, *remake*. Her accusation obliged the publisher Alfaguara, to withdraw the already-printed book from bookshops (Gelós 2015).

dispute, the legal and the literary. While the plagiarism allegations against Katchadjian's *Aleph* seem partly legitimate according to a century of Argentinian intellectual property law, they are absolutely risible in terms of artistic experimentation, largely because the 'plagiarised author' was one of the pioneers of this new literary practice.<sup>4</sup>

## THE FATTENED ALEPH

Citing the first lines of the scandalous book in question will give a closer view of the kind of "fattening" interventions that Katchadjian applies to Borges's text, which are italicized here for the purposes of this study:

La candente y húmeda mañana de febrero en que Beatriz Viterbo *finalmente* murió, después de una imperiosa y extensa agonía que no se rebajó un solo instante ni al sentimentalismo ni al miedo *ni tampoco al abandono y la indiferencia*, noté que las horribles carteleras de fierro y plástico de la Plaza Constitución, *junto a la boca del subterráneo*, habían renovado no se qué aviso de cigarrillos rubios *mentolados*; o sí, sé o supe cuáles, pero recuerdo haberme esforzado por despreciar el sonido irritante de la marca; el hecho me dolió, pues comprendí que el incesante y vasto universo ya se apartaba de ella, *Beatriz*, y que ese cambio era el primero de una serie infinita *de cambios que acabarían por destruirme también a mí*. (7-8)<sup>5</sup>

4 | By contrast, it can also be said that Borges himself played with the notion of plagiarism in its most trivial sense. For example, in a speech he held in 1952 at the funeral of the writer Macedonio Fernández, Borges affirmed that he was such an admirer of his friend's work that: "I imitated him, up to the point of literal transcription, up to the point of passionate and devoted plagiarism" (Engelbert 1993: 382, my translation).

5 | "On the hot and humid February morning in which Beatriz Viterbo *finally* died, after a period of desperate and extensive agony that never for a single moment gave way to sentimentality or fear, *nor to abandon or indifference*, I noticed that the horrible iron and plastic billboards of Plaza Constitución *next to the entrance to the subway* had been renovated to an advertisement for I do not know which blond *menthol* cigarettes. *Or I do, I know or I knew which ones they were, but I remember making an effort not to pay attention to the irritating sound of the brand*. The fact hurt me, since I realised that the vast and unceasing universe was already moving away from her, *Beatriz*, and that this change was the first one in an endless series *of changes that would end up destroying me, too*" (the translation as well as the emphases are mine).

One of the distinctive marks of Katchadjian's intervention is the addition of a somewhat banal and quotidian language to Borges characteristic academic prose. For example, when Borges, the narrator and main character of "The Aleph", visits Argentino Daneri's house to finally see the Aleph — that is, the whole universe concentrated in a spot in the corner of Daneri's basement — he lists a number of objects he sees: "nieve, tabaco [...], convexos desiertos ecuatoriales y cada uno de sus granos de arena, [...] en un gabinete de Alkmaar un globo terraqueo entre dos espejos que lo multiplicaban sin fin" (Borges 2009a: 753).<sup>6</sup> Katchadjian adds in his story, among others: "los infinitos microbios de que estamos compuestos [...], un sapo aplastado por un jeep" (2009: 43-44).<sup>7</sup> These latter certainly clash with Borges far more elegant choice of words.

The plot of "The Aleph" revolves around the death of Beatriz Viterbo and her at first secret life, which is reconstructed as a puzzle over the course of the short-story, from the perspective of the main character, Borges, along with that of Argentino Daneri. The references to the sexual life of Beatriz Viterbo that Katchadjian adds play a similarly "irreverent" role, in view of the fact that in Borges's oeuvre it is unusual to find eroticism of any kind:

Beatriz (yo mismo suelo repetirlo) era una mujer *hermosa*, una niña de una clarividencia casi implacable, pero había en ella negligencias, distracciones *coquetas*, desdenes *sensuales*, verdaderas crueldades *de la exhibición*, que tal vez reclaman una explicación patológica [...] *Cierta vez, el doctor Sigui me había sugerido que Beatriz padecía un desorden sexual.* (34)<sup>8</sup>

Not only is Beatriz Viterbo endowed with a much spicier personality in Katchadjian's *Aleph*, but she is also documented as having sexual encounters with Argentino Daneri and other men: "vi en un cajón del escritorio (y la letra me hizo temblar) cartas obsenas, increíbles, precisas, que Beatriz había dirigido a Carlos Argentino, *vi luego cartas de Beatriz, aun más obscenas, dirigidas al doctor*

6 | "snow, tobacco [...], convex equatorial deserts and their every grain of sand [...], in a study in Alkmaar a globe of the terrestrial world placed between two mirrors that multiply it endlessly" (Borges 2004: 130).

