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Becoming Menard? Geopolitical Readings and the Authorial Subject in Ricardo Piglia

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ABSTRACT

This article discusses Ricardo Piglia's extensive engagement with 'Pierre Menard, autor del *Quijote*' in his critical and fictional work, examining the ways in which Piglia politicizes Borges's celebrated story. Building upon Piglia's well-documented attempt to reconcile Borges with left-wing criticism, the article engages in close dialogue with Robin Fiddian's *Postcolonial Borges: Argument and Artistry* (2017) to elaborate the geopolitical significance of Piglia's novel *Respiración artificial* (1980) and his wider oeuvre. In order to do so, the article pays particular attention to the narratorial strategies that Piglia deploys in the novel, and the literary alter-ego he creates to carry the authorial subject into the work, analysing the unique position Piglia assigns to Borges's story within the Argentine canon. Thus it will be proposed that Piglia effectively re-orders Argentine literary history from the perspective of 'Pierre Menard' to augment the political significance of the story. In developing these arguments, it will ultimately be shown that Piglia seeks to become the titular character, reproducing his literary experiments further to develop the postcolonial critique contained in Borges's original story.

KEYWORDS


Jorge Luis Borges; Ricardo Piglia; 'Pierre Menard, autor del *Quijote*'; *Respiración artificial*; postcolonialism; narration

Introduction

El Quijote [...] me interesa profundamente, pero no me parece ¿cómo lo diré? inevitable. [...] El Quijote es un libro contingente, el Quijote es innecesario. Puedo premeditar su escritura, puedo escribirlo, sin incurrir en una tautología.

(Borges 1990, 447–448)

Considering the incredible project which he sets out to realize, exactly reproducing the text of the *Quijote*, it is more than a little surprising that Pierre Menard claims within Borges's story that the source material is 'unnecessary'. As has often been discussed, both literary history and Menard's own writing would seem to suggest otherwise.¹ The danger when setting out to write an essay on Borges's masterful tale over eighty years after its first publication, however, is very much that the resultant text may be unnecessary and the author may fall into tautology. The problem, of course, is that throughout the intervening years Borges's story has been subject to intense and continuous theorizing,

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debate, discussion, and analysis.² It can be hard to believe that there is anything new left to say about the story. Nonetheless, the possible advantage for contemporary critics is that they confront a problem analogous to that which Borges himself sought to overcome: how to continue writing when it seems as if everything has already been written? Testament to the brilliance of ‘Pierre Menard, autor del *Quijote*’ (and Borges’s wider oeuvre) is both that literary critics found within it the means by which to reconceptualize the very foundations of textual analysis, and that it created ‘una de las preguntas insoslayables de la literatura argentina contemporánea: ¿cómo escribir, o cómo seguir escribiendo, después de Borges?’ (Contreras 2002, 271). From a certain perspective, this too, is the question which the present essay seeks to address.

Of those contemporary Argentine authors who have taken up the challenge of writing ‘after’ Menard, I focus here on Ricardo Piglia precisely because his engagement with the text is particularly overt and direct.³ Moreover, as I will go on to argue, Piglia’s engagement with Borges’s story effectively synthesizes certain ‘post-modern’ approaches to ‘Pierre Menard’ which follow thinkers such as Roland Barthes in ‘The Death of the Author’ (1967) and Michel Foucault in ‘What is an Author?’ (1969) in questioning the essence and function of the authorial subject, and more recent ‘postcolonial’ interpretations which focus on the geopolitics at work in the tale. In his critical analysis of the texts produced by Pierre Menard, Borges’s rather pretentious frame narrator proposes that ‘es lícito ver en el Quijote “final” una especie de palimpsesto, en el que deben traslucirse los rastros — tenues pero no indescifrables — de la “previa” escritura de nuestro amigo’. Nonetheless, he also laments that ‘sólo un segundo Pierre Menard, invirtiendo el trabajo del anterior, podría exhumar y resucitar esas Troyas . . .’ (1990, 450). In examining Piglia’s artistic recreation of ‘Pierre Menard’, I suggest that he essentially ‘inverts’ Menard’s labour, though not with the intention of uncovering the traces he has left within Cervantes’s ‘original’. Where Menard surprisingly eschews his contemporaries’ political arguments for pacifism in order to extol the supremacy of arms over letters (Borges 1990, 448–449), I will propose that Piglia first reproduces Menard’s literary experiment precisely to reinvigorate and reinforce his contemporaries’ arguments in favour of revolution. Thereafter I will propose that Piglia, through his literary alter-ego Emilio Renzi, critically examines the text of ‘Pierre Menard’ to rediscover the social function of literature following the defeat of that same revolutionary project. Ultimately, I will propose that Piglia draws on his friendship with revolutionaries and his own political beliefs in order to situate the story specifically within the geopolitics of contemporary class struggle, and thus that he effectively mobilizes the Borgesian inheritance in order to become Pierre Menard.

