BORGES: TIME, MODERNITY, AND NOSTALGIA IN *EVARISTO CARRIEGO*

by

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A THESIS

Presented to the Department of Romance Languages
and the Robert D. Clark Honors College
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Bachelor of Arts

June 2016

An Abstract of the Thesis of

Felicia Hamilton for the degree of Bachelor of Arts
in the Department of Romance Languages to be taken June 2016

Title: Borges: Time, Nostalgia, and Modernity in *Evaristo Carriego*

Approved: _____

Mayra Bottaro

What is the purpose of nostalgia in literature? How does it respond to modernity? And what is its function as a temporal tool? These are the driving questions behind my research, which will focus on *Evaristo Carriego*, an early work by Argentine author Jorge Luis Borges. This eponymous biographical work serves more to paint a picture of Buenos Aires in development than to chronicle the life of the man himself. Borges uses popular and historical mythologies to construct a mythic image of the neighborhood Palermo during the early twentieth century. Because of this, the work is often read as a "pre-text", that is, a history that the rest of Borges' writings would reference. I aim to build on this, examining how this particular work creates counternarratives to modernity. I propose an interconnectedness of time, modernity, and nostalgia which enriches an understanding of *Carriego* through an analysis of Borges' methods of constructing literary worlds in which there are multiplicities of dissonant and converging iterations of time. Beyond simply reading and explaining *Carriego* as a pre-text, I hope to draw broader conclusions about the impact of various iterations of time in a modern and postmodern culture.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Professors Bottaro, Southworth, and Balbuena, for helping me to fully examine the specific topic and consider the various perspectives and contexts related to this subject matter. I would first like to express my gratitude to Professor Bottaro for having inspired me to go in this direction with my thesis. She has been an indescribable help for more than a year and has taken significant time to provide guidance as my research progressed from an amorphous idea to a more articulated research topic.

Professor Southworth was also a great help in the articulation of the theoretical material that I have used in this thesis, and she encouraged me when I was not sure if I was going in the right direction with my research. I appreciate her time and guidance.

Professor Balbuena was my thesis prospectus leader and thus has seen my thesis grow from a mere proposition into a full-length paper. I am grateful for her help in the early stages and for her generosity in agreeing to be a part of my thesis defense team.

Finally, I would like to briefly thank those professors whose classes provided a background for the material that I am now working with in depth: Jeffrey Librett, Joseph Fracchia, and Timothy Williams stand out as three people who have greatly influenced the way I think. They merit much more than a mere mention, but for lack of space I will simply say that the way I think now has been indelibly shaped by my interactions with them.

Finally, I will say thank you to my parents for always being willing to bounce ideas around with me. Their patience has been an invaluable resource.

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Introduction

I. Colonial and postcolonial transformations

Buenos Aires was founded twice. First established in 1536, the city quickly sputtered out of existence due to a lack of supplies and the hostility of the local tribes. It was reestablished 50 years later and began to slowly expand as a rural community and port city. However, because it was still under the remote rulership of the Lima-based Viceroyalty of Peru, Buenos Aires languished as an all-but-forgotten city in the backwaters of the territory. Eventually this distance from the central government proved to be an advantage, and the population continued to expand throughout the 18th century as the city became a center for the contraband trade of materials such as cereal grains and beef products. Other materials such as silver began to make their way into circulation from mining towns in the Andean region, and the city found itself a bustling town of 20,000 people in the mid-1700s.

In 1776, Buenos Aires was named the head of its own viceroyalty, Viceroyalty of the Rio de la Plata--river of silver, after one of the most lucrative exports of the time. Two military victories in 1806 and 1807 in which a local army pushed back British forces marked a definitive moment in the establishment of an Argentine identity, and in 1810 the city cut ties with Spain. Six years later, the viceroyalty declared its independence and Buenos Aires was established as the head of the United Provinces of the Rio de la Plata.)

This period marked the beginning of the struggle between two parties, Unitarians and Federalists. The areas surrounding Buenos Aires were reluctant to

consent to the centralist Unitarian government, and there was much clamor from the Federalists, who desired more local autonomy. After the presidency of Unitarian Bernardo Rivadavia ended in 1827, a series of Federalists took power, culminating in the rule of the caudillo Juan Manuel de Rosas the Restorer. Under his 17-year dictatorship Buenos Aires took shape as the center of power for the region that was roughly equivalent to the modern state of Argentina. During this period, the "civilization/barbarism" dichotomy took rhetorical shape in unexpected new ways, permeating cultural, social, and political currents from the mid-1800s onward. During his exile in Chile, future president and writer Domingo Faustino Sarmiento carefully constructed specific ideological assignations to these two categories that were articulated by the visible desire to align the future of the postcolonial nations with the metropolitan ideals of modernization, progress, and Europeanization. Rosas' bloody rule was overthrown by an army in 1852.

The following years were marked by changes in land management and an exponential increase in foreign trade and immigration. The huge number of European immigrants that arrived to settle the countryside necessitated the development of railways that connected Buenos Aires to the farther reaches of the ranching and farming territories. This change took place fairly rapidly throughout the 1860s. Campaigns to eradicate the indigenous people of the region had begun under Rosas and continued for decades; the conflicts were exacerbated by the invasion of indigenous land by settling farmers. The "Conquest of the Wilderness" in 1879 was the final move to annihilate and push these peoples to the far edges of Argentine territory. The Argentine Rural Society

was established and the vast expanses of fertile, hospitable pampas were converted into cattle ranches, which quickly became a major source of income.

The establishment of farms also led to the decline of the gaucho, which was the name of the nomadic ranchers who tended roaming cattle in the Argentine pampas. They were increasingly marginalized by the efforts of the government to "civilize" and Europeanize the country, and most were forced into "peonage or military service".[1]

The civilization/barbarism dichotomy continued to significantly influence national politics and culture, and Buenos Aires became ever more polarized from the rest of the country as it developed into a wealthy cosmopolitan center. A huge influx of European immigrants--particularly Spaniards and Italians--completely reshaped the demographic between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. This was mostly, but not entirely based on the need for workers; the government also encouraged European immigration in order to intentionally change the racial composition of the country in an effort to "civilize" it.

Buenos Aires of the early 1900s was an international symbol of wealth. Rapid urbanization culminated in a city with a powerful modern infrastructure and a French aesthetic. The city celebrated its centennial anniversary in 1910 with the opening of a new subway system and a series of wide avenues. Throughout this period, the city became a thriving center of high culture: art, music, theater, literature, and philosophy. The Argentine literary scene continued to be profoundly influenced by the cultural conflict evinced in the rhetorical articulations of civilization and barbarism. It was in this climate that Jorge Luis Borges and his contemporaries lived and wrote.

[1] Richard W. Slatta, *Gauchos and the Vanishing Frontier* (University of Nebraska Press, 1992), 5.

II. Cultural production and the elitism of progress

"Argentine literature is the history of the national will"[2] and as such, it is important to look at the conflicts that played out in literature as a background to reading Borges' work for its political, social, and cultural content. In describing the ideological current of Argentine literature, Ricardo Piglia invoked the concept of the "other" ("el otro"): the establishment of an other--in this case, the barbarian, the gaucho, the Indian or the immigrant--aids in the creation of exclusionary social and cultural borders which delineate national identity.

The previously mentioned dialectic of civilization/barbarism was a defining feature of the literary scene as well as the political. Sarmiento, who was the seventh president of Argentina (after the dictatorship of Rosas), wrote *his Civilization and Barbarism: The Life of Juan Facundo Quiroga (Civilización y Barbarie: Vida de Juan Facundo Quiroga)* while in exile in 1845 and molded his discussion on concepts sketched out by Chilean Francisco Bilbao in his Chilean Sociability (Sociabilidad Chilena), published in newspaper "El Crepúsculo" in June 1st, 1844. Sarmiento's work parallels the gaucho Facundo Quiroga with the caudillo Rosas, presenting a racially stratified discourse that would come to define Argentine literature. It is much less a biography of Facundo as it is a historicist's attempt to explain the social and political climate of a country through the life of one man. Sarmiento's production is echoed in the works of other Argentine intellectuals, such as Esteban Echeverría, who wrote "El matadero" while holed up in an estancia located near Luián just before he fled to exile

[2] David Viñas, *Literatura Argentina y realidad política* (Buenos Aires: Jorge Alvarez, 1964).

in Montevideo. This short story characterizes the Unitarians and Federalists and their assigned roles in society by the exiled intelligentsia: one upstanding, moral, possessing European sensitivities; the other barbaric, savage, and charged with negative racial stereotypes.

The epic *Martin Fierro* (1872), written by arguably the last writer of the *literatura gauchesca* genre José Hernández, came to be known as the quintessential work of Argentine literature. A poem written in the style and from the point of view of the gaucho, *Fierro* is the paradigmatic example of the appropriation of the voice of the disenfranchised gauchos by the lettered elites. This work is deeply integrated into Argentine culture and identity and has been written about by almost all influential authors from the country, Borges included.

Early in the 20th century and coincidentally with the Centennial celebrations of the constitution of the first patriotic government in 1810, the gaucho would become canonized as the symbol of the nation through the work of writers as Leopoldo Lugones, whose historical *novel La Guerra Gaucha* (1905) would later become a very successful film. The literary movement of criollismo, active between the end of the 19th century and beginning of the 20th century, yielded a wealth of authors that used a realist style to portray local scenes, language, customs, manners, especially of the lower and peasant classes. This literature based on the country's natural elements was mostly epic and foundational and Borges' earlier work is inscribed under its guise. Ricardo Guiraldes' *Don Segundo Sombra* can also be said to be part of this trend. A novel about the lingering shadow of the gaucho figure contrasts with Roberto Arlt's chronicles of

the rapid development of Buenos Aires in his “Aguafuertes porteñas” (“Porteña etchings”).

The mark of the 19th-century cultural and ideological conflict between civilization and barbarism, unitary and federalist, gaucho/indio/mulato and European urbanite, city and pampas, local and foreign, indelibly affected all Argentine literary and cultural production. It manifested in separations such as the one between the Florida and the Boedo group, the former favoring vanguardism and literary elitism while the latter emphasized worker’s rights and characteristically socialist themes. But the expression of identity through literature in the 20th century was far more complicated than Sarmiento’s affirmation of the superiority of civilization: the complex issues that arose due to the mechanisms of modernity, Eurocentrism, and conversely, the pull of nationalism, are constructed and reconstructed in the works of Borges.

III. Writing from the Orillas

One can speculate a variety of reasons for which Borges chose to write about Evaristo Carriego. The first of these is the compelling personal connection Borges felt to Carriego’s life and work: a friend of Borges’ father, the poet was known to frequent their Palermo household, bringing stories from outside. Carriego was a consummate teller of romanticized tales of *las orillas*, the outskirts of Buenos Aires in which the violent, albeit valiant *culto de coraje*—cult of courage—still lived. Borges was fascinated by stories such as these: despite the fact that he grew up “behind a fence of

iron palings", he imagined a "Palermo of the knife and guitar" that lurked just beyond the garden.[3]

Borges came from a privileged and well-rooted family. One of his grandfathers was a colonel in the army; another one of his ancestors fought in the independence wars. The Borges family lived in the neighborhood Palermo, which at the time of Borges' birth in 1899 had yet to be incorporated into the city's spreading mechanisms of progress. Carriego's poetry speaks to the Palermo that Borges imagined during his book-filled childhood; there was enough overlap between the lives of the two authors that they experienced the same moment in space and time. Just as Carriego was deeply influenced by the streets he roamed, Borges expresses a love of and intimate closeness with his city of origin.