7 | "the infinite microbes we are made of [...], a toad run over by a jeep" (my translation).

8 | "Beatriz (I myself often repeat it) was a *beautiful* woman, a girl of implacable perspicacity, but she could be careless, susceptible to coquettish distractions, sensual disdains, real cruelties *of ostentation*—which may have a pathological explanation [...] *Once, Doctor Sigui suggested to me that Beatriz suffered from a sexual disorder*" (my translation).

*Zunni*” (44-45).<sup>9</sup> Katchadjian’s interventions mostly live up to the name of his book: they work like “fatty tissue”, “unnecessary” additions to the canonic text, which go so far as to transform Borges’s classical short story-form into a novella (Gelós 2015).

Borge’s widow was by no means ignorant of Katchadjian’s avant-garde gesture. Moreover, she considered this “plagiarism” as an act of irreverence against her husband, one of Argentina’s most important and respected 20<sup>th</sup>-century writers, as she expressed in one of the many interviews she gave: “Se mete en una obra ajena en un plagio irreverente para deformarla: no lo voy a permitir” (Sánchez, 2015).<sup>10</sup>

## “APPROPRIATION LITERATURE”

Katchadjian’s fattening of ‘The Aleph’ is not an isolated phenomenon, quite the contrary, it can be contextualised within a series of recent and highly provocative literary experiments. Annette Gilbert dubs these “Appropriation Literature” in her 2014 book, *Reprint: Appropriation and Literature*, in which she also makes specific reference to Katchadjian’s and Borges’s work.<sup>11</sup> According to her theory, this new literature is characterised neither by copying or playing with the style of a canonical writer, nor by reusing a famous character or certain motifs, but rather by the use of the entire “materiality as such” of a text (Gilbert 2014: 51). What differentiates appropriations from plagiarism is that they explicitly show the intervention performed by a work by “staging the act itself” (51). Gilbert also places particular emphasis on defining the controversy that is generated by these works’ refusal to fulfil traditional readerly expectations, principally the expectation of originality, in the sense that they have to be a “new” and “unique” product of the imagination of the writer:

Where exactly does the provocation of these books lie? [...] we are concerned with books for which no new, original text has been produced. Rather, these books are based on texts or complete books which already

---

9 | “In a desk drawer (and the handwriting made me shiver) I saw obscene, incredible, precise letters that Beatriz had written to Carlos Argentino, then I saw the letters by Beatriz, even more obscene, addressed to doctor Zunni” (my translation).

10 | “He messes with someone else’s work in an irreverent plagiarism in order to deform it: I will not allow that” (my translation).

11 | According to Gilbert’s theory, the kind of intervention applied in The Fattened Aleph could be that of “Interpolation”, which “[u]sually [...] refers to a subsequent (unauthorized) insertion of words or sentences in the text of a work” (Gilbert 2014: 68).

exist, and which are appropriated and re-published under a new authorship. Hence, these works challenge the concepts of innovation and originality dictated by our culture, a challenge that is usually answered with accusations that these works possess a disrespectful hubris or that they are brazen plagiarism—especially when they are concerned with canonical texts of world literature or intellectual history. This applies both to appropriations in which the original text or book hasn't been modified, and to appropriations that modify a given text. (49-50)

It is exactly for this reason that the accusation of plagiarism has no validity Katchadjian's case. There is clearly no intention to "deceive the reader" by concealing Borges's authorship of the 1949 'Aleph'. On the contrary, not only does Katchadjian rewrite a literary classic precisely for a reader who is anticipated to surely know of its existence—and includes the original's "fattened" title within the title of the new work—but he also explains how he performed his literary "appropriation" in the postscript,<sup>12</sup> explicitly declaring that the text worked on is that of Borges. This means that, in terms of the Gilbert's theory mentioned above, Katchadjian is explicitly staging the act of appropriation (51):

El trabajo de engordamiento tuvo una sola regla: no quitar ni alterar nada del texto original, ni palabras, ni comas, ni puntos, ni el orden. Eso significa que el texto de Borges está intacto pero totalmente cruzado por el mío, de modo que, si alguien quisiera, podría volver al texto de Borges desde éste.