Macedonio, Borges, and Plagiarism

Empecé a ser citado por Jorge Luis Borges con tan poca timidez de encomios que por el terrible riesgo a que se expuso con esta vehemencia, comencé yo a ser el autor de lo mejor que él había producido.

(Fernández 1993, xli)

In an anecdote often invoked in discussion of ‘Pierre Menard, autor del *Quijote*’, Borges granted the story a special place in his own life story. As he describes the event, recently

bereaved by the death of his father, a seemingly innocuous cut to the head led to septicaemia, a brush with death, and the fear that he would never write again. Thus Borges decided to try something he claimed never to have attempted before and composed the story, radically changing the trajectory of his life and work in the process (Borges 1971, 170–171). Of course, as numerous commentators note, this was *not* Borges's first short story and, in 'El acercamiento a Almotásim' (1936), he had already composed a tale in the form of a commentary on an inexistent book (see, for example Boldy 2009, 33–34; Premat 2009, 71). Despite the 'truth' of Borges's mythical account, then, it seems that 'Pierre Menard' marks a crucial turning point in his creative self-fashioning *as* an author. The story, the character, and the authorial figure which Borges created, however, were heavily indebted to Macedonio Fernández. As Julio Premat notes, 'el personaje de Pierre Menard, el programa literario que subyace en el texto así como el uso agudo de la afirmación paradójica, mucho le deben a Macedonio [Fernández], ese escritor que, como Menard, tendría una escasa "obra visible"' (2009, 72). Certainly the men became intimate friends, and Borges (much like Menard's commentator) helped to ensure that the elder writer held a mythological presence in the history of Argentine letters despite the fact he scarcely published. In his reading of the story, Premat thus goes on to argue that, in 'Pierre Menard',

Borges transforma la negatividad macedoniana en creatividad, exponiendo la impotencia de escritura ("todo ha sido escrito") en cimiento de una innovación radical, es decir, probando que se puede seguir escribiendo aunque se haya llegado "después". En Menard se inventa otra manera de ser autor, gracias a un mito personal que desmonta la aporía de la creación moderna, despejando el camino para una obra sin parangón en la literatura argentina. (2009, 73-74)

For his part, Ricardo Piglia engaged with 'Pierre Menard, autor del *Quijote*' in an extensive and intensive manner throughout his career. Yet it is also the case that, as Tomás Abraham phrases it, 'Macedonio [es] su modelo de escritor y de hombre. Su santo' (2004, 116). The tie that binds these various strands together for Piglia is ultimately the creative possibility of Borgesian plagiarism which becomes the revolutionary act at the centre of his literary concerns. In his postcolonial reading of Borges's 'Pierre Menard', Robin Fiddian discusses Piglia's engagement with the story at length through an analysis of his novel *Respiración artificial* (1980). Somewhat surprisingly, however, he overlooks the most direct reworking of 'Pierre Menard' in Piglia's oeuvre, namely, 'Homenaje a Roberto Arlt', published within the collection *Nombre falso* (1975). While it has now been discussed exhaustively within the existing literature, it is nonetheless useful briefly to outline Piglia's recreation of 'Pierre Menard' in his earlier story before preceding to discuss his later novel.