Borges, however, did not spend the entirety of his life in Buenos Aires. His family moved to Switzerland during his adolescence and when he returned, he became deeply involved in local literary circles, going on to become the founder of the Ultraist movement. This style, which was marked by a prismatic fragmentation of reality as opposed to direct representation, provided a way to structurally reconstruct Carriego's life. Borges saw in Carriego a man who captured something essentially Argentine. In "El alma del suburbio" ("The soul of the neighborhood") Borges pinpoints a passage which exemplifies Carriego's inside-out knowledge of his Palermo. His unapologetic, yet somehow idealized portrayal of the city was appealing to both Borges and readers at the time when Carriego was popular. It can be argued that Borges paralleled Carriego's vision of the city in his early nationally focused literature, presenting an equally

[3] Jorge Luis Borges, *Evaristo Carriego*, trans. Norman Thomas di Giovanni (New York: E.P. Dutton, Inc., 1984), 33.

subjective but modified picture of his surroundings. Borges, unlike Carriego, was a famed rewriter: he modified not only his own work, but also the very history of Buenos Aires and its most influential founding myths. He wrote a mythical history of Buenos Aires ("Fundación mítica de Buenos Aires", in *Fervor de Buenos Aires,* 1923) and, in "El fin", chronicled the end of the legendary gaucho Martín Fierro. Carriego too is subject to Borges' heavy editing hand, and given the arguably significant ideological connotations of his other rewrites, his take on Carriego's life can also be seen as the medium by which he conveys his vision of the world. As a starting point, Borges draws from the similarity of their origins: both were men who inhabited an ambivalent, indescribable space in time. Both writers are men who consider themselves *orilleros,* writers from the orillas.[4] This place, which is timeless and not bound to any geographic boundary, connects Borges and Carriego through space and time.

Carriego, according to Borges, was the "first observer of the outskirts of Buenos Aires"[5] and played an integral role in the way that the outer slums came to be seen. Though he praises the moments of truth and innocence found in the work, Borges is also critical of the way Carriego painted the suburbs as gloomy and unfortunate:

> Obviously, Carriego is somewhat responsible for our gloomy impressions. More than anyone, he has dulled the bright colors of the city's outer edge; he holds the innocent blame for the fact that, in the tango now, the wenches one and all go to the hospital and the hoodlums are ruined by morphine.[6]

[4] "People who live there…think of themselves as men either of the country or men of the city, but never as men of the outer slums. It was out of this ambivalent material that Carriego created his work." Borges, Carriego, 103.
[5] Borges, *Carriego*, 162.
[6] Borges, *Carriego*, 159.

Throughout the book, Borges reiterates that it was Carriego who created the pathetic and afflicted past, for which readers have sympathy: "The general view, expressed both orally and in writing, is that this inspiring of pity is the strength and justification of Carriego's work."[7] Borges argues that Carriego misrepresents the quality of life of people at the time, and that they were actually joyful and courageous to a fault.[8] In his book, Borges does what he can to reestablish the *culto de coraje*—the joyful, lively violence of the cult of courage—in the context of Carriego's life and times:

> What we have, then, is men who led extremely elemental lives, gauchos and others from the River Plate and the Paraná, forging, without realizing it, a religion that had its mythology and its martyrs—the hard and blind religion of courage, of being ready to kill and to die. This cult is as old as the world, but it was rediscovered and lived in the American republics by herders, stockyard workers, drovers, outlaws, and pimps."[9]

In Borges, we see a mutation of the voice of the *orillero* in that he is caught at a time, the era of the centenary in 1912, when Buenos Aires was in the throes of progress. He favored Carriego as a poet because Carriego portrayed the orillas as a static reality where the *culto de coraje* was a part of everyday life, not a remnant. Carriego, as a poet, gives Borges a platform on which to address the question of the coexistence of past and present.

Borges takes the poetry of Carriego and snippets of his life and fleshes them out into a spatial and temporal map of his surroundings. Carriego is a kind of vehicle for Borges to write his own history, and through the many essays and editions that went

[7] Borges, *Carriego*, 91.
[8] Borges, *Carriego*, 158. "The present-day tango, concocted of picturesqueness and labored *lunfardo* jargon, is one thing; and the old tangos...are the invention of those who disbelieve in the hoodlum's bravery, of those who explain and set you right about it. The first tangos...still testify to the rollicking courage of the outer slums."
[9] Borges, *Carriego*, 141.

into the final edition of the book, he constructed his past. Carriego is the pre-text necessary for the establishment of himself as an author and the fictional history which provides the background of the rest of his body of work. In writing a "biography" of Carriego, Borges pens his own autobiography. In fact, it could be said that he is actually attempting to write an autobiography of Carriego, using his own subjective experience as a lens. He tries to both express the poet's essence and convey his own voice and experiences. There are moments in which the lines between Carriego and Borges become palpably blurred, such as in this quote from "A Life of Evaristo Carriego":

> We who were from the center of the city listened to him utterly enchanted, as if he were telling us tales of a far-off country." Carriego knew himself to be frail and mortal, but the endless pink-walled streets of Palermo kept him going.[10]

This quote connects the "we", which includes Borges as listener, with Carriego the storyteller and, in the end, the reader senses that it is really *Borges* who was kept alive by the "endless pink-walled streets". An author preoccupied with alternate representations of space, time, reality and identity, it follows that Borges would apply this same complexity in writing about himself, prismatically, with the voice and features of another.

The moments in which the identities of the two men are blurred are characteristic of the in-betweenness that Borges establishes and encourages. This in-betweenness can be seen as a staging of difference: city vs. orillas, Borges vs. Carriego, timeline vs. alternate timeline.

[10] Borges, *Carriego*, 56-57.

IV. Summary of Content: Biography and Myth

The first words of what was to become *Evaristo Carriego* were written in the margins and blank pages of Lisandro Segovia's *Diccionario de argentinismos.*[11] It was a book carefully thought out for many years and published in waves: the first writings, some of which had already been submitted to local newspapers, were submitted to a competition and won the Second Municipal Prize in 1929. The first edition of the book was published in 1930. The second, which was published in 1955, contained several supplementary chapters, including "A history of the tango", which served to "round out" the work.[12]

The book itself, although cohesive, is in no way a traditionally chronological biography, and in this sense it can be said to continue in the tradition of Sarmiento's biography of Facundo. It is part vivid descriptions of Palermo, part literary analysis, part subjective experience and part cultural anthropology. With chapters ranging from "Palermo, Buenos Aires" to "A Life of Evaristo Carriego" to "Inscriptions on Wagons" and "Stories of Horsemen", *Carriego* "is really about Borges himself and about old-time Buenos Aires."[13] The beginnings of his fascination with the nature of time, labyrinths, maps and intricately unreal realities can be seen in this biographical work.

The beginning of each chapter is marked by a passage that sets the tone. Sometimes this is done by way of narrative, and sometimes it takes the form of an

[11] Daniel Balderston, "Las variantes raleaban: Two versions of *Evaristo Carriego"*, *Variaciones Borges* 38 (2014): 81.
[12] Denise Dupont. "'Don Quijote' and the pursuit of literary eternity in *Evaristo Carriego*", *Latin American Literary Review* 33 (2005): 115.
[13] Borges, *Carriego,* 13.

explanation that helps the reader decode the rest of the chapter: for example, Chapter III, "Heretic Masses", begins with a clear reference to ultraism:

> Every writer starts out with a naïvely physical idea of what art is. To him a book is not an expression…but literally a *volume*, a prism with six rectangular faces which is made up of thin sheets of paper.[14]

The presence of these introductory sections contribute to an understanding of *Carriego* as a myth or parable. These phrases or paragraphs direct the way the book is read, shaping it as an allegory of the modern condition.

It is worth examining the structure of *Evaristo Carriego* because it is one of the first indications that the biographical function of the book is only secondary. Just as it was written in fragments, each chapter presents a different facet of Carriego's life and works. The list of chapters is as follows:

Prologue
I. Palermo, Buenos Aires
II. A Life of Evaristo Carriego
III. Heretic Masses
IV. Song of the Neighborhood
V. Possible Summary
VI. Complementary Pages
VII. Inscriptions on Wagons
VIII. Stories of Horsemen
IX. The Dagger
X. Foreword to an Edition of the Complete Poems of Evaristo Carriego
XI. A History of the Tango
Appendixes

[14] Borges, *Carriego*, 65.

Carriego and His Awareness of the City's Outskirts
Foreword to an Edition of the Selected Poems of Evaristo Carriego

The first chapter, a lovingly rendered vision of Buenos Aires as it was during a particular span of time, is a telling indicator of the way Borges himself felt about his city of birth. It is not an establishment of a factually historical location, but of a space in time: the era directly preceding and following the Argentine centenary in 1912. This is followed by a chapter that loosely details some of Carriego's life--mainly his patterns, his beliefs, and his relationships. Borges places him in context with his ancestors and contemporaries.

"Heretic Masses" and "Song of the Neighborhood" are chapters which explain and analyze some of Carriego's poems. As in the previous chapters, an important part of these is context: for every stanza, Borges explains the social, cultural, and historical connotations implicit in the narrative. These first four chapters are shot through with numerous endnotes that explain Borges' personal belief, and sometimes tangential details that fill in background information.

"Possible Summary" neatly ties up the life of Carriego, his poetry, and his legacy in roughly 2 pages. After this, Borges delves into in-depth background material. The last several chapters are those which were published in 1955, some twenty years after the original publication of the book. While the first half of the book shows how young Borges "loved the man [Carriego], on this side idolatry"[15], the latter half presents complex visions of the past of Buenos Aires and of Carriego himself, complicating his

[15] Borges, *Carriego,* 195.

previous enthusiastic love for the city. This can be seen in passages such as that where he decries the influence of tango on Argentine identity.

> …Popular, or traditional, poetry can influence sentiments and shape behavior. If we apply this thesis to the Argentine tango, we would find in it a mirror of our daily lives and at the same time a mentor or model whose influence is certainly malignant. The early milonga and tango may have been foolish, even harebrained, but they were bold and gay. The later tango is like a resentful person who indulges in loud self-pity while shamelessly rejoicing at the misfortunes of others.[16]

This contrasts with the uncritical presentation of tango as an unquestionable part of enduring Argentine culture seen in Chapter I:

> Of the Maldonado all that will remain will be…the two tangos that bear the river's name—an early one, which, being the stream's contemporary, made no fuss about it, and was only for dancing…the other, a plaintive ballad-tango in the later style of the Boca".[17]

The 1930 edition of the book, from which the latter quote originates, was written before Borges developed a more critical view of Argentine traditions and Buenos Aires itself. In *Carriego*, the city is more of a character than the poet himself, and Borges' enthusiasm, fascination, and love for his home as a young man is clear. This sentimental attachment, though it does not disappear in the additions to later versions of the book, takes on new dimensions as an ideological tool instead of an effusive expression of admiration.

Some of his strongest cultural sentiments are conveyed in chapters such as "Inscriptions on Wagons" and "Stories of Horsemen", but unlike the eager fascination conveyed in "Palermo, Buenos Aires", these chapters are marked by the temporal,

[16] Borges, *Carriego*, 146.
[17] Borges, *Carriego*, 46.

spatial, and historical intricacy characteristic of later Borges. This complexity is exemplified in passages such as this one:

> "Time is the native Argentine's infinite, and only, capital. We can raise slowness to the level of immobility, the possession of space."[18]

And in "Stories of Horsemen", Borges references Martín Fierro and hints at the way he has become representational of the disappearing anachronisms of a simpler past:

> The horseman vanishing into the distance with a hint of defeat is, in our literature, the gaucho.[19]

These chapters are also more openly biographical: though Borges does not describe his life, he more clearly narrates his own personal relationship with Carriego, his life and works, and the circumstances, legends, and people that influenced him. There are elements of vindication and vilification of the poet, all part of the character that Borges began creating in the 1920s. *Evaristo Carriego* is the medium by which Borges sets his national stage, putting characters into play and telling stories so complex that one easily forgets that they are seeing a facade.

V. Review of the Literature on *Evaristo Carriego*

Though *Evaristo Carriego* is one of Borges' lesser studied works, it is nevertheless the subject of various articles which delve into the multiple layers of complexity that can be found in the book. Although there are not many full-length scholarly articles that explore into the biographical work, it merits mention in a number of books as a chapter or section of a chapter. Research on *Carriego* can, for the most

[18] Borges, *Carriego*, 114.
[19] Borges, *Carriego*, 123.

part, be separated into three categories: examinations of the book as a groundbreaking work in the (re)definition of biography (Di Giovanni, Alonso, Jencke); analyses explaining the significance of the two editions that were published (Di Giovanni, Canala, Balderston); and studies of *Carriego* as it relates to the rest of Borges' career (specifically, themes found in his later work) and his life (Alonso, Dupont, Jencke, Sarlo).