Con respecto a mi escritura, si bien no intenté ocultarme en el estilo de Borges tampoco escribí con la idea de hacerme demasiado visible: los mejores momentos, me parece, son esos en los que no se puede saber con certeza qué es de quién. (Katchadjian 2009: 50)<sup>13</sup>

**12** | Kachadjian's extra prologue is indeed a reference to Borges's work, who in his postfaces deploys multiple 'tricky' narrators, who sometimes contradict the main narrator, add new information about the story and 'confuse' the reader.

**13** | "The work of fattening had only one rule: not to remove nor to modify anything from the original, not words or commas, or a full stop, or the sequence. This means that Borges's text is intact but totally crossed by mine, so that, if someone wanted to, he could go back to Borges's text starting from this one. Regarding my writing, even though I did not try to hide myself in Borges's style, I did not write with the idea of becoming visible: the best moments, I think, are those in which it is uncertain what belongs to whom" (my translation).

## THE ACCUSATIONS

Disregarding current novelties in literary theory, María Kodama accused Katchadjian of plagiarising Borges. In an interview with *El País* from 2016 around the time when rumours of the case began to spread in literary circles, Kodama demonstrated her understanding of the concept of intellectual property in terms of possession, stating that Katchadjian should have asked for her permission to experiment with Borges's work — that is, for 'appropriating' it:

P. ¿Por qué demandó al escritor argentino Pablo Katchadjian por su obra *El Aleph engordado*?

R. Ya solo la palabra engordado hubiera producido el desmayo de Borges. Yo fui criada por un padre japonés y tengo códigos que aquí no existen. Lo básico es preguntar, porque si yo quiero usar ese suéter te digo, ¿me lo prestás o no?

P. Si le hubiera pedido permiso para jugar con la obra de Borges, ¿Se lo hubiera concedido?

R. No, no. No se puede jugar con la obra de Borges. (Cué/Centenera 2016)<sup>14</sup>

Nevertheless, plagiarism as such does not exist in the Argentinian penal code. The closest corresponding legal form is "Intellectual Property Fraud", which was enacted in the 1930s, a period in which these kinds of artistic "interventionist" experiments were emerging. The legal strictures relevant to this case are:

se consideran casos especiales de defraudación y sufrirán la pena que él establece [...]:

a) El que edite, venda o reproduzca por cualquier medio o instrumento, una obra inédita o publicada sin autorización de su autor o derechohabientes;

14 | "Q. Why did you sue the Argentinian writer Pablo Katchadjian for his work?

A. The mere word fattened would have caused Borges to faint. I was raised by a Japanese father and I have principles that don't exist here. The minimum is to ask, because if I want to use this sweater I say to you: can I borrow it?

Q. If he had asked for your permission to play with the work from Borges, would you have given it to him?

A. No, No, You cannot play with Borges's work" (my translation). Everything indicates that Kodama meant Argentina with the word "here".

b) El que edite, venda o reproduzca una obra suprimiendo o cambiando el nombre del autor, el título de la misma o alterando dolosamente su texto;<sup>15</sup>

Given the facts — that Katchadjian had changed the name of the original short story to *The Fattened Aleph*, intentionally erased Borges's name as author, altered the text without distinguishing between Borges's work and his own, which was precisely the whole point of the intervention, and finally that he offered the work for sale — the law could partly be interpreted in favour of Kodama.<sup>16</sup>

In this debate, two irreconcilable concepts start to become evident. The problem that comes to the surface here is as follows: how can literature and its possibilities of experimentation, legitimate in their own field and depending on their own rules, be judged according to an outdated law that does not take into account any change in that field since the 1930s?