Borges, Arlt, and Revolution

In 'Homenaje a Roberto Arlt' (1994) Piglia claimed to have discovered an unpublished text by the Argentine author and reproduced it together with an introductory essay describing how he obtained the manuscript. While it has long since been established that the story was, in fact, a plagiarized copy of a story by Leonid Andreyev, the subterfuge was maintained for a considerable period and deceived several critics. Indeed, it served to confirm Piglia's theory that Arlt's literary style was largely derived from the poor Spanish

translations of Russian literature which he read. It is notable, however, that the book in which it was contained opened with a quotation from Borges attributed to Arlt and, against the prevailing trends in left-wing criticism at the time (which sought to displace the fantastic literature of the conservative Borges with the more socially engaged work of Arlt), Piglia utilized the Borgesian technique of erroneous attribution to effectively synthesize their contrasting literary projects (Berg 1998, 44; Speranza 2006, 266).⁴ In the process, Piglia also added an economic critique to the creative use of plagiarism promoted by Borges in 'Pierre Menard', emphasizing the violation of the laws governing private intellectual property that it implies.⁵ Expanding on this idea, Graciela Speranza traces the references to Marx and Proudhon in the text and invokes the theatre of Brecht in her analysis, while Bruno Bosteels closely analyses the story in light of Piglia's contemporaneous critical writing to uncover 'the invisible lineage of Brecht–Mao' (Bosteels 2003, 231; Speranza 2006). More recently, I have discussed the text in a similar way through Foucault's 'What is an Author?', although I erred in suggesting that the critical introduction was attributed to Piglia's alter-ego, Emilio Renzi (as we shall later see, the question of narrative voice is an important concern). While Renzi does appear in the text, he is cited in the footnotes as the editor of Arlt's letters. Thus he appears as the source of authority, while the act of plagiarism belongs to Piglia.

Nonetheless, I did highlight an element of postcolonial critique (and further indebtedness to Borges) in my discussion of 'Homenaje a Roberto Arlt' by citing Piglia's belief that, following Borges and Macedonio, Argentine literature became contemporaneous and 'in sync' with its North American and European counterparts (Geraghty 2019, 2, 10; Piglia 2016, 82–83, 172–73). Equally, by writing the history of Piglia's deception and its discovery, Speranza demonstrates that it represents an instance of the periphery deceiving the centre. As she notes, it was a US expert in Arlt who confirmed the authenticity of the story, and it was catalogued as such in major libraries in that country. Moreover, when Ellen McCracken revealed the true origin of the text in publication, it was claimed by María Eugenia Mudrovic to already be well known in Argentina (Speranza 2006, 259–62). For Edgardo Berg, the text rejected the geopolitical outlook promoted by dependency theory which he argues had been transferred into the cultural sphere through the celebration of revolutionary populism (1998, 44), while Bosteels makes it clear that Piglia was deeply immersed in the radical politics of Third World revolution inspired by Mao and that, through 'Homenaje a Roberto Arlt', he sought to unleash the revolutionary potential Piglia found in Borges's 'Pierre Menard'.⁶ When Piglia came to write *Respiración artificial*, however, his outlook was tempered by defeat. This later text was, of course, separated from the first by the military coup of 1976 which undoubtedly led to a faltering in Piglia's belief in an emancipatory and revolutionary politics.⁷ While both Bosteels and I discuss this radical break, the former mentions it only in relation to Piglia's earlier story, while I did not discuss the relationship between *Respiración artificial* and 'Pierre Menard' in detail. It is rather Fiddian who takes up this particular challenge. In his analysis, Fiddian focusses not on the technical correspondence between Piglia and Borges's respective texts, as has generally been the case with regard to 'Homenaje a Roberto Arlt', but rather on the characters' critical discussion of Borges's story. While Fiddian finds fault with this reading of 'Pierre Menard', it nonetheless provides the impetus for the deepening of his own post-colonial interpretation of the tale.