Norman Thomas Di Giovanni, whose English translation of *Evaristo Carriego* is arguably the most complete and most widely disseminated, has dedicated a fair amount of work to further analyzing the book. In a chapter in *The Lesson of the Master* which also appears as the introduction of his translation, Di Giovanni explains the fragmentary beginnings of *Carriego* and the ways in which it complemented (or perhaps countered) an early, rare biography of Carriego by José Gabriel.[20] With reference to Borges' life, Di Giovanni briefly explains the way the later changes in the author's ideologies affected the second edition of the book, making it corrective in reference to what could have been read as fervent nationalism in the first half. Similarly, in "Lecturas y relecturas de un comienzo: sobre las ediciones de *Evaristo Carriego*", Juan Tablo Canala goes over the essays and works that were synthesized into the first edition of *Carriego*, as well as the corrections that went into the second edition. He delves into some of these changes at the sentential level. Canala expresses the importance of looking at the *suppression* of the changes that reveals Borges' desire to conceal the

[20] "It would have been pointless for Borges in 1930 to have gone over the same ground as Gabriel in 1921.To be of value, another book on Carriego had to be different from, even a reaction *against*, the previous one. If José Gabriel's book could have all the facts and none of the essence of Carriego, Borges would deliberately set out to write a book that, near enough, contained none of the facts and all of the essence." Norman Thomas Di Giovanni, "Evaristo Carriego: Borges as Biographer", in *The Lesson of the Master: On Borges and His Work* (Great Britain: Continuum, 2003), 96.

origins of his work and, in doing so, conceal his own ideological beginnings: "Recordaba Borges con cierta turbacion durante la edicion de sus obras: 'Estoy absorto ante las inepcias que he escrito. Libros como Evaristo Carriego y Discusión no pueden corregirse. Voy a publicarlos tal cual estan, con una notita desligándome'" ("Borges remembered with certain discomfiture during the process of editing his works, 'I am overwhelmed by the ineptitudes that I have written. Books like *Evaristo Carriego* and *Discusión* cannot be corrected. I am going to publish them so that, with a note, they will become detached from me."[21] [22] Canala highlights what can be described almost as embarrassment on the part of Borges that refers back to the corrective element explained by Di Giovanni, in which Borges desired to cover up what might be seen as youthful ineptitude or even a lack of critical analysis. The work of Di Giovanni and Canala, however, does not address some of the more complex ways that Borges visualizes and recontextualizes narratives of modernity.

In "Las variantes raleaban: two drafts of *Evaristo* Carriego", Daniel Balderston conducts an in-depth investigation into the literary genealogy of the work, beginning with the scribbles that appeared in *Diccionario de argentinismos* and going all the way to changes made in the second edition. Rather than focusing on the ideological meaning of these changes, however, Balderston presents *Carriego* and its two "campaigns" as "an eloquent testimony to Borges's capacity to construct a whole out of precarious fragments, leaving the seams of his work visible, daring to write imperfect pages."[23] It is relevant to examine literary genealogies because they provide a concrete way to

[21] Juan Tablo Canala, "Lecturas y relecturas de un comienzo: sobre las ediciones de Evaristo Carriego," Variaciones Borges 38 (July 2014): 99.
[22] All translations aside from quotations from Di Giovanni's translation of Carriego are mine.
[23] Balderston, "Las variantes raleaban", 81.

explain the changes made by Borges, a famous re-writer who chose every word he wrote intentionally.

Reading *Carriego* from a different angle, Diego Alonso explores the dubious historicity of Borges' so-called biography in "Sobre la memoria y la historicidad de las imagenes en *Evaristo Carriego*" ("On memory and the historicity of images in *Evaristo Carriego*"). Alonso expands upon Borges' dealings with what would be considered factual, historical past, questioning whether it is necessary to speak of the past empirically in order to establish truth. In looking at this facet, Alonso briefly presents a view of the legitimacy of the modes of time established by Borges, including eternity, in terms of writing about history. He challenges the necessity of establishing a factually based past, explaining the ways in which an image-rich, memory based depiction of the past is equally real, and which in fact enables the past to "lose its condition of otherness".[24] Time in Borges is an important and widely discussed theme which is relevant to any work involving Borges and modernity. However, Alonso does not explicitly connect his study to the idea of modernity or nostalgia.

Denise Dupont not only expands upon the idea of eternity, but establishes the idea of *Carriego* as a pre-text in her article "*Don Quijote* and the pursuit of literary eternity in *Evaristo Carriego*": "I believe that [it] contains a guide promoted by Borges to shape readers' interpretations of his work…For example, the 1955 additions to *Evaristo Carriego* serve as a pre-reading for the original work, carried out by the

[24] "Dicho de otro modo: se incita a hallar bajo la luz de los recuerdos, ya restituidos en imágenes, la secreta forma del tiempo donde el pasado pierde su condición de otredad." Diego Alonso, "Sobre la memoria y la historicidad de las imagenes en *Evaristo Carriego"*, *Variaciones Borges* 37 (2014): 81.

'author' within *Evaristo Carriego* itself."[25] She deepens this analysis by looking into the way the relationship between time and space undermines history in various ways, and draws parallels between Borges as writer and Carriego as a character and Miguel Cervantes as a writer and Don Quijote as a character. Dupont's idea of a "pre-text" is useful in placing *Carriego* in context with the rest of Borges' work and looking at the significance of the trajectory of his literary career.

Beatriz Sarlo also approaches some of the previously mentioned themes in her book *Jorge Luis Borges: A Writer on the Edge*. Though she does not dedicate a substantial portion of the book to *Carriego,* she does integrate portions of it into a more holistic approach to his body of work. She develops the idea of the "pre-text" and the role of *Carriego* as a foundation for the rest of his writing as well as a platform in which Borges could create himself: "The character 'Borges' who writes this book is as much an invention as Carriego".[26] Beyond this, she says, Borges created the *orillas* in this book, establishing it as a space in between the city and the pampas that is unique to his literature. Sarlo's view of Borges is broad and approaches many themes relevant to this study, however, deeper connections to time and modernity in *Carriego* are not specifically examined.

Guillermo Gaxiola dedicates a book of essays to addressing Borges and the problematic of time. He presents a series of questions, namely: "What is the feeling of time? Is time real or is it just a subjective construct by which we order our

[25] Dupont, "'Don Quijote'", 115.
[26] Beatriz Sarlo, *Jorge Luis Borges: A Writer on the Edge* (London: Verso, 2006), 25.

perceptions?"[27] Though he does not answer these questions, he examines the ways in which Borges forms and molds time in his work, explaining the ideas of eternity and circular time. Gaxiola draws from Borges' body of writings to explain and complicate existing conceptions of time. This is useful in reading Borges as a whole, and provides important background information when looking at *Carriego* as part of a larger thematic arc.

Kate Jencke places Borges into context with Walter Benjamin in her book *Reading Borges After Benjamin*. In the chapter "*Evaristo Carriego* and the Limits of the Written Subject," Jencke delves into the interplay between Borges and the self he creates in *Carriego*, the façade of the author. She presents a fairly holistic review of many of the themes often discussed in *Carriego*, in addition to drawing parallels between this biographical work and another written prior to it about Walt Whitman in which Borges analyzed "the possible relations between an individual poet, and a region, era, or people."[28] In the end, she denominates the book an "allegorical biography" in which the "(non)mirror of language" profoundly challenges the reader's, writer's, and subject's identities.[29] This examination is useful in creating a launching point for further investigation, and is one of the most complete works on *Carriego* itself.

There has been much research into *Evaristo Carriego* as a biography and Borges as biographer, rewriter, and master of molding temporalities, but there is little convergence in which *Evaristo Carriego* is examined in terms of its relationship with

[27] Guillermo Gaxiola, *Borges y el idealismo: un análisis sobre el tiempo* (Guadalajara: Arlequín, 2012), 57.
[28] Kate Jencke, "*Evaristo Carriego* and the Limits of the Written Subject", in *Reading Borges after Benjamin: Allegory, Afterlife, and the Writing of History* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007), 41.
[29] Jencke, *Reading Borges*, 65.

time and the subjective temporality of memory. This is where I hope to expand upon current scholarship on Borges: I propose an interconnectedness of time, modernity, and nostalgia which enriches an understanding of *Carriego* through an analysis of Borges' methods of constructing literary worlds in which there are multiplicities of dissonant and converging iterations of time. Where a majority of research forgoes connecting Borges to the historical and ideological currents of (post)colonialism and the installation of modernity in Argentina, I propose that this is a fundamental connection for an understanding not just of the aesthetics of time but also its function in *Carriego.*

Modernity

The word "modernity" calls to mind newness and innovation. It is often related to urbanization and technology: the development of cities, the filling of empty and untamed land with buildings and the trappings of what is conceived to be civilization. When this is explored, it reveals the incomplete and flawed traditional understanding of modernity, which characterizes it as a product for exportation. This, therefore, implies a spatial relationship. In exportation, there is a location from which the product originates and a location where it is put into play as part of an economic game. Modernity as a product is thought to originate in central locations; metropoles—such as European cities—from which it is exported as a whole and instated in peripheral spaces.[30] This articulation makes the concept of modernity a powerful one, justified as a model-myth held up before colonized people by Western Europe, an identity to which the colonized should aspire and should mimic, but could never quite master.[31]

I. Modernity: a useful critique or a constricting abstraction?

Scholars have resorted to certain discourses of modernity to make many different points in debates over past, present and future. It is usually employed as an analytical category that defines a subject for scholarly inquiry. "Modernity" as a category has been traditionally employed to represent a powerful claim to singularity in the form of a long and continuing project of Western Europe. Positive discourses of modernity have been produced in Western colonial and imperial environments to

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[30] Timothy Mitchell, *Questions of Modernity,* vol 11 (University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 1. "Modernization continues to be commonly understood as a process begun and finished in Europe, from where it has been exported across ever-expanding regions of the non-West."
[31] Homi Bhabha, "Of mimicry and man", in *The Location of Culture*.

"tame" the rich diversity of human experience. In the tradition of Latin American scholarship, a critique of modernity has centered on the articulation of "multiple modernities" or "alternative modernities".[32] The argument in these plural articulations brings out the way in which non-Western peoples develop cultural forms that are not mere repetitions of tradition but bring their own perspectives to progress. Some contemporary postcolonial scholarship has offered a critique of the project of alternative modernities on the basis that these projects tend to obscure the pervasive and powerful force of modernity as a project of Western civilization and they normalize modes of resistance that conform to narrative emplotments more attuned to earlier anti-colonial struggles than our postcolonial presents. David Scott is critical of alternative modernities as a denial of the constitutive force of the Western project of modernity which futilely espouses liberation from the colonial circumstance as the end of an unfinished teleology.[33]

Frederick Cooper asks the question of whether "modernity" could be understood as a condition ("something written into the exercise of economic and political power at a global level") or a representation ("a way of talking about the world in which one uses a language of temporal transformation while bringing out the simultaneity of global unevenness, in which 'tradition' is produced by telling a story of how some people became 'modern'")[34]. With these questions in mind, then the follow-up would ask about

[32] The idea of alternative modernities is proposed by scholars such as Julio Ramos, Carlos Alonso, and Mary Louise Pratt.
[33] David Scott, *Conscripts of Modernity: The Tragedy of Colonial Enlightenment* (Duke University Press Books, 2004).
[34] Cooper, 114.

the specific nature of those conditions or about the subject that produces said representation.

Two very important concepts underscore the idea of modernity: the assumption of a naturalized historical time which is linear and the distinction between West and non-West, otherwise iterated as the center and the periphery.[35] These ideas are intimately connected to the construction of Buenos Aires and Carriego himself in Borges' book. A useful theoretical construction of modernity that allows for the establishment of these connections comes by way of postcolonial scholar Timothy Mitchell. In "The Stage of Modernity", he proposes the exploration of two forms of difference when it comes to modernity: the displacements opened up by the different space of the non-West, and the ways in which this space is made to appear different:

> To claim that the modern is always staged as representation is not to argue that modernity is concerned more with image-making than with reality. It is to argue that the colonial-modern involves creating an effect we recognize as reality, by organizing the world endlessly to represent it.[36]

Mitchell claims that modernity is a staging of a double difference: reality as different from image, and image as different from reality. And, he says, to call modernity a *stage* would be erroneous, falling into the trap of describing modernity as the innate different between locations and time periods:

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[35] Here it is fitting to mention the phenomenological idea of the Other: this is a term that represents that which is not the self. In a broader sense, this can be used to talk about persons who do not conform to hegemonic ideals or social norms. The Other could be loosely related to the periphery, while the self could be seen as the center. This idea can be seen in Johannes Fabian's *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Builds Its Subjects.*

36 Mitchell, "Modernity", 17.

> If modernity is not so much a stage of history but rather its staging, then it is a world particularly vulnerable to a certain kind of disruption or displacement. No representation can ever match its original, especially when the original exists only as something promised by a multiplicity of imitations and repetitions. Every act of staging or representation is open to the possibility of misrepresentation, or at least of parody or misreading. An image or simulation functions by its subtle difference from what it claims to simulate or portray, even if the difference is no more than the time lag between repetitions. Every performance of the modern is the producing of this difference, and each such difference represents the possibility of some shift, displacement, or contamination.[37]

This functions in *Evaristo Carriego* as the way in which the Buenos Aires that is represented is a simulacrum of the original: it claims authenticity through impersonation of Carriego while at the same time presenting the obvious paradox of being written from the point of view of an author native to an environment that has long since become postmodern. *Carriego* stages the difference between the past and the present and, concurrently, the outskirts (the other) and the city.