## THE SCANDAL

The scarce 200 copies of *The Fattened Aleph* that were published in Buenos Aires — a number of which were sold for a small amount of money, while the rest were given to friends as gifts — were enough to land Katchadjian in court. The scandal of the plagiarism accusation consequently sparked a debate among numerous Argentine writers and academics (Gelós 2015). In response, they gathered in Katchadjian's defence, highlighting the absurdity of judging *The Fattened Aleph* under such an obsolete law, and pointed out that the method Katchadjian used is consistent with literary-historical precedent, more specifically, interventions based on rewriting what can be called "original" texts. This panorama was articulated in an open letter they wrote for the gathering:

15 | "[The following] are considered special cases of fraud and will be punished with the penalty provided by law [...]:

a) The editing, sale or reproduction of an unpublished or published work, by any means or instrument, without authorization of its author or copyright-holder

b) The editing, sale or reproduction of a work removing the name of the author, the title or deliberately changing the text"

(Article 72 of law 11.723 of the penal code, my translation).

16 | In an interview with the newspaper *La voz*, Kodama's lawyer, Fernando Soto, said: "If Katchadjian is so creative, he should write his own books and then fatten them up" (Redacción LaVoz, my translation).

María Kodama is the heir to Jorge Luis Borges's literary estate. This estate includes short stories, poems, essays, prologues, articles and books written in collaboration, which fit into four volumes in a bookshelf: the remaining world literature, which Borges helped to renew from Argentina, and of which *El Aleph engordado* is legitimately a part, does not belong to María Kodama, nor does she have any veto power over it.<sup>17</sup>

The defence attorney Ricardo Straface, who is also a writer, asked Katchadjian to write a short essay explaining to the judge that the concept behind the appropriated *Aleph*, as well as its narrative procedures, are part of a tradition of art and literature which emerged a couple of decades ago. He makes reference to intertextuality, to Duchamp's readymades, and indeed to the fact that Borges was a pioneer in this tradition (Castagnet/Salzmann 2012). Straface states in an interview: "Yo creo que fue importante esta explicación para que los jueces aceptaran el argumento jurídico de que no había intención de engañar, y que este procedimiento tenía una gran tradición, de la cual Borges era un entusiasta cultor" (Zúñiga 2012).<sup>18</sup> Borges dedicated an enormous part of his work to creating the "literature of literature", or as Michel Lafon calls it, "le champ privilégié de l'expérimentation borgesienne" (1990: 35). It is in this sense paradoxical to prosecute a contemporary writer who is experimenting with literary methods that Borges helped to develop.

In his fiction, Borges himself played with the idea of appropriation literature. In his much-cited short story — which Gilbert mentions in *Reprint* — "Pierre Menard, author of the Quixote", a writer from the 20<sup>th</sup> century attempts to compose *Don Quixote*, replicating Cervantes's text word for word, but without copying the original:

No quería componer otro Quijote — lo cual es fácil — sino *el Quijote*. Inútil agregar que no encaró nunca una transcripción mecánica del original; no se proponía copiarlo. Su admirable ambición era producir unas páginas que coincidieran — palabra por palabra y línea por línea — con las de Miguel de Cervantes. (Borges 2009b: 533)<sup>19</sup>

17 | "Support for Pablo Katchadjian [English version]. Open Letter" <http://alephengordado.blogspot.de/p/support-for-pablo-katchadjian-english.html> (last accessed on 31 May 2017).

18 | "I think this explanation was important for the judges to accept the legal argument, that there was no intention of deceiving, and that this narrative procedure had a long tradition, of which Borges was an enthusiastic promoter" (my translation).

19 | "Pierre Menard did not want to compose *another* Quixote, which surely is easy enough — he wanted to compose *the* Quixote. Nor, surely, need one be obliged to note that his goal was never a mechanical transcription of the original; he had no intention of *copying* it. His admirable



Gilbert also cites a work — as an example of appropriated literature — published by Éditions Lorem Ipsum in 2009, attributed to the author ‘Pierre Menard’ and entitled *El ingenioso Hidalgo Don Quijote de la Mancha*. Exactly as detailed in Pierre Menard’s notes in Borges’s short-story, only chapters 9, 38 and 22 are published, and correspond “word by word and line by line” to Cervantes’s *Quijote* (Gilbert 2014: 435-37).