Much Ado about Narration

It is important to note that Piglia's *Respiración artificial* has a highly unusual structure. The novel's first part is largely constituted of an epistolary exchange between Emilio Renzi, a frustrated novelist, and his estranged uncle Marcelo Maggi. Maggi is attempting (and failing) to write the biography of his great-grandfather-in-law, Enrique Ossorio, who served as secretary to Manuel de Rosas yet betrayed both sides of the conflict between the *federales* and *unitarios* in Argentina's civil wars. In the novel's second part Renzi arrives in Entre Ríos province to visit his uncle, but finding that he is not there, instead engages his friend Vladimir Tardewski in a 'a Joycean peripatetic conversation' in which he espouses many of Piglia's own theories regarding the history of Argentine literature (Menton 1993, 126–27). While there is no doubt that Joyce is one source of inspiration for the nocturnal conversation, it is equally the case that it invokes Paul Valéry's *La Soirée avec Monsieur Teste* (1896) in which his literary doppelgänger, Edmond Teste, expresses the opinions and interests of his creator. As several critics have argued, Pierre Menard can also be considered a parody of Valéry's alter-ego (see, for example De Man 1964; Fishburn and Hughes 1990, 194), and it is during this part of the novel that Piglia elaborates his theory concerning 'Pierre Menard'.⁸

As Fiddian presents it, Piglia's theory contains two parts both attributed to his literary alter-ego, Renzi. The first proposes that key stages in the history of Argentina have been shaped by intellectual pairs comprising one illustrious and cultured European immigrant, and one less celebrated and successful Argentine, which has served to produce a colonial inferiority complex in the young nation despite its independence.⁹ Crucially, Borges has a central place within this accounting of Argentine history and is paired with the Polish émigré writer Witold Gombrowicz. Nonetheless, Fiddian proposes that Piglia 'has little interest in Gombrowicz and pairs Borges instead with an earlier writer of European extraction, Paul Groussac', leading to the second part of the theory (2017, 70–71). In this stage of the discussion, Renzi returns to Groussac's essay *Uné énigme littéraire* (misspelt in the text as *Un énigme littéraire*, as Fiddian notes) in which the French immigrant to Argentina and director of the National Library claims to have uncovered the identity of the 'true' author of Avellaneda's apocryphal *Quijote*. Renzi takes great delight in revealing that Groussac attributed the book to an author who died prior to the publication of the first part of Cervantes's text, and thus could not possibly be the author of the apocryphal second. Thus he argues that Groussac inadvertently invented 'la técnica del anacronismo deliberado y de las atribuciones erróneas' (Piglia 2008, 128). The phrase, as Fiddian notes, is drawn directly from 'Pierre Menard, autor del *Quijote*' and Renzi thus concludes that Borges's story is a wicked satire at Groussac's expense (2017, 72).

In Fiddian's excellent close-reading of this episode he identifies a deliberate mistake which Piglia includes in the text while elaborating this theory. Where Groussac actually claimed that the author of the apocryphal *Quijote* was the Valencian Jean Martí, Piglia names him instead José Martí, 'homónimo ajeno y del todo involuntario del héroe cubano' (Piglia 2008, 127), which adds further irony to Renzi's stinging critique of European intellectuals in Latin America who claim mastery of supposedly universal knowledge. Fiddian, however, dissents from this opinion, noting that:

In 'Paul Groussac', Borges defended the right of an immigrant figure to a place in the canon of Argentine writing, and this in spite of Groussac's legendary putdowns of Argentine historians whom he lambasted as professionally backward and lacking in all but the most basic of training. (2017, 177)

Fiddian subsequently returns to 'Groussac's declarations of sympathy for Spain in the war over Cuba in 1898', arguing that they 'marked him out as an Americanist in the hemispheric politics of the age' and thus that he prefigured José Enrique Rodó's denunciation of the USA as 'Calibanesque' (2017, 50). By paying particular attention to the frame narrator in 'Pierre Menard', noting and commenting at length on the 'fundamental mismatch between the language in which the narrative is written, i.e., Spanish, and the language in which the narrator [...] presumably formulates his thoughts [i.e., French]', Fiddian thus links the two texts and elaborates on the complex intercultural dynamics at play in 'Pierre Menard' through a postcolonial lens (2017, 68–69).