Carriego stands out among the works of Borges because it is one of his most transparent texts. That is to say, while his other stories and essays develop labyrinthine and complex conceptualizations of time and space, *Carriego* is an early enough text that these ideas have yet to be completely formulated (though in the chapters added in the second edition, the problematics of time and space begin to emerge in a way that is more characteristic of late Borges). The pull linear time is still felt, but Borges challenges its universality and homogeneity through incorporating layers of time that complement each other and, when disentangled, reveal the incompleteness of the project of modernity. The relationship between time and space is still defined in a

[37] Mitchell, "Modernity", 23.

familiar West-centric way: there is a connection between the expansion of modernity and the passage of time. Yet the cracks and inadequacies of a progress-oriented timeline are revealed in the rhetoric of juxtaposed anachronism, and the falsehood of an all-encompassing forward-marching linear narrative is challenged through the rhetoric of repetition and moments of sameness. As Donnelly says in "Mirror of Time", "Borges undermines the continuity of space in time through eternal presentness...and denies linearity through recurrent temporality."[38]

In order to explain how Borges diverges from the flawed iterations of space and time characteristic of narratives of modernity, these two concepts, which can be seen as structural components of a traditional understanding of the phenomenon, must be acknowledged.

a) Historical time

Historical time is chronological—meaning it moves from the past to the present in a linear fashion, tracing connections between events that place them all on the same trajectory into the same future. This is the time that is measured by clocks and calendars: it passes in the same units regardless of how its passing is perceived. It is bound up with the system of capitalism and the idea of time as money. Because it is a unitary measurement, it is also a structure which is based on a set of quantitative value judgments. Modernity assumes the supremacy of technological development, capitalist economies, and increasing distance between man and nature. Within this frame of reference, the present is always superior to the past, and in turn, the future is superior to

[38] Jennifer Donnelly, "Mirror of Time: Temporality and Contemporaneity in the Work of Jorge Luis Borges", *Contemporaneity* 2.1 (2012), 81.

the present. This way of expressing history, or "historical time"[39] was created in and for the west and claims universalism, despite being invented in Europe for Europe.

The temporality of modernity is explained by Walter Benjamin as being "homogeneous empty time"[40]: this is an expression of time as an empty space that is filled with unitary events. It is meaningless in and of itself, and it is an essential part of understanding capitalist progress. The unitary events with which homogeneous empty time is filled are markers which create the illusion of progress. These markers, however, are just *categories* that are filled and refilled with new types of technology, social structures, and cultural trends. The refilling of categories creates the feeling of perpetual newness, or eternal present. Thus this expression of time—homogeneous empty time—takes a linear form.[41]

b) West and non-west

The discourse of modernity becomes spatialized, but it is not geographical. "Europe" or the "West" that modernity refers to is the tale/narrative that imperialisms have told the colonized, where "the modern" continues to dominate the stories that are told and is part of the *known history*, something that has already happened elsewhere and which is to be reproduced mechanically or with a local content.

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[39] Timothy Mitchell, *Questions of Modernity,* vol 11 (University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 7.

[40] Walter Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History", in *Illuminations,* ed. Hannah Arendt (New York: Schocken Books, 1969).

[41] In the same work ("Theses on the Philosophy of History"), Benjamin articulates a kind of time that breaks with homogeneous empty time: this is Messianic time, which consists of moments in which time is frozen. These moments are always immediately accessible from any point in time and, unlike homogeneous empty time, are ultimately meaningful. Messianic time ruptures the linearity of homogeneous empty time. It is qualitative, not quantitative, and thus defies the chronological timeline of progress.

Modernity as a spatial phenomenon is "the belief that there were metropolitan foci from which the modern emanated and through which its rippled and delayed expansion across time and space would transform the material and cultural orders of societies that languished in the outer confines of the system."[42]

An alternative mentioned by Mitchell which pertains to thinkers such as Foucault is the idea of modernity not as an imposition of the West, but as a result of the meeting of West and non-West. This conception of modernity as a result of the clash of two supposedly separate entities relies on the assumption of initial difference between West and non-West, and thus still falls into the trap of "European-centered dualism". In this vision, the idea of the West requires an "other" in order to be defined—and, in requiring the definition of the other, necessitates a retroactively applied concept of empire. Before the meeting of West and non-west, these categories did not exist: "Europe's sense of cultural identity was constructed in the business of colonizing and getting rich overseas." The West is always relative to something else. Europe was not a Western empire until there was a constitutive other.

c) The development of temporalities and modernity in Evaristo Carriego

In the context of modernity, the idea of the West and its constitutive other contains a temporal dimension within the linear chronology of progress. They are not only central spaces in relation to peripheries, they are presents and futures in relation to pasts. Non-west implies an anterior location on the timeline of progress. It is assumed that any people with a different relationship to technology, time, production, or nature

[42] Carlos J Alonso, "The Burden of Modernity", *Modern Language Quarterly* 57.2 (1997), 227.

have fallen behind on an inevitable track towards progress. Not only does the non-west exist in a peripheral physical location, it is also placed at a distance temporally.[43] If the West and the non-west are juxtaposed in time or space, they are forcibly "othered"[44] (rhetorically in the case of Borges) by being described as "forgotten by" or "lost in" time.[45]

Modernity is based on the creation of a time-space relationship that is measured by "progress", technical advancement. Borges constructs his stage at precisely the moment in which this relationship is articulated. The world of *Carriego* arises from the juxtaposition of historical time and what could be called Messianic time, time which defies unitary measurement.

It is at the conjunction of temporality and spatiality that Borges constructs the world of *Evaristo Carriego*. The framework of the world Borges creates is that of modernity. He expresses his idea of this time-space relationship and its variations in a footnote to the first chapter:

> I maintain—and I wish neither coyly to evade nor boldly to parade paradox—that only new countries have a past; that is to say, an autobiographical memory, a living history. If time is a succession of events, we must admit that where more things are happening more time is passing, and so it is on this inconsequential side of the world that time is passing, and so it is on this inconsequential side of the world that time is most profuse. The conquest and colonization of these domains—a

[43] Johannes Fabian calls this "denial of coevalness" in *Time and the Other.*

[44] That is, separated neatly into the categories established by the previously mentioned Eurocentric dualism of progress.

[45] "Thousands of days no longer known to memory, misty zones of time, waxed and waned, until, via a number of individual foundations, we reach the Palermo of the eve of the nineties.... It is this Palermo of 1889 that I wish to write about." This quote exemplifies the way in which Borges describes a time resembling Benjamin's homogeneous empty time: it is an ambiguous time-space bounded by the advent of the mechanisms of progress--buildings and institutions. By describing the previous time as "misty" and "no longer known to memory," Borges implies an irrevocable distance--an "othering" of a past that is not technically far from the present. Jorge Luis Borges, *Carriego*, 41.

> handful of fear-ridden mud forts clinging to the coast and watching the curved horizon, the bow that shoots forth Indian raids—was so indecisive that, in 1872, one of my grandfathers was to command the last major battle against the Indians, bringing the sixteenth-century conquest to a conclusion only after the middle of the nineteenth century. Be that as it may, why resurrect the past? In Granada, in the shade of towers hundreds of years older than the fig trees, I did not feel the passage of time, but I have felt it in Buenos Aires on the corner of Pampa and Triunvirato, today an utterly featureless place of English-style roofs, three years ago a place of smoky brick kilns, and five years ago a jumble of small pastures. Time—a European sentiment of a people with a long past, and their very justification and glory—moves more boldly in the New World. Young people, in spite of themselves, sense this. Over here we are contemporary with time, we are brothers of time.[46]

Borges begins with a statement that is, despite his supposed desire to avoid catering to paradox, boldly in contrast with the traditional European idea of the flow of time and history.[47] "Only new countries have a past," he says, and this past is a product not of an accumulation of many years, but of a concentration of events. He reinforces historical time by emphasizing its quantitative and chronological nature, but also contradicts it by implying that there is a lively interplay between moments in time. "Living history" is the idea that time is not a static chunk of completed events, but the very relationship between something that has happened, something that is happening, and something that has yet to happen. The "new countries" Borges mentions are those which have not yet frozen history in the past, those which are still in the process of establishing a narrative. The unspoken opposite of this is the Old World, where the production of history is no longer part of daily life (as in Granada, where Borges says he cannot feel time). Borges

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[46] Borges, *Carriego,* 42.

[47] Tishale Tibebu, Hegel and the Third World: The Making of Eurocentrism in World History (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2011), 141-142. Hegel stated that the Americas, prior to the arrival of the conquerors, was not only inferior to Europe in almost every way but also lacking in a "true" history. Their history was "a purely natural culture which had to perish" with the arrival of Christian Europeans. The traditional Hegelian conception of history is of a timeline that begins with the instatement of Christianity and recognizably European tools of linear, capitalist progress.

seeks to portray the "new country" as a place where past and present are simultaneous: the past is immediately present because it is being lived by every person in every circumstance.

Borges further develops this seeming paradox by explaining that "where there is a greater density of events, more time is passing". This can, perhaps, be used to complicate Benjamin's ideas of homogeneous empty time and Messianic time. The idea that a "greater density of events" equates the passage of time fits into the scheme of historical time, or chronological empty time, because it fills time the way one would fill a calendar. However, when this is taken in conjunction with the concept of a living history kept alive by the interplay of moments, one cannot argue that Borges completely caters to the traditional hegemonic expression of time. He states that he "did not feel the passage of time" in Granada yet he did in Pampa and Triunvirato, implying that time in the Old World has come to a stop--perhaps this could be said to be the eternal "now" of Messianic time. However, Borges is not creating the dichotomy that Benjamin does in his *Theses*, and he does not construct a vision of time as a meaningless space to be filled. The passage of time, the speed at which history is being created, is palpable (and meaningful) in a place which has changed rapidly and drastically within five years--and most notably, it has moved ahead on the timeline of progress. Meanwhile, Granada carries thousands of years of history, yet it is no longer alive or felt. The palpability of time, its *feeling*, is vital to an understanding of Borges.

Time, according to Borges, is a "European emotion": that is, it is something felt by "people with a long past". The description of time as a feeling as opposed to the measurement of a factual entity suggests that Borges is willing to play with the

seriousness of a progress-oriented temporality. He contrasts this feeling of European historical time with the way time is experienced presumably in Argentina: "we are contemporary with time, we are brothers of time", he says. The word "contemporary" suggests an incomplete desire of keeping-up-with in a technological or cultural sense. In his essay "What is the contemporary?", Giorgio Agamben interprets the contemporary as an experience of profound dissonance: "Contemporariness is, then, a singular relationship with one's own time, which adheres to it and, at the same time, keeps a distance from it. More precisely, it is that relationship with time that adheres to it, through a disjunction and an anachronism."[48] The contemporary, in this context, is not a label of periodization; it is an existential marker. To be "contemporary" is to experience a state of proximity with one's own temporality. Furthermore, for Agamben, the contemporary is he "who firmly holds his gaze on his own time so as to perceive not its light, but rather its darkness."[49] In applying the idea of contemporariness as disjunction, or coexistence of many contradictory or paradoxical entities, it can be seen that *Carriego* functions on the juxtaposition of multiple concepts of time—namely capitalist and non-capitalist, or homogeneous and Messianic.

In the context of Mitchell's statement that the staging of modernity functions on subtle structural differences, Borges' text blatantly manifests modernity in the way it mythologizes the past and plays with subjective temporalities.

[48] Giorgio Agamben. "What Is the Contemporary?" in *What Is an Apparatus?: And Other Essays* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009), 41.
[49] Agamben, "Contemporary", 44.