According to Gilbert, 21<sup>st</sup>-century appropriated literature puts into practice notions and concepts of rewriting from the previous century. Thus, Borges’s work, as one of the touchstones of this tradition of rewriting, was (and still is) “appropriated”, as in the example mentioned above: “Borges’s fictions [...] can be seen as the model case for contemporary appropriation literature, which is why authors always refer to it. Meanwhile, it has even become the trigger and object of real appropriation” (Gilbert 2014: 53).

## RE-WRITING THE ARGENTINIAN LITERARY CANON

*The Fattened Aleph* is part of the “Trilogy of Argentinian Literature”, an unfinished project of Katchadjian’s that had emerged by the mid-2000s, and which consisted in intervening in or re-writing three Argentinian literary classics: *El Martín Fierro* by José Hernández, *El Matadero (The Slaughter Yard)* by Esteban Echeverría and finally the text in question here, “The Aleph”. Borges himself also worked on *Martín Fierro*, not only writing several essays about a book which had become the Argentinian “National Epos”, but also writing an alternative ending for it in one of his short stories.

Published in 1872, *Martín Fierro* is a poem that tells the story of a *gaucho*<sup>20</sup> who is the eponymous narrator. The poem begins with Fierro recounting the perfection of his former rural existence with his wife and children in total harmony with nature. This equilibrium is soon destroyed when the state recruits him to fight on the frontier against the *indios*, the country’s native inhabitants. After deserting, Fierro begins an anonymous life of misery, pain and violence, until the end of the story of the second part (“The return”) when he meets his children again. In this scene, he is also confronted by the brother of a man that he brutally killed, who is seeking revenge. They start a discussion, but do not fight in a typical gaucho knife fight as they intended to, because Fierro’s children are present.

Even though the book was published with the aim of criticising the Argentinean state’s terrible treatment of recruited gauchos, many literary critics at the beginning

---

ambition was to produce a number of pages which coincided—word for word and line for line—with those of Miguel de Cervantes” (Borges 2000a: 37).

20 | A word commonly used to refer to inhabitants of the countryside.

of the 20<sup>th</sup> century considered it the most representative text of Argentine literature due to the protagonist, Fierro, seemingly possessed of all the virtues of what could be called a 'paradigmatic' national hero. Leopoldo Lugones, one of the most influential poets of the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, was one of the advocates for transforming Hernández's *Martín Fierro* into the national book of the Argentineans (Sarlo 2007: 61).

72 years after the publication of the book that was transformed into a central part of the Argentine literary canon, Fierro makes an appearance in Borges's short-story "El fin" ("The End"), in *Ficciones*. Borges restages Fierro's confrontation with the brother of the man that he kills in the Hernández narrative, and commits the sacrilege of killing off the 'national hero'. In this case, 'The End' means an ending, redundancy intended, to the open story of *Martín Fierro*, and is a symbolic gesture of Borges's critical attitude to the edification of Hernández's text as the national epic. Borges also expressed this attitude in more than one essay.<sup>21</sup>

Desde su catre, Recabarren vio el fin. Una embestida y el negro reculó, perdió pie, amagó un hachazo a la cara y se tendió en una puñalada profunda, que penetró en el vientre. Después vino otra que el pulpero no alcanzó a precisar y Fierro no se levantó. Inmóvil, el negro parecía vigilar su agonía laboriosa. Limpió el facón ensangrentado en el pasto y volvió a las casas con lentitud, sin mirar para atrás. Cumplida su tarea de justiciero, ahora era nadie. Mejor dicho era el otro: no tenía destino sobre la tierra y había matado a un hombre. (2009c: 628)<sup>22</sup>

Borges not only questions the canonisation of *Martín Fierro* by writing a critical essay against it, but also through his fiction. Borges rewrites the ending of the national epic and initiates a new way of doing experimental literature in Argentina.

*Martín Fierro* is a poem in octosyllabic verse, with a very distinctive *abbcbb* rhyme, which can be placed in the genre of 'Gaucha Literature'. The following lines, which every Argentinian scholar could, at least in theory, recite by heart, appear at the beginning of the poem's first book, when Fierro starts to narrate his bitter experiences:

21 | See Borges (1997): *El escritor argentino y la tradición*.