It is the close attention that Fiddian pays to language and the relationship between Borges and his pretentious French narrator in 'Pierre Menard', and to errors in Piglia's *Respiración artificial*, that allows him to produce this rather brilliant analysis of Borges's story. However, it is his *lack* of attention to language and the relationship between author and narrator in *Respiración artificial* that leads him to make several (un)fortunate errors in his reading of Piglia's novel. Not least among these is a tendency to read Renzi as a straightforward substitute for Piglia in the text, an error to which I am also prone, as Ben Bollig astutely observes (2019, 1364). Limiting himself to discussion of a solitary section of *Respiración artificial* it is perhaps inevitable that Fiddian does not engage in detailed discussion of the role of the multiple narrators the novel contains. Nonetheless, the question of who is speaking, of *who is in control of the narrative*, lies at the very heart of *Respiración artificial*. Indeed, when one of the minor characters in the book (an escaped Nazi hiding in Entre Ríos) comments on the theory of relativity, conflating and confusing it with the observer effect, he stumbles upon this core element of the novel. Attempting to delineate the etymology of the concept, he states 'relativa, de *relata*: narrar. El que narra, el narrador. *Narrator*, dice Maier, quiere decir: el que sabe' (Piglia 2008, 119). And in *Respiración artificial*, knowledge and control of the narrative are intimately connected through the fundamental question Piglia seeks to address: '¿cómo narrar los hechos reales?' (Piglia 2008, 19).

At the risk of being somewhat pedantic, then, it is useful to catalogue the various narrators who appear in Piglia's polyvocal novel. As previously intimated, the first part of the text contains an epistolary exchange between Renzi and Maggi, hence narrative control generally passes back and forth between the two characters. However, as the novel proceeds, large monologues delivered by Luciano Ossorio, Maggi's father-in-law, are reported to Maggi by Renzi after the latter visits him on the former's instruction. Thereafter, the narrative becomes increasingly complex as the exchange of letters is interrupted by diverse authors of other letters which have been received by Luciano. It transpires that these were, in fact, posted by Enrique Ossorio (Luciano's grandfather) some one hundred years prior to the commencement of *Respiración artificial* and constitute his bizarre utopic novel formed of letters written in the nineteenth century yet addressed to the future and dated 1979. To complicate matters further, Enrique's letters are intercepted by the sinister censor Arocena, who then appears as a narrator in the novel's first part as he meticulously analyses the letters in a paranoid search for secret codes formulated by political subversives. These narrative contortions will be important later in my analysis. Regarding Fiddian's interpretation of the novel, however, it is the novel's second part which is particularly important.

If the first part of *Respiración artificial* is complicated and perplexing, the second part is a masterpiece of narratorial ventriloquism. While the entire section takes the form of a single

nocturnal conversation, narrative control actually passes between Tardewski and Renzi. There are three major theories elaborated during the discussion, each attributable to a specific character (Maggi, Renzi, and Tardewski); however, in each case these theories are relayed to the reader *by a different character* that speaks on behalf of, or reports the speech of, the originator of the theory. Fiddian's first oversight is failing to acknowledge the other theories elaborated in the novel, lessening his interpretation precisely because each theory is intricately connected to the others. The first theory is that which we have already encountered: the analysis of Argentine history through intellectual pairs formed of one dominant European and one subordinate Argentine. However, where Fiddian attributes the theory to Renzi, it is *Maggi's theory* and, in his absence, it is reported to Renzi by Tardewski. Renzi's theory, that Borges was the last Argentine writer of the nineteenth century and Roberto Arlt the first of the twentieth, comes second and, while reported as direct speech, the narrator is still Tardewski. Finally, Tardewski relates his (apocryphal) discovery of a meeting between Hitler and Kafka, but at this stage Renzi has taken narrative control and it is he who reports Tardewski's direct speech.