It stands to clarify *how* exactly this staging of dissonant times, namely past and present, manifests in *Carriego*. Here the concept of *survival* as explained by Georges Didi-Huberman becomes relevant:

> Yet, he also discovered something even more overwhelming (which one never notes in reading Frazer): the vertiginous play of time in the present, in the present 'surface' of a given culture. Vertigo is first expressed in the powerful sensation - in itself obvious, but its consequences less so - that the present is woven with multiple pasts.[50]

Given this description, we can see Borges as a modern writer not because he espouses the narrative of modernity, but because in *Carriego* he presents a staging of difference in which the past exists contemporaneously with the present, *surviving* in the cracks of a modern system. Didi-Huberman's idea of survival as a "differential between two contradictory temporal states"[51] can be seen particularly clearly in "Song of the Neighborhood", a chapter that Borges introduces with a passage that stages the coexistence of the inexorable forward march of modernity and the enduring vestiges of the past:

> Nineteen hundred and twelve. Out toward the many stock pens of Cerviño Street or toward the canebrakes and potholes of the Maldonado—an area reduced to galvanized iron sheds, variously named dance halls, where the tango was all the rage at ten cents a dance, partner included—local toughs still tangled with each other…but for the most part Palermo conducted itself in a God-fearing manner, and it was a place of genteel poverty, like any other mixed community of immigrants and native Argentines. By this time, the centenary of Argentine independence was already as dead as its miles of blue bunting, as its successions of toasts…its municipal illuminations against the rust-colored sky of the Plaza de Mayo, and that other foretold illumination, Halley's comet, was an angel of air and fire to which the organ grinders

[50] Georges Didi-Huberman, "The Surviving Image: Aby Warburg and Tylorian Anthropology," *Oxford Art Journal* 25.1 (2002), 63.
[51] Didi-Huberman, "Surviving", 62.

> sand the tango "Independencia" …Palermo joined the rush toward foolishness. Sinister Art Nouveau architecture sprouted like a swollen flower even as far out as the marshes…The bell of the movie house…mingled with the tired clatter of horse-drawn wagons and with the knife grinder's whistle.[52]

The juxtaposition of the post-centenary Palermo and its previous form, which still bursts through the cracks of development, establishes the idea of "modern" as a complex interweaving of multiple times in which the anachronisms of the past are part of a temporal background layer. While the "bell of the movie house" signifies the introduction of new technology, the "tired clatter of horse-drawn wagons" indicates that Palermo has by no means experienced an even, homogenous transformation into a developed area.

The concepts that Borges sets forth in these passages provide a peek into the way that he structures relationships between time and space. Throughout the first section "Palermo, Buenos Aires" he constructs a vision of the past interspersed with images, anecdotes, and characters that are both part of the past and present. The places, people and events which populated the past are still current. Time is a block of transparent layers, each of which can be peeled back to reveal moments that are directly related. In *Evaristo Carriego* Borges looks through layers of time to pinpoint the exact event which is relevant to his narrative--he identifies the moments which shine through progress-oriented historical time, which ironically proves its existence. The present in *Carriego* is not shown as a transition between moments. Time reaches a standstill in the experience of the present and instead of the "eternal past" presented as linear, there is a rupture experience of particular moments which can be accessed, which implies a

[52] Borges, *Carriego*, 82-83.

particular relationship of temporal experience. There are no lists or dates; there is a construction of time from a structure based on the moment that conjures and explodes particular epochs, lives, out of linear history. This is very close to a Benjaminian conception of Messianic time, which is in itself a temporality that subverts the narrative of modernity.

This is not to say that Borges vilifies the process of capitalist progress, because he still carries out the work of modernity in his nostalgic separation of past and present—this will be the topic of a later section. However, the creation of particular eternal *spaces*—visceral descriptions not of events but of smells, sounds, feelings, and sights—ruptures chronology. Borges does this often when speaking of the life of Carriego: instead of painting his life in terms of its important events, he describes his patterns, the things that "repeat him over and over in us."[53] If he is repeated in the daily actions of every person, then the distinction between past and present loses meaning. The existence of the past in the present means that it is *not past*. This is a narrative counter to the standard birth-to-death chronology. Instead of placing Carriego in a temporal context and reinforcing historical time, Borges creates a narrative that connects Carriego to the reader's experience, spinning his poetry into intimate tales that put into words something personal. For example, when presenting the poem "El casamiento" ("The Wedding"), Borges says that "Carriego's poem is a very skillful expression of the features found at any humble festivity"[54]—meaning Carriego captures

[53] Borges, *Carriego*, 63.
[54] Borges, *Carriego*, 98.

an essential aspect of the experience of living in Buenos Aires in his "immortal stanzas."[55]

Evaristo Carriego is not so much a biography as it is a time warp, taking the reader back in time to the poet's era—or at least constructing a vision of the way this era was. Warped time itself is both a reinforcement and reformulation of linear time. In this aspect, Borges is still responding to the constraints of that historical time which is seen to be so ubiquitous. But he is contorting this temporality by connecting non simultaneous events, forcing simultaneity. The feeling of connectedness between disjoint moments in time is partly constructed by Borges' use of "vanishing images",[56] snapshots that are a kind of magic mirror that allow the reader to be immediately present at that particular time. The presence of the reader in the described moments is facilitated by the use of present tense and, occasionally, images presented as exercises in visualization:

> Imagine a horse-drawn wagon. Imagine a big wagon whose rear wheels, suggestive of reserve power, are taller than its front wheels and whose native-born teamster is as hefty as the wood-and-iron creation on which he rides, his lips pursed in absentminded whistling or, with paradoxically gentle commands, calling out to his team…the driver's seat [seems] more thronelike, as if the wagon still had about it something of the military character of chariots in the marauding empire of Attila. [57]

Moments like these are intentionally guided so that the reader sees the image from a particular perspective, which in this case leads to an understanding of a wagon and wagon driver as powerful archetypes akin to historical legends such as Attila the Hun. The reader can access Borges' past through his or her own experiences and associations

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[55] Borges, *Carriego,* 85.
[56] Borges, *Carriego,* 38.
[57] Borges, *Carriego*, 113.

and memories: Borges states in the first chapter that "reality comes to us...through memory, the essence of which lies not in the proliferation of facts but in the enduring nature of particular elements."[58] These are enduring vestiges, moments similar to Messianic time, which together form the points on the constellation of Carriego, and are fundamental to the counternarrative.

[58] Borges, *Carriego*, 38.

Time

I. Temporal endlessness, spatial boundlessness

Despite the fragmentary structure of *Carriego*, or perhaps because of it, Borges establishes an overarching narrative of eternity, envisioning and constructing enduring moments which enable immortality. This immortality, "which annihilate[s] the supposed flow of time"[59] is literarily expressed by Borges by way of patterns and repetitions. In breaking with a chronological flow of time, Borges means to restore unity to the scattered remains of the past that exist contemporaneously with the constantly mutating present, between the cracks of the façade it presents.

The dictionary definition of eternity is *time without end* or *time that seems to have no end, or is immeasurable.*[60] There are two elements involved in this definition, perception and quantitative measurement. Borges works with the perceptive aspect of eternity: the way time feels (..."I did not feel the passage of time, but I have felt it in Buenos Aires..."[61]) and the way it manifests in thoughts, memories, and even identity.

Eternity is both a way to play with temporality and to use time as a tool for the construction of ideas and perceptions, even ideologies. That which is eternal surpasses the transience of quotidian human experience and enters the realm of myth and deities. The varied concepts related to eternity—immortality, infinity, and memory—are all involved in the preservation of something which is of utmost value. In *Carriego*, this is the Argentine soul--or what Borges has construed to be the Argentine soul. To this end,

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[59] Borges, *Carriego*, 63.

[60] Merriam-Webster. Eternity: time without an end, or time that seems to be without an end.

[61] Borges, *Carriego,* 42.

he constructs Carriego himself as an eternal figure who inhabited a moment in time which somehow surpasses all moments in time.

II. Aesthetics of eternity

In order to create these moments of timelessness which are so numerous in *Carriego*, Borges employs a variety of rhetorical techniques which lend the book what could be called an aesthetic, or feeling, of eternity. Some of these are structural, and others are subtler.

A very obvious negation of time is presented in Borges' avoidance of the biographical dates of Carriego's life. Though Di Giovanni says this is merely because Gabriel had already provided these in an earlier biography, it is an arguably intentional way to blur the temporal boundary created by birth and death dates. Borges states that he thinks a non-chronological account of Carriego's life is a more accurate way to go about writing his biography:

> I believe that a chronological account is inappropriate to Carriego, a man whose life was made up of walks and conversations. To reduce him to a list, to trace the order of his days, seems to me impossible; far better seek his eternity, his patterns. Only a timeless description, lingering with love, can bring him back to us.[62]

There is something here about the way that chronology negates that which is eternal. Providing beginning and end dates separates one from the flow of time, while ignoring the biographical details of a life results in an archetypal depiction; the patterns that make Carriego relatable to the reader are not given an end date. An archetype is by nature relatable; this would mean that the archetype of Carriego would have a more

[62] Borges, *Carriego*, 55.

enduring quality than a more faithfully biographical rendering because the reader would be able to identify themselves in his life and live out "his eternity, his patterns."

> These patterns in Carriego's life that I have described will, I know, bring him closer to us. They repeat him over and over in us, as if for a few seconds each one of us were Carriego. I believe that this is literally the case, and that these fleeting moments of becoming him (not mirroring him), which annihilate the supposed flow of time, are proof of eternity.[63]

The repetition of patterns in which the essence of Carriego dwells not only keep him alive in the present, but also keep the past alive. When Borges speaks of the annihilation of the "supposed flow of time"—that is, past, present, and future as chronological and separate events--he reaffirms the existence of time as always-accessible layers. When one "becomes" Carriego, the passage of time is rendered unimportant. The same thing happens when one plays truco and "becomes" an ancestral self. Borges describes how this is possible: "His game is a repetition of past games—in other words, of moments of past lives. Generations of Argentines no longer here are, as it were, buried alive in the game. Following this thought through, it transpires that time is an illusion."[64] Repetition, which Borges further characterizes as "set formulas", creates a kind of timeline that one can enter outside the boundaries of linear time and live the *same* thing that those who participated in said formulas did before them.

It merits mention that the previously mentioned passage is, itself, structured by repetition:

> The various stage of its aggressive discourse, its sudden turning points, its flashes of intuition, and its intrigue cannot help but **repeat**

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[63] Borges, *Carriego,* 63.

[64] Borges, Carriego, 112.

> **themselves**. They must, in the course of time, **repeat themselves**. For a regular player, what is truco but a habit? Just look at the **repetitiveness** of the game, at its fondness for set formulas. Every player, in truth, does no more than fall back into old games. His game is a **repetition** of past games—in other words, of moments of past lives. [65]

This repetition of repetition seen in the words bolded above is indicative of a much broader, structural pattern in which Borges repeats the same moments throughout the book, or repeats previously used wording to a noticeable extent. He is especially fond of writing and rewriting moments that seem to be the genesis of Carriego as an immortal character, "what…he will be for all time."[66] The irony lays in the fact that there were no particular moments of Carriego's life that immortalized him, because his name has been forgotten by the majority of the population. These moments are times that appealed to *Borges*, not to the public at large, though he makes it seem like the immortality of Carriego's work is universally acknowledged. The words "infinite, eternal, immortal" ring throughout the book, informing the reader that Borges is presenting a timeless vision of time and boundless image of space. To put it blatantly, Borges convinces the reader that his subject is eternal simply by *saying* he is so, and this is reinforced by his rhetorical techniques.

Sameness, also seen as indeterminacy and lack of definition, is another way that eternity is conveyed rhetorically. It is also a feature of repetition, because the very concept of repetition involves a factor that is the same across time and space: As Jennifer Donnelly says, "Sameness disintegrates the possibility of movement from one

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[65] Borges, Carriego, 112.