22 | "From his cot, Recabarren saw the end. A thrust, and the black man dodged back, lost his footing, feigned a slash to his opponent's face, and then lunged out with a deep jab that buried the knife in his belly. Then came another thrust, which the storekeeper couldn't see, and Fierro did not get up. Unmoving, the black man seemed to stand watch over the agonizing death. He wiped off the bloody knife in the grass and walked slowly back toward the houses, never looking back. His work of vengeance done, he was nobody now. Or rather, he was the other one: there was neither destination nor destiny on earth for him, and he had killed a man" (Borges 2000b: 141).

Aquí me pongo a cantar  
 Al compás de la vigüela,  
 Que el hombre que lo desvela  
 Una pena extraordinaria  
 Como la ave solitaria  
 Con el cantar se consuela [...]. (Hernández 1945: 155)<sup>23</sup>

*The alphabetically-sorted Martín Fierro* (2007) was Katchadjian's first work in the "Trilogy of Argentinian literature". Katchadjian took every line of the poem and sorted them in alphabetical order according to initial letter, so that the rhyme and verse-structure typical of Gaucho Literature is lost, along with the order of the famous narrative. What remains after Katchadjian's intervention is mere play of forms, in which the tale of the gaucho — even though the poem is deconstructed — is nevertheless latent for a reader familiar with the original *Martín Fierro*:

A andar con los avestruces  
 A andar reclamando sueldos  
 A ayudarles a los piones  
 A bailar un pericón  
 A bramar como una loba  
 A buscar almas más tiernas  
 A buscar una tapera  
 [...]  
 Aquí me pongo a cantar  
 Aquí no valen dotores [...]. (Katchadjian 2007: 7)<sup>24</sup>

Both authors work on *Martín Fierro* in a subversive way, Borges by questioning its canonisation as the national poem and killing its main character in a short story, Katchadjian by eliminating its rhyme and verse-structure, which are exactly what make the poem part of Gaucho Literature. Their methods are, however, very different: while Borges writes his own fictive story, restaging Fierro in "The End", Katchadjian appropriates *Martín Fierro* by working with the whole materiality of the text. The creation process of *El Martín fierro ordenado alfabéticamente* is far from that of writing a story. As Katchadjian said in an interview, he just copy-pasted *Martín Fierro* and the computer ordered it alphabetically within a few seconds (Terranova: n.d.).

23 | "Here I'll sit and sing / to the beat of my guitar:

'cause a man who's kept awake / by a heavy sorrow,

like a lonely bird / consoles himself with song" (Hernández 1974: 11).

24 | As the purpose of Katchadjian's appropriation of *Martín Fierro* is to play with the mere forms of the language, that is, with the signifier, a translation of this passage is unnecessary.

In the second part of the trilogy, a project that is still unfinished, Katchadjian experiments with *The Slaughter Yard*. A violent short story by Esteban Echaverría, written between 1838 and 1840 but not published until 1871, *The Slaughter Yard* concerns the cruelty of the despotic governor of Buenos Aires Province, Juan Manuel de Rosas, who ruled during the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in a very turbulent and polarised political context. In an interview, Katchadjian explains how he inverted the narrative line of the short story, in which a group of *Federales* from the *Mazorca* — Rosas partisans, who are represented as barbarians — torture a *Unitario* — one of their political adversaries, a group represented as civilized city-intellectuals. Katchadjian's version starts at the end, and ends with the beginning: first the *Unitario* dies, then the *Federales* undress him, after which he is tortured, then kidnapped, and so on (ibid.).

The thought here is not to imply that Borges and Katchadjian share a similar style, though both authors certainly share an impetus to question the classics of Argentinian literature through certain irreverent acts, whether killing the main character of the “national book” or fattening the text of one of the most important authors of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in Argentina. Thus Katchadjian finds himself in the paradoxical situation of being accused of committing the very ‘crimes’ that Borges himself admitted to, against Borges's own work. One day, perhaps, Katchadjian will be able to publish a second edition of his scandalous book, including all of the legal documents and other writings that the trial generated. In this way, Katchadjian will be able to continue fattening his Aleph.