This narratorial confusion leads to some minor aberrations in Fiddian's analysis that I would suggest are rather more significant than they may at first appear. For example, Fiddian suggests that Piglia, 'through the *nom de plume* of "Renzi"' labels Groussac '[un] erudito pedante y fraudulento' and 'un francesito pretencioso', while also suggesting 'that, had Groussac continued living in Paris, he would forever have languished at the level of "un periodista de quinta categoría"' (Fiddian 2017, 71; Piglia 2008, 127). In fact, only the first of these insults is uttered by Renzi. Importantly, the narratorial structure of the text makes it impossible to attribute the remaining two. They would certainly be in keeping with Maggi's assessment of Groussac, given that Tardewski explains Renzi's uncle felt Groussac to be the 'más representativo de estos intelectuales trasplantados' in Argentina and '[un] verdadero dictador cultural', yet Tardewski himself makes a rather withering assessment of James Joyce (whom he had met briefly in Europe) and casts an acerbic judgment on José Ortega y Gasset (Piglia 2008, 112, 127, 171). While it is possible that Tardewski is simply reporting Maggi's opinions, it is equally plausible that these are Tardewski's interjections, or possibly a synthesis of the two emerging from a previous conversation. This final possibility is particularly significant given that, within Maggi's schema, Tardewski is *his* intellectual partner whom he believed to be 'el último de una lista que se iniciaba, según él, con Pedro de Angelis y llegaba hasta mi compatriota Witold Gombrowicz'. Indeed, it is Maggi's belief that it is Tardewski who 'venía a cerrar la larga sucesión de europeos aclimatados en este país' (Piglia 2008, 113). This it is to say that Tardewski, a philosopher who had studied with Wittgenstein in Cambridge but who was nonetheless *rejected* by the Argentine academy, inverts the order of cultural dominance and produces a new synthesis in his dialogue with Maggi. This, in turn, brings us to Renzi's contribution to Maggi's theory, and Borges's place within it.

To Err Is Human (Or Perhaps, Divine?)

In discussing the theory of intellectual pairs elaborated in *Respiración artificial*, Fiddian is rather imprecise when he suggests that Piglia first pairs Borges with Gombrowicz and substitutes the latter rather quickly with Groussac. It is rather that Maggi pairs Borges with Gombrowicz, and Renzi interrupts Tardewski's discourse to suggest that 'Pierre Menard' is, in fact, a satire of the French writer. Furthermore, when Fiddian suggests that Piglia 'has

little interest in Gombrowicz', he is demonstrably incorrect (2017, 71). Renzi may have no interest in Gombrowicz, but Piglia most certainly does, as we shall later see. The important point for now, however, is Fiddian's claim that Renzi's attack on Groussac means that he 'remains outside the fold of Argentine culture as modelled (and policed) by Piglia and others', 'despite Borges's earlier advocacy of him' (2017, 74). Fiddian supports his interpretation by drawing on Renzi's claim that 'Pierre Menard' is structured around the error committed by Groussac in *Uné énigme littéraire* and characterized by Renzi as 'esa chambonada del erudito galo', which Fiddian translates as 'the French scholar's botched job' (2017, 72–73). I would suggest, however, that a little linguistic slippage allows us to read Renzi's comment differently, or rather, to locate Piglia's presence within Renzi's critique. While the first definition of 'chambonada' provided by the *Real Academia Española* certainly supports Fiddian's translation and argument, the second rather complicates the picture. Here, 'chambonada' is defined as 'Ventaja obtenida por chiripa' which is to say, an advantage gained through a serendipitous accident (*Real Academia Española*). Given that this usage would be unusual in Argentina, it may seem that reading Renzi's comment in this way is an unlikely or even outlandish suggestion. It is worth remembering, however, that Piglia's own assessment of Groussac is somewhat more forgiving than that made by Renzi. Just as Fiddian notes that in 'Pierre Menard' Borges impersonates a French man writing in Spanish and that the story constitutes a crucial turning point in the development of Borges's prose style (2017, 191), so, too, Piglia argues that 'cuando uno piensa en el cruce de dos lenguas recuerda por supuesto de inmediato a Borges, el español de Borges, preciso y claro, casi perfecto. Un estilo cuya genealogía el mismo Borges remontaba a Paul Groussac'. As Piglia continues, he even proposes that Groussac 'definió, por primera vez, las normas del estilo literario en la Argentina' (2000b, 74–75). It is thus evident that Piglia assures Groussac a central place within the Argentine canon through a stylistic synthesis with Borges. What, then, of Renzi's own theory and conception of Argentine literary history?