[66] Borges, Carriego, 128.

spatial-temporal condition to another, and therefore refutes the passage of time."[67] However, the dialogue of sameness takes on new dimensions in the context of the *orillas*. These are "that bare expanse where the land takes on the indeterminateness of the sea"[68], a place in between the city and the pampas that somehow escapes the flow of linear time. The orillas, as a *feeling*, extends throughout the whole book, manifesting as haziness and ambiguity:

> Thousands of days no longer known to memory, misty zones of time, waxed and waned…[69]
>
> …the little window balconies of ordinary people opened onto days that were all the same...[70]
>
> …there began to materialize from the dust a slumlike jungle of single-story, unplastered dwellings.[71]
>
> [There] were a number of large rambling houses, each with a string of patios one behind the other, yellow or brown houses with entranceways in the shape of an arch—an arch repeated mirrorlike in the next entranceway…[72]
>
> The protagonist is eternal, and the wary ranch hand who spends three days behind a door that looks out into a backyard…is the same one who with two bow, a lasso made of horsehair, and a scimitar was poised to raze and obliterate the world's most ancient kingdom under the hooves of his steppe pony.[73]

In these images, the reader can *feel* the sameness that Borges is trying to convey: the houses he describes looks the same and, when seen together, form a "jungle"—a space in which there are no extraordinary features; that is, each section of the space is enough like every other that it does not merit notice. These are moments in space and time

[67] Jennifer Donnelly, "Mirror of Time: Temporality and Contemporaneity in the Work of Jorge Luis Borges", *Contemporaneity* 2.1 (2012), 83.
[68] Borges, *Carriego*, 45.
[69] Borges, *Carriego*, 41.
[70] Borges, *Carriego*, 43.
[71] Borges, *Carriego*, 48.
[72] Borges, *Carriego*, 44.
[73] Borges, *Carriego*, 123.

which cannot be defined by description of outstanding characteristics or by quantitative information. They are “misty zones of time” defined by their lack of definition. Lack of temporal and spatial definition implies eternity and infinity.

The eternal presence of Carriego is ultimately important in Borges’ desire to lift the historical past from the muck of time and re-shape it. This is because “those adequate though hazy images of the pampa from on horseback, which are always in the background of Argentine consciousness, must also have been present in Carriego.”[74] Carriego himself is a kind of vehicle for the past, and if he is, in a sense, a time traveler, then he brings the past with him.

Both Borges and his characterization of Carriego exemplify the *flâneur*: the observer of time and space, who by ambiguity and lack of identification with any particular time or space is present in *all*. This character is a creation of modernity and, more specifically, cities themselves. It is a character that springs from the myth of the metropolis, which Benjamin explains in “On Some Motifs in Baudelaire”:

> Benjamin's metropolis is one entwined with myth, a seemingly paradoxical position in that, for many, modernity is seen as the obviation of myth, the disenchantment of the world. For Benjamin the metropolis is a form of dreamworld… The metropolis is enslaved by myth, a myth that adopts new guises in the supposedly progressive, fashionable world of the commodity. For Benjamin it is precisely the fetishization of the commodity, the repetition of the 'nothing-new' within the fashion industry, and the 'deception' of progress which constitutes and fuels the 'myth' of the metropolis.[75]

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[74] Borges, *Carriego,* 63.

[75] Walter Benjamin, “On Some Motifs in Baudelaire”, in *Illuminations* (New York: Schocken Books, 1969)

This "repetition of the nothing-new" relates back to modernity and the idea of homogeneous empty time, the meaningless refilling of categories. This concept is further unraveled as the fueling of a myth of progress. The flâneur, paradoxically, is a creation of the myth of progress yet is simultaneously detached from its rules. Cristian Cisternas Ampuero expounds on the flâneur as a transcendent character in "Jorge Luis Borges: El 'otro' flâneur":

> The figure visible behind these argumentations is that of the urban itinerant who traverses the outskirts of the premodern city in search of identities that will complement his...who perceives history and the flow of spacetime in his intransferible internal dimension.[76]

He "longs for infinity"[77] but does not seek to create it; perhaps he can be defined as a "brother of time"—one who passes easily between non-synchronous layers. The flãneur is so much a part of the temporal myth of modernity that its rules become all but obsolete in his time-traveling.

Here the difference between the concepts of infinity and eternity becomes clearer. While eternity is generally a temporal concept, infinity is more related to spatial perception. Both of these are integral to Borges' construction of Carriego and his surroundings: it is the combination of eternity and infinity that forms the backdrop of Carriego's mythic history. The existence of the pampas, the grasslands of Argentina, as infinite (boundless) and eternal (timeless) is necessary for Carriego's (and therefore Borges') existence as a flâneur—that is, a mythic character which is perpetuated by

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[76] Cristian Cisternas Ampuero, "Jorge Luis Borges: El 'otro' flaneur", *Revista Chilena de Literatura* 62 (2003), 80.
[77] Ampuero, "Flaneur", 80.

modernity but which simultaneously challenges its hegemony.[78] The timelessness and boundlessness that is embodied by ambiguity and utilized by the flâneur can be seen in the description of early Buenos Aires as missing "the other sidewalk": "Sólo faltó una cosa, la vereda de enfrente".[79] The vision of looking from one city sidewalk out onto the endless pampas provides profound insight into the idea of Buenos Aires, specifically Palermo, as a simulacrum or façade. The idea of the "vereda de enfrente" or the opposite sidewalk contains the idea of copying—the replication of modernity through the doubling of sidewalks, which has not yet taken place—and that of the façade, the visual of the city without any substance. The replication of modernity is the enslavement of eternity and infinity, thus the origins of Buenos Aires as a city arise from the ambiguity of the pampas and Palermo and its development entails the fragmentation of unity.

II. Eternity as a counter- and sub-narrative of modernity

The previously mentioned concept of eternity as repetition, homogeneity, and always-accessible moments located in different layers of time functions as a counternarrative to the unitary passage of chronological time. The possibility of preserving moments or reclaiming them exactly as they were upon first occurrence by

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[78] And yet Borges asserts in a footnote on page 87 that "to make of the cowhand an eternal traveler across the pampa is a piece of romantic nonsense." I would argue that this statement is demonstrative of the ideological tendency to marginalize the gaucho. The flaneur is an elite character who needs an urban background; Carriego has the background an education to be a traveler of spacetime while the gaucho is a tool that, while he can be *placed* into any period of time *by* the elite, cannot do this traveling of his own agency. A symbol does not have sovereignty; it is what hegemony makes of it. This is what happened to the gaucho when he was co-opted by the government for use as a national legend.

[79] Jorge Luis Borges, "Fundación mítica de Buenos Aires", in *Fervor de Buenos Aires*. 1923. http://www.literatura.us/borges/fervor.html.

nature acts against the conception of time as a line that goes irretrievably into the future, casting off events that can never again be experienced. Contrary to this, *Carriego* is full of characters that exist eternally and locations that defy definition in terms of modernity. "Days that were all the same"[80] can only be described in terms of the relativity of spatial existence, not in terms of time passing. And Borges does go on to refer to spatial features as "moments".[81] This necessitates an understanding of the overlap between space and time, in that spatially discrepant locations can be reconciled through sharing time and temporally distant moments can be unified by space. When Borges describes a particular physical space as a moment, he identifies it temporally and acknowledges that it can never be the same in the chronology of time passing, but also creates it as an accessible moment in a layer of time. The creation of overlap between space and time allows one to flow indistinguishably into another in a kind of mode of eternity.

However, the simple fact that Borges has established a way of "proving" eternity and avoiding the trap of purely linear time does not *disprove* chronology. The eternity of Borges is not the eternity found at the end of capitalist or religious teleologies, nor can it be said to directly negate these categories. As Donnelly points out, "Time is not temporally successive and...temporal succession is not unreal"[82] in Borges' works. In his iterations of Messianic time, Borges does not contradict historical

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[80] Borges, *Carriego*, 42. "Fig trees cast shadows over walls; the little window balconies of ordinary people opened onto days that were all the same; the forlorn notes of the peanut vendor's horn explored the twilight. Atop the humbleness of houses it was not uncommon to see masonry urns, crowned aridly with a cactus, a sinister plant which in the universal sleep of other plants seems to belong to a nightmare zone..."

[81] Borges, *Carriego,* 42. "There were also happy moments: the patio grapevine, the local tough's strutting step, the rooftop balustrade with the sky showing through."

[82] Donnelly, "Mirror", 79.

time but expands upon it, "[revealing] linear history as a performance of time, but not time itself."[83] If linear time is a strip of paper, the temporalities found in *Carriego* are a Mobius strip: not a negation of the existence or reality of the paper, but a contortion of it, a warping. If, as Mitchell says, modernity "renders history singular by organizing the multiplicity of global events into a single narrative", then Borges restores multiplicity, by way of a displacement or staging of difference.[84] This is not to the detriment of the narrative of modernity, it is merely a complication--the establishment of paradox within a time frame that demands absolute objectiveness regarding the unitary passage of time.

[83] Donnelly, "Mirror", 82
[84] Mitchell, *Modernity,* 9.

Time and nostalgia

Nostalgia, the sentiment of longing for a different time or place—or, more accurately, longing for a different experience of a time or place, is the point at which time and intention meet. Borges is not often thought of as a writer who conveys a nostalgic point of view; in many contexts he is read from a dry and philosophical perspective. However, in his restless rewriting, his seeking of new and different pasts, his preoccupation with the simple violence of the knife fight, and his obsession with his ancestry, a different kind of nostalgia can be seen. "What was Palermo like then, and how beautiful would it really have been?"[85] This question, which he proposes in the prologue, offers a glimpse of understanding into Borges' intention in rewriting the past with a certain degree of sentimentality. Time, to Borges, is a literary game, and its *feeling*, "el sentir del tiempo", is a piece on the gameboard.

I. "El truco" and the game of time

In the section "El truco", which is an addendum to chapter 4, "Song of the Neighborhood", Borges expands upon the card game "truco"—a complicated game of deception and bluffing. Within this addendum, Borges further elucidates his relationship with and perception of time. Thomas McEnaney, who wrote about Borges' poem "El truco", speaks to the way that Borges presents the game as a "particular aesthetic response to the historico-political…Borges does not merely represent politics as playtime. Rather, the historical allusion allows the Argentine poet to construct an aesthetic system whose non-linear intertextuality provides a unique and specifically

[85] Borges, *Carriego*, 33.

literary model for acknowledging the past's intervention in the present."[86] A key aspect of time in *Carriego* is its malleability: time not existing as a chronological entity but as the experience of a person or people. Specifically, in his dealings with past events, Borges emphasizes that which is eternal, namely memories (images, events, places, and sounds) and myths. It is an eternity in which the past overlaps with the present by existing simultaneously in a subjective way (layered time can be experienced as such, even if it cannot be described within the context of chronological history). Truco is the embodiment of this vision of time; it is a manifestation of the vehicle by which vestiges of the past, alternate timelines, are accessed.

"The dealer shuffles these little pictures [cards]"[87] and in doing so, somehow shuffles images of time and space. When the game begins the players are transported to a different world: "the players, turned suddenly into Argentines of old, cast off their everyday selves. A different self, an almost ancestral and vernacular self, takes over the game."[88] Borges' description implies a direct transformation of present into past. The players become cultural archetypes, inhabiting the personalities of those who were "buried in the game".[89] Truco is somehow at the heart of what is most Argentine, and thus carries all of the layers of the time that has past and all the people who have lived to play it. It is a game riddled with tradition, or Borges might say that the game *is* tradition: it is Rosas, it is the tango, it is

[86] Thomas McEnaney, "In the Cards: Prophecy and the Gamble of Language in Borges' 'El truco'", *Variaciones Borges* 22 (2006), 141.
[87] Borges, *Carriego*, 109.
[88] Borges, *Carriego*, 109.
[89] Borges, *Carriego*, 112.

> evocative as an anniversary. Milongas performed around a campfire or in a saloon, the jollification at wakes, the threatening boasts of the followers of Roca or Tejedor, escapades in the brothels of Junin Street or in their progenitor on Temple Street are the human sources of the game. Truco is a good singer, especially when winning; it sings down at the far end of a street in the small hours from lighted bathrooms.[90]

The chapter on truco is representative of an essential tenet of the way Borges portrays time. It is that "time is an illusion".[91] He is not trying to say that time is not passing and things are not changing, but that it is like a veil that can be lifted to reveal a world that, in a chronological sense, is long gone. Truco is a way to restore the idea of the past as a whole, an all-encompassing world, and it removes the fragmented façade of modernity. Nostalgia is the vehicle by which surviving images are accessed.

This recalls the importance of memory as a subjective vehicle for the past to travel into the present—in other words, memory as the facilitator of what can loosely be called Messianic time. The entire book is written in memories, both Borges' memories and memories he has constructed for Carriego in order to place him into context. Beyond this, Borges begins to extend his memory-visions into the realm of the universal—memories shared by all Argentines. It is in creating collective memories that Borges begins to explore the sentiment of nostalgia.