## WORKS CITED

- Borges, Jorge Luis (1997): *El escritor argentino y la tradición*, Madrid: Alianza.
- (2000a): “Pierre Menard, author of the Quijote”, in: *Fictions*, London: Penguin, pp. 33-43.
  - (2000b): “The End”, in: *Fictions*, London: Penguin, pp. 138-41.
  - (2004): “The Aleph”, in: *The Aleph and other Stories*, New York: Penguin, pp. 118-33.
  - (2009a): “El Aleph”, in: *Obras Completas I 1923-1949*, Buenos Aires: Emecé, pp. 743-58.
  - (2009b): “Pierre Menard, Autor del Quijote”, in: *Obras Completas I 1923-1949*, Buenos Aires: Emecé, pp. 530-38.
  - (2009c): “El fin”, in: *Obras Completas I 1923-1949*, Buenos Aires: Emecé, pp. 626-28.
- Engelbert, Jo Anne (1993): “El proyecto narrativo de Macedonio”, in: *Macedonio Fernández. Museo de la Novela de la Eterna*, eds. Ana María Camblong/ Adolfo De Obieta, Madrid: CSIC, pp. 373-92.

- Gilbert, Annette (2014): *Reprint. Appropriation and Literature*, Wiesbaden: Luxbooks.
- Hernández, José (1945): *Martín Fierro*, Buenos Aires: Estrada.
- (1974): *The Gaucho Martín Fierro*, translated by Frank G. Carrino/Alberto J. Carlos/Norman Mangouni, New York: Delmar.
- Katchadjian, Pablo (2007): *El Martín Fierro ordenado alfabéticamente*, Buenos Aires: Imprenta argentina de poesía.
- (2009): *El Aleph engordado*, Buenos Aires: Imprenta argentina de poesía.
- Lafon, Michel (1990): *Borges ou la réécriture*, Paris: Ed. du Seuil.
- Sarlo, Beatriz (2007): *Borges, un escritor en las orillas*, Madrid: Siglo XXI.

## ONLINE SOURCES

- Castagnet, Martín Felipe/Adela Salzmänn (2012): “Kodama no es nada”, *Revista Tónica*, 2 July, <https://revistatonica.com/2012/07/20/kodama-no-es-nada/> (last accessed on 12 June 2017).
- Cué, Carlos E./Mar Centenera (2016): “Le di mi palabra a Borges, tengo que cuidar su obra”, *El País*, 30 Apr. 2016, [http://cultura.elpais.com/cultura/2016/04/29/actualidad/1461953194\\_970145.html](http://cultura.elpais.com/cultura/2016/04/29/actualidad/1461953194_970145.html) (last accessed on 12 June 2017).
- Gelós, Natalia (2015): “#Injusticia poética”, *Revista Anfibia*, <http://www.revistaanfibia.com/cronica/injusticiapoetica/> (last accessed on 12 June 2017).
- Sánchez, Matilda (2015): “Las razones de Kodama: ‘No voy a permitir un plagio irreverente’”, *Clarín*, 4 July 2015, [https://www.clarin.com/sociedad/razones-kodama-permitir-plagio-irreverente\\_0\\_SkzICj8KP7g.html](https://www.clarin.com/sociedad/razones-kodama-permitir-plagio-irreverente_0_SkzICj8KP7g.html) (last accessed on 12 June 2017).
- Redacción LaVoz (n.d.): “Fernando Soto: ‘Que Katchadjian escriba sus propias obras y después las engorde’” <http://www.lavoz.com.ar/ciudad-equis/fernando-soto-que-katchadjian-escriba-sus-propias-obras-y-despues-las-engorde> (last accessed on 12 June 2017).
- “Support for Pablo Katchadjian [English version]. Open Letter” (n.d.), <http://alephengordado.blogspot.de/p/support-for-pablo-katchadjian-english.html> (last accessed on 12 June 2017).
- Terranova, Juan (n.d.): “Entrevista a Pablo Katchadjian”, *La Tercera* 4 <https://sites.google.com/site/la3eraopinion/la-tercera-numero-4/entrevista-a-pablo-katchadjian> (last accessed on 12 June 2017).
- Zúñiga, Diego (2012): “Un (engordado y delirante) cuento de Borges”, *Qué Pasa*, 28 June 2012, <http://www.quepasa.cl/articulo/cultura/2012/06/6-8927-9-un-engordado-y-delirante-cuento-de-borges.shtml/> (last accessed on 12 June 2017).