In the second major theory expounded in *Respiración artificial*, Renzi essentially re-orders the history of Argentine letters by proposing that Borges is 'el mejor escritor argentino del siglo XIX', while 'Arlt empieza de nuevo: es el único escritor verdaderamente moderno que produjo la literatura argentina del siglo XX' (Piglia 2008, 130, 133). Renzi, therefore constructs a new binary opposition internal to Argentine letters, and creates a temporal division between the work of Arlt and Borges. As we have seen, however, this theory has already produced a synthesis: Piglia's 'Homenaje a Roberto Arlt'. Renzi's theory actually provides the hermeneutic device necessary to interpret Piglia's earlier story. All of the key features of Piglia's previous literary experiment are found in *Respiración artificial*, including the assertion (now made by Renzi) that Arlt's style is an imitation of the poor Spanish translations of Russian novels which he read. Indeed, Renzi fully explicates the logic underpinning the story and all but reveals Piglia's ruse. Hence the importance of my mistake in attributing 'Homenaje a Roberto Arlt' to Renzi; just as Renzi appeared in a footnote to Piglia's story as the source of authority so, too, he emerges in *Respiración artificial* to explain the previous text. In an inversion of the normal relationship between character and author, it seems that it is Renzi who justifies, defends, and promotes the work of Piglia. Nonetheless, that my mistake takes the form of a narratorial misattribution is, in the end, another fortunate misstep. The same is also true of that made by Fiddian. For what Renzi adds to Piglia's

previous experiment is an historical extension of 'la técnica del anacronismo deliberado y de las atribuciones erróneas' drawn directly from 'Pierre Menard' (Borges 1990, 450).

In delineating his theory of Argentine literary history, Renzi essentially employs the same logic defined by Borges in 'Kafka y sus precursores' (1951), in which Borges argues that a writer creates his own precursors and that traces of his work can then be identified in that of his forebears, to reorganize Argentine literary history from the perspective provided by 'Pierre Menard'. Of course, this logic is already to be found in Borges's story insofar as the narrator suggests that traces of Menard's unwritten text are to be found in Cervantes's 'original'. In *Respiración artificial*, Renzi thus finds Borges's technical innovation in the fact that Domingo Faustino Sarmiento erroneously attributes the epigraph which opens his book *Facundo: civilización y barbarie* (1845), a foundational text in Argentine literature. As Speranza demonstrates, this is entirely in keeping with Sarmiento's casual approach to literary citation (2006, 267–68). Crucially, however, by reading Groussac in the same light, Renzi also fundamentally includes him in this version of literary history, despite the caustic insults he casts in his direction. Furthermore, it must be remembered that *Respiración artificial* is ultimately the story of 'tres intelectuales fracasados': Emilio Renzi the failed author, Marcelo Maggi the failed historian, and Tardewski the failed philosopher (Balderston 1987, 112). Indeed, following Luciano Ossorio's sage counsel that 'hay que hacer la historia de las derrotas', the book is replete with histories of defeat, frustration, and failure which date back to the origin of Argentina as an independent nation (Piglia 2008, 17). As is mentioned in the text (and not without certain Borgesian overtones), Enrique Ossorio's father was a failed soldier prevented by illness from participating in the struggle for liberation. Undoubtedly the focus on defeat and failure is a reflection of Piglia's despondency as the revolutionary fervour of the 1960s was crushed by Argentina's most brutal dictatorship. One must look no further than Piglia's published diaries from the period, which recount his relationship with various political militants and revolutionaries disappeared during the military's self-styled 'Dirty War', to confirm the hypothesis (Piglia 2016). More than this, however, attempting to produce an alternative history from the point of view of the vanquished is Piglia's way of continuing to write *after* (or in the midst of) the devastation wrought by the dictatorship. It is a defiant act designed to counteract the 'official' version of history promoted by the military. For this very reason, identifying Groussac's error and branding his literary analysis a failure, is ultimately a positive means of incorporating him into this counter-history, much in keeping with Fiddian's defence of the French writer through his support for Cuba in the face of US aggression. As we shall now see, Tardewski's theory also ends in failure and it further deepens Piglia's political critique.