II. Nostalgia

Though there can be individual and group nostalgia (and there is a wide overlap between these two iterations), arguably the more forceful and impactful nostalgia is that which is shared: with a friend, with family--or with a whole nation. In *Carriego*, Borges

[90] Borges, *Carriego,* 110.
[91] Borges, *Carriego,* 112.

lavishes paragraph after paragraph on the creation of images of the past which, if they do not resonate personally with the reader, may resonate culturally (or vice versa). For example, in the opening chapter he pays homage to a visceral symbol of both country life and time past: "Specific reference comes down to us of a 'dappled mule grazing in the pastures of Palermo, at the edge of this city.' I see the animal absurdly clear and tiny in the far reaches of time, and I have no desire to add anything to it. Let this solitary mule suffice."[92] In a psychological study on nostalgia and imagery conducted by William Havlena and Susan Holak, it was found that the consensus established nostalgic images to be those which 1) were black and white, 2) were clearly identifiable as belonging to the past, and 3) which carried a sense of the duration of memory, or the quality that it would last "forever".[93]

The Buenos Aires illustrated by Borges in *Carriego* fits all three of these findings. The idea of black and white, beyond its associations with antique photographs, has the overarching connotation of simplicity. Black and white is often paralleled with a view of the world as evil and good. Borges' Buenos Aires is a city in a book of pop-ups where the mundane is either glossed over or exaggerated to mythical proportions. This mythologizing simplification is exemplified throughout the first chapter, "Palermo,

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[92] Borges, *Carriego,* 38.

[93] William J Havlena and Susan L Holak, "Exploring Nostalgia Imagery Through the Use of Consumer Collages", *Advances in Consumer Research* 23 (1996), 35-42.
"Certain image characteristics appear to convey nostalgia. Several subjects mentioned that black-and-white photographs seemed more nostalgic than color images. Here, the feeling of age was the primary determinant and was not linked to any emotional reaction or attachment to the subject of the image. The participants also noted explicitly that age was a criterion for an image to represent nostalgia. One group limited nostalgia to objects that were between twenty and forty years old or were associated with that period, although these products might still be available or people might still be alive. The relevance of childhood as a period for nostalgic memory was described by one woman in talking about the inclusion of the word "Forever" in her collage: "I put that in, I think, because a lot of the things that we remember as a child just keep going on for us forever, at least in our lifetime they are meaningful to us." (36)

Buenos Aires", but is particularly pronounced in a fragment in which Borges describes, in flashes, the "centuries-long encroachment of Buenos Aires upon Palermo":

> The best approach, if we were to adopt the techniques of filmmaking, would be to present a continuous flow of vanishing images: a mule train laden with wine casks, the less tame animals blinkered; a long, flat stretch of water on which a few willow leaves float; a phantasmal wandering soul high on his horse, fording flooded streams; the open range, where absolutely nothing happens; the relentless hoofprints of a herd of cattle being driven to the Northside stockyards; a cowhand (silhouetted against the dawn) who dismounts from his spent horse to slit its broad throat; smoke from a fire dispersing into the air.[94]

Not only does this simplify a "centuries-long" process into a series of evocative and poignant images, it also removes the complexity of human characters in favor of natural and animal symbolism: the two figures of people that appear in this excerpt are that of a "wandering soul" and a "silhouette". If one were to research the foundation of Buenos Aires and Palermo, a history of colonization, invasion, and violence would be found, but Borges chooses not to portray this aspect. To analyze this given the classical criticism of nostalgic histories, it can be seen as an "abdication of personal responsibility, a guilt-free homecoming".[95] However, it can also be seen as a method of establishing history in a way that is archetypally memorable: compacting timeless time into a few relatable images so it can be repurposed as a national symbol in order to hold the place of the past which came before modernity. Yet Borges, with the multiplicity of timelines that he proposes, does more than create an archetype of the past. He also establishes points in time that are always accessible from any other moment in time—the previously discussed Messianic moments--which seem to relate to the present in an

[94] Borges, *Carriego*, 38.
[95] Svetlana Boym, "Nostalgia and Its Discontents", *Hedgehog Review* 9.2 (2007), 9.

emotionally charged dialogue. The affective aspect of nostalgia has to do with a subjectivization or idealization of points in time that are distant in the context of linear chronology.

a) Restorative and reflective nostalgia

Nostalgia has been theorized in a variety of ways, but the most applicable explanations and examples come from authors who have examined the emergence and function of the sentiment in relation to modernities both in Europe and in places colonized by Europe. Two iterations of the nostalgic sentiment have been proposed by Svetlana Boym in *The Future of Nostalgia*, a study of nostalgia as a tool for reclamation and recreation. Beyond being simply a desire to return to a lost homeland or, perhaps more accurately, a temporally distant homeland, Boym proposes that there are two kinds of nostalgia that are expressed in the same "frames of reference" but are not used to the same effect.[96] Because nostalgia involves a subjective perception and presentation of time, it follows that there would be different tendencies and results associated with different nostalgias.[97]

Restorative nostalgia, according to Boym, is about the reconstruction and reclamation of the "lost home".[98] This is the nostalgia involved in the formulation of

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[96] Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York: Basic Books, 2001), 49.

[97] I would add the disclaimer that Boym studies nostalgia in the context of Europe and thus these iterations can be used only theoretically in reference to Latin America. The potential problematics that arise from applying concepts originating in and referring to Europe will not be fully discussed in this paper, but it is essential to be aware that no expression of temporality can be transplanted directly. I do not intend to do this; I simply wish to use some of the framework proposed by Boym to complicate the meaning of a tendency I have seen in *Carriego.*

[98] Boym, *Nostalgia*, 41. "Restorative nostalgia puts emphasis on *nostos* and proposes to rebuild the lost home and patch up memory gaps."

nationalistic fervor found in countries that have lost previous power or glory;[99] it relies on symbols and myths and claims to be the truth. "Restorative nostalgia has no use for the signs of historical time—patina, ruins, cracks, imperfections".[100] That is, the process of reunification with the object of nostalgia requires a memory untainted by human error. Restorative nostalgia is a kind of "cure" for the "ache of temporal distance and displacement"[101] that creates temporal continuity and so brings the sufferer of nostalgia closer to the lost subject. The object of restorative nostalgia is to bring back the past, either on a small scale or a large one--such as a nation.

The idea of restorative nostalgia also appears as a tool in anticipating and preventing a loss. It can be used as the "justification of empire"[102] or the feeling which leads to the establishment of violent and repressive regimes. The predictive nostalgia of a potential future loss of power results in a present strengthening of nationalism and political strictness, which are seen as preventative measures. Ian Duncanson states that this is a tendency in colonial areas, where the regime imposed over the precolonial society is always both reacting to homesickness (separation from the homeland) and attempting to thwart any potential future loss of power.[103]

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[99] This is seen in Wolfgang Schivelbusch's *The Culture of Defeat*, which examines the rise of nationalism in France, Germany, and the American South following their greatest defeats. The reaction to loss in these places was to rebuild a positive cultural narrative based on a rose-colored view of prior strength and prestige.

[100] Boym, *Nostalgia*, 45.

[101] Boym, *Nostalgia*, 44.

[102] Ian Duncanson, "Nostalgia and Empire", *Griffith Law Review* 21 (2012), 24.

[103] Duncanson, "Empire", 24. "Nostalgia for a misty, lost world purged of doubt represents a particular sentimental elision of the frequently brutal racist experiences of local populations here. As Chakravarty writes of the Raj, 'imperialism, by virtue of its very nature was insular, racist and arrogant', 'the empire in India had a surly and unpleasant image', softened in European memories by 'warm accounts of the **high noon** of empire as well as soulful descriptions of the interplay of light and shadow during its twilight years'.9 In one of nostalgia's meanings, then (the more popular meaning, perhaps) it helps to create a kindly if melancholic retrospect on a past - which on closer examination, or seen from the perspective of

Reflective nostalgia, on the other hand, is preoccupied not with the reclamation of what was lost but the memory of loss itself. It is about "individual and cultural memory" and is the realm of those "who resist the pressure of external efficiency and take sensual delight in the texture of time not measurable by clocks and calendars."[104] In contrast to restorative nostalgia, reflective nostalgia embraces the imperfections and the fragmentary aspect of human memory, because its office is with the personal (if not individual) experience of the passage of time. Because it emphasizes the phenomenological aspect of time, reflective nostalgia could be related to Messianic time. It deals with the mental space created by loss, but does not seek to reunite the two fragments by painting the past in simple, perfect, black-and-white terms. It is not unitary, and it is an experience of the people as opposed to being a tool of nationalism, used by those in power to achieve a political or cultural goal.

Both of these conceptualizations of nostalgia are useful in analyzing Borges and his game of time. With his vivid and loving accounts of the pampas, the orillas, and the violent tenor[105] of life during the period of Buenos Aires' development, it seems that he is trying to bring the past directly to the reader: not just as literature, but as a

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the other of the vision, is ethically dubious- and casts an acceptably positive spell on oppressors. In the imperial context, it also signals a national grief for lost greatness."

[104] Boym, *Nostalgia*, 49.

[105] J Huizinga opens his book *The Waning of the Middle Ages* with a chapter titled "The Violent Tenor of Life", which details many of the ways in which medieval life still had "the colours of a fairy-story" (7). All emotions, says Huizinga, were stronger due to the fact that medieval life involved a direct conflict of man vs. environment and man vs. superiors. Huizinga's arguably nostalgic portrayal of life in the middle ages is yet another example of the way that pre-capitalistic, pre-"modern" life is idealized, even mythologized. After all, how many archetypal stories do we have of kings, queens, and courtly life? How often is this time period romanticized to the point of losing historical accuracy? The legendary aspect of medieval life can be attributed at least in part to the fact that it has been placed into a different realm of time. Borges similarly presents the Buenos Aires of Carriego as belonging to a different, slower temporality--that of the past. He states this in the second footnote of the first chapter

constructed memory in moments of Messianic time. But what sets these moments apart from the "thousands of days no longer known to memory"?[106] Borges idealizes the past and condenses the aspects which form the stage of *Carriego* into condensed utopian moments: despite the fact that he has no reservations in stating the poverty of Palermo, its plague of criminals and the violence which took place under Rosas, he lavishes attention on the (sometimes grotesquely) picturesque and the archetypal. This coexistence of beauty and ugliness, both presented in loving detail, is seen in passages such as this one:

> To the west ran dirt alleys that grew progressively poorer in the direction of the setting sun. Here and there a railroad shed or a shallow pit where agave grew or an almost whispering breeze abruptly heralded the pampa. Or perhaps one of those small unplastered houses...[107]

Borges not only constructs an image of the environment, but he also paints the characters who populated his Palermo, telling their stories. The influence of the literary pantheon from his childhood[108] is clear:

> The hero of this reckless Odyssey was the classic gaucho on the run from the law, this time betrayed by a character who was a vindictive cripple but who had no equal with the guitar. The story, the bit of it I have salvaged, tells how the hero managed to escape from jail; how he was compelled to wreak his vengeance in the space of a single night; how he vainly searched for the traitor; how, as he roamed the moonlit streets, the exhausted wind brought him snatches of the guitar; how he followed this trail through the labyrinths and the shifting of the wind; how he came to the far-off doorway where the traitor was playing his guitar; how, elbowing his way through the onlookers, he lifted the cripple on his

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[106] Borges, *Carriego,* 41.
[107] Borges, *Carriego*, 45.
[108] "…those who populated my days…were Stevenson's blind buccaneer…, and the traitor who left his friend behind on the moon, and the time traveler…, and the genie imprisoned for centuries in a Solomonic jar, and the Veiled Prophet of Khurasan…" Borges, *Carriego*, 33.

> knife; how he walked away in a daze, leaving behind, dead and silenced, both informer and telltale guitar.[109]

The Palermo of his childhood imagination is the construction of a boy who grew up aware of the legends regarding life outside the fenced-in house, but innocent to its reality. The way this is expressed in the original Spanish is particularly telling: "Cómo fue aquel Palermo, o cómo hubiera sido hermoso que fuera?" he asks ("What was Palermo like then, and how beautiful would it really have been?").[110] The use of pluperfect subjunctive expresses a feeling of doubt, and furthermore implies the ending of the possibility for something that never really was. This becomes important when relating Borges' tendency to rewrite history to an evocation of nostalgia based on personal experience.

The "past" (those moments in time which are being accessed) is still contemporary in Borges' Palermo; it is in the air, the people, and the buildings. Considering this, and the fact that Borges already established that his setting is based on imagination, we see the use of applying the concept of restorative nostalgia. The recollection of archetypal imagery is backed by an undercurrent of very pointedly designed imagery that frequently highlights the advent of the institutions of modernity.

> I have led the reader to imagine a vast open area covering many blocks, and although the corrals themselves disappeared in the 1870s, that image typifies the place, which was always taken up with large properties--the cemetery, the Rivadavia Hospital, the prison, the market, the municipal cattle pens, the present day wool-scouring sheds...all surrounded by the abject misery of downtrodden lives.[111]

[109] Borges, *Carriego*, 44-45.
[110] Borges, *Carriego*, 33
[111] Borges, *Carriego*, 47.

Here is an example of the way Borges juxtaposes what could be considered "pre-modern"[112] Palermo and its incarnation as a developed area. It is an attempt to create continuity, thus uniting the past and the present not in a flow of time, but in a non-linear meeting of temporally dissimilar locations. This is not the synchronicity of the non-synchronous as described by Ernst Bloch; it is a celebration of that very layering and the coexistence of multiple non-convergent but mutually accessible temporal spaces.[113] First he states the way he has *directed* the reader to imagine a "vast open area" and continues by saying that "that image typifies the place". This is paradoxical, because "the corrals themselves disappeared in the 1870s." The superimposition of an image from the past over what presently exists is, as Borges would say, "proof" both of eternity and of the power of nostalgia to allow for the coexistence of these two times. Not only does he use present tense, suggesting that the image lives on, he also intersperses the edifices of the past with those that still exist--such as the "wool-scouring sheds" and the cemetery.

Another example of the juxtaposition of past and present is found in the previously cited introduction to Chapter IV, "Song of the Neighborhood."[114] This passage speaks to the development of nationalistic fervor as a way to mark an era, or the feeling of an era ("…the astrological jubilation of the centenary of Argentine independence was already as dead as its miles and miles of blue bunting…"[115], and beyond this, hearkens again to Didi-Huberman's idea of survival, especially in the

[112] I use this term not as a value judgment or as the assessment that a place needs to change, but rather as a description of the nature of the infrastructure of a particular place at a particular time.

[114] Found on p. 32 of this thesis and page 82 of *Evaristo Carriego*.
[115] Borges, *Carriego*, 82.

context of nostalgia. The existence of indelible cracks in the façade of the modern allows for enduring moments that carry the past into the present. "Admitting that the present bears the mark of multiple pasts means, above all, to allow for the indestructibility of an imprint of time, or times, on the forms proper to our present life."[116] Borges highlights the ways the past punctures the present, sometimes appearing even as a dead body: "...local toughs still tangled with each other, and now and then a man's face got marked up or a dead hoodlum would be found at dawn, contemptuous, with a slashed belly."[117] The surviving image of the past still manifests as the knife fights of the *compadrito* who kept the *culto del coraje* alive. This enduring liveliness of the past could be considered anachronistic, but Borges stands to argue that the very notion of anachronism is flawed: if something is happening in the moment, it is present, regardless of what era it appears to characterize.

This excerpt, which explodes with local imagery and neatly presents the haphazard existence of enduring traditions and habits between the cracks of modernity, fits Boym's description of restorative nostalgia as a method of addressing the "wholeness and continuity"[118] of history which puts at ease the sufferer of nostalgia. The fabrication of a linear flow reassures the sufferer that time is whole, and makes fragments into a collage of archetypal images. In this case, the nostalgia felt is the dissociation that results from the fragmentation of eternity (or homogeneity) into unitary time, which manifests as the thin façade of difference between past and present. Modernity resulted in the bounding of boundless time, spatially indicated by the

[116] Didi-Huberman, "Surviving", 63.
[117] Borges, *Carriego*, 82.
[118] Boym, *Nostalgia*, 45.

"haphazard centuries-long encroachment of Buenos Aires upon Palermo, which was at that time little more than an ill-defined patch of marshy ground in the hinterland."[119] Much of Borges' staging of Carriego's life and works is preoccupied with the juxtaposition of the pre-historic, pre-modern space of Palermo with the advent of technology and institutions. This is both a temporal and spatial wound, and nostalgia serves to restore continuity and create a window through which the past and the periphery are accessible.

Restoration of the past in any form, including accessing it through memory, involves playing with modernity and its temporalities. Phenomenological time, the framework of nostalgia, involves rapid movement in various temporal directions. This experience contrasts with calendrical time, as it defies unitary progressive succession. The contrast between the experience of the passage of time and the supposed reality of its existence outside the sphere of feeling causes cognitive dissonance, confusion at not knowing what is real. This is a fundamental aspect of nostalgia: making sense of time in a way contrary to the unitary measurement of the hegemony; accessing memories in such a way that they become eternal, mythic. Nostalgia could be described as an emotional tool of time-travel. It is the term given to phenomenological time-travel within the frame of reference of modernity, which functions on an implicit belief in the truth of historical time. Nostalgia is a coping mechanism implemented almost universally in societies that have experienced radical breaks in cultural continuity, such as wars, violent colonization, and collective traumas. "The nostalgic desires to obliterate history and turn it into a private or collective mythology, to revisit time like space,

[119] Borges, *Carriego*, 38.

refusing to surrender to the irreversibility of time that plagues the human condition."[120] It is a denial of the passage of time, but also an acceptance: by characterizing nostalgia, the chronology of time is reinforced, because otherwise an individual experience of the past would be simply described as an experience of "now" and would not be seen as symptomatic of separation from a moment in time.

The idea that Borges is creating continuity by breaking linearity, creating access points into Messianic moments located in layers buried deeply in linear time, suggests the need for a reconsideration of what *restorative* means in this context. In historical time, restoration is a re-placement of moments into the temporal locations that they correspond to: namely, past, present, or future. The sentiment of nostalgia can serve to reinforce the distance between past, present, and future on a linear chronology. However, if Borges is using nostalgia to create continuity, yet also expanding upon linear time by breaking it into a multiplicity of temporalities, then the nostalgia expressed is the emotional reformulation of the non-historical non-modern space of Buenos Aires in the late 1800s and early 1900s. More than that, it is an attempt to reconcile that non-modern space with the ethos of modernity. The non-modern is seen in fragmented vestiges of the past, very alive but no longer whole. As seen throughout the book, the formulation of a linear narrative out of two disjoint timelines often serves only to create a sense of deeper fragmentation and dissimilarity, which is then fabricated again into a narrative that is clearly a façade. It is a cinematic unification that relies on imagery and the projection of supposedly collective understanding of the

[120] Boym, *Nostalgia*, XV.

myths of the city, belying the dissonance of contemporaneity. I refer again to the passage in which Borges describes history as though it were a film montage:

> The best approach, if we were to adopt the techniques of filmmaking, would be to present a continuous flow of vanishing images: a mule train laden with wine casks, the less tame animals blinkered; a long, flat stretch of water on which a few willow leaves float; a phantasmal wandering soul high on his horse, fording flooded streams; the open range, where absolutely nothing happens; the relentless hoofprints of a herd of cattle being driven to the Northside stockyards; a cowhand (silhouetted against the dawn) who dismounts from his spent horse to slit its broad throat; smoke from a fire dispersing into the air.[121]

To Borges, reality is fragmentary: it is "a stream of flashes punctuated by ironies, surprises, and portents as strange as surprises."[122] This reality is a product of the multiplicity of timelines that complicate the modern condition. Unity, however, can be found *within* individual images, which can reclaim a type of eternity in which phenomenological time stops. These moments, which exist as fragments but provide wholeness, are those which nostalgia enables access to.

The "reclamation" (and I say this with quotations because reclamation relies on the truth of loss based on chronological progression, which I argue cannot be taken for granted) of past moments through detailed and archetypal constructions of visceral *spaces*, akin to memories, reinforces the idea that linearity can be subverted through subjective perception. Thus nostalgia is not only a feeling, but also a mode of expressing an experience of time.

The paradox of nostalgia serving a double function must be addressed as well. Within historical time, nostalgia is an illness that prevents the sufferer from living in the

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[121] Borges, *Carriego,* 38.
[122] Borges, *Carriego*, 38.

present, reducing him or her to a life of fantasies.[123] However, in the alternate timelines constructed by Borges, nostalgia appears as a proof of the circular and eternal nature of time. The same moment can be lived subjectively over and over, repeating itself in endless circles, while at the same time the "now that flows" continues to make history.[124] Nostalgia is the affective tool which enables the experience of wholeness and eternity, isolating moments outside linear time which have slipped through the cracks of modernity and still contain pieces of time lost to a historical chronology.

[123] Boym, *Nostalgia*, XIV. "In the seventeenth century, nostalgia was considered to be a curable disease, akin to the common cold...By the twenty-first century, the passing ailment turned into the incurable modern condition."

[124] Boethius: Nunc fluens facit tempus, nunc stans facit aeternitatum. (The now that flows makes time, the now that stands makes eternity.)

Conclusion

I. Recapitulation: The significance of the connections between modernity, time, and nostalgia

Modernity is a conceptual framework that describes a particular way of establishing infrastructure (cities and transportation systems), economics (capital-based economies and massive industry), and culture (a devaluing of traditional or indigenous expression in favor of cosmopolitan European styles). Because of the way it is structured, it results in value judgments that are based on a supposedly inevitable teleology called progress, in which everything eventually acquires the trappings of the "modern". Modernity, the state of being modern, relies on the continual renewal of categories which facilitates the illusion of an eternal present. Within *Evaristo Carriego,* modernity manifests overtly as the city of Buenos Aires with its institutions, buildings, streets, and the general rapidity of life. This book was written under the guise of biography in order to chronicle the era in which Palermo, then part of the outskirts of Buenos Aires, was in between pampas and city (both spatially and in terms of temporal development).

The teleology of modernity has become so internalized with globalization and the spread of capitalism that it often overruns alternate timelines and ways of being, for example, the *culto de coraje* which Borges references in describing the ways the outer slums *were* before Carriego "rewrote" them. The unitary and normalizing effect of progress—that is, its inevitable ordering of time onto a chronological scale of inferior past to superior future--forces the narratives of subjective and non-capitalist time into a peripheral, almost invisible position. These temporalities, which are counternarratives to

modernity, involve the legitimizing of nonlinear movement both forwards and backwards in time, as well as the expression of eternity. Eternity also subverts historical time, because it defies the notion of arrival at an endpoint.

Borges' text also shows the temporality of modernity: though the structure and ethos of the book is fragmentary, it highlights the weight of the "forward motion" which pulled peripheral areas like Palermo in the 1800s into the cosmopolitan whirlwind of the city—the future. This temporality is countered by eternity, which appears as moments that exist outside the frame of the passage of time. Eternity takes the form of repetition, which denies temporal distance and establishes sameness between moments that are separated on a linear timeline. There is an aspect of recollection to these moments, which are called into the present by mentally and emotionally accessing a time past.

Nostalgia has more than one function, as it is both an individual and a universal experience. While it can be used to reclaim the past, or reflect on it, I argue that nostalgia could actually be a tool for breaking the linearity of historical time. In the context of Benjamin's ideas of homogeneous empty time and Messianic time, nostalgia has the potential to be seen as the emotional tool which allows moments of Messianic time to puncture through the meaninglessness of homogenous empty time. Through recollections and moments in which the past inhabits the present, in the way that Borges describes Carriego repeating himself in the daily patterns of all of us, or the way that truco players "take on" their ancestral, archetypal roles.

The articulation of nostalgia as a vehicle is dependent on the role of time as a medium which can be traveled through in any direction. Borges allows for this

directional mobility within the context of modernity, which demands unitary forward motion (progress). *Evaristo Carriego* is unique among the works of Borges because it openly relies on the city of Buenos Aires as a structure. Many of Borges' later works lose this vernacular connection and take place in conceptual or imagined realms. *Carriego* allows a reader of Borges to see the national context in which he was formed as a writer and thinker, and to explore the beginnings of what would become complex, "universal" themes in his later writings. It can be seen as a foundational history both of Borges' body of work and of himself as a person. His articulations of time and modernity provide a lens through which emerging postcolonial thought can be viewed, complicating the dichotomies of colonialism and modernity. *Evaristo Carriego* provides a spatiotemporal model that weaves together fragmented pieces of history with contemporary ideologies, all under the guise of biography. It is a mirror image of an imaginary history of Buenos Aires that presents a linear vision of time and the advent of progress, but also opens the door for a multiplicity of subjectively experienced timelines.

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