Formless Marginality

As previously intimated, within Maggi's conception of Argentine history, Tardewski is his partner. Moreover, Tardewski's own discovery echoes Renzi's revelation that Groussac had erred when attributing the apocryphal *Quijote* to Jean Martí. In this way, all three theories are intricately woven together. Given that Tardewski is a Polish exile living in Argentina, it is also at this stage that questions of language come to the fore. Particularly reminiscent of Borges's 'Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius', Tardewski's discovery is the result of a fortunate accident. While conducting scholarly research in the reading rooms of the British Museum, a catalogue error leads to him being delivered and reading an annotated edition of

Hitler's *Mein Kampf*. Inspired by an editorial footnote in the text, Tardewski follows a series of intertextual references to 'discover' that Hitler had met and conversed with Kafka in Vienna between 1909 and 1910 and was the inspiration for his fiction (Piglia 2008, 203). The parallels with 'Tlön' and with Groussac's discovery of the 'true' author of the apocryphal *Quijote* are immediate and obvious. That the discovery leads to failure and ruination is also highly significant. Travelling to Warsaw to work on his new project, Tardewski is surprised by the war, escapes from Europe and makes his way to Argentina. Although unable to communicate in the local language, Tardewski is introduced to the Argentine philosophic community but, having different philosophical interests and influences (and rather strident opinions), he is ultimately rejected by this intellectual circle. Sensing that failure awaits him, he attempts to publish his theory concerning Hitler and Kafka in a local magazine to ensure ownership of the discovery. It is at this juncture that his language deficiency intervenes to thwart his ambition.

While Tardewski writes his paper in English, he has no choice but to pass it to a local translator who understands neither Polish nor English, and the resultant Spanish text is one which Tardewski cannot read. Moreover, a spelling mistake ensures that his paper is also erroneously attributed to Tardowski. As he later laments 'es difícil decir la verdad cuando se ha abandonado la lengua materna' (Piglia 2008, 107). The situation is ultimately the inverse of that which Fiddian analyses in 'Pierre Menard'. In Borges's story the Argentine author imitates two erudite, privileged and pretentious Frenchmen who write in Spanish, one of whom sets out to author and claim ownership of the greatest novel produced in his adoptive language. In Piglia's case, he imitates a downtrodden and defeated Polish emigrant who can neither read nor write Spanish, and whose greatest discovery is attributed to someone else due to his lack of linguistic ability. If the former is a parody and critique of the French academy, the latter certainly raises questions about its Argentine equivalent. From a postcolonial perspective, however, the most important element of Tardewski's tale is the structural correspondence between his life story and that of his compatriot Witold Gombrowicz.

Much like Tardewski, Gombrowicz was surprised by the outbreak of war while he was travelling outside his native Poland. In this instance, however, he found himself in Argentina and chose to remain in the South American nation. As Premat explains, this was entirely in keeping with his literary endeavours:

Si su viaje a Argentina en 1939 puede calificarse de contingencia, su decisión de quedarse en el margen, de no regresar a su país ni incorporarse al exigente mundillo cultural del exilio polaco (en particular en París), debe verse como una defensa de la especificidad de su obra: sólo desde afuera, en la intemperie de lo ajeno, Gombrowicz parece poder mantener el tono y la libertad de expresión que necesita. (2009, 9-10)

Notably, Piglia assesses the same marginal qualities of Gombrowicz's literature in an essay entitled '¿Existe la novela argentina? Borges y Gombrowicz' (1987), subsequently published under the title 'La novela polaca'.¹⁰ The relevance of Piglia's essay to *Respiración artificial* is implied in the very title. Drawing on Borges's 'El escritor argentino y la tradición' (1951) and its central thesis that 'las literaturas secundarias y marginales, desplazadas de las grandes corrientes europeas tienen la posibilidad de un manejo propio, "irreverente", de las grandes tradiciones' Piglia also notes that 'en este punto Borges y Gombrowicz se acercan' (2000b, 72-73). More than this, however, he argues that:

Para Borges (como para Gombrowicz) este lugar incierto permite un uso específico de la herencia cultural: los mecanismos de falsificación, la tentación del robo, la traducción como plagio, la mezcla, la combinación de registros, el entrevero de filiaciones. Esa sería la tradición argentina. (2000b, 73)

This is to say that, for Piglia, Gombrowicz and Borges are also united through Renzi's conception of Argentine literary history, itself an extension of the logic underpinning 'Pierre Menard'. As Piglia's essay moves forward, he turns to the question of Argentine literary style, and it is here where he notes Borges's debt to Groussac. Piglia then adds Lugones as the principal figure in Argentine literary style who falls between the others and asserts that 'esa línea define las convenciones dominantes de la lengua literaria' (2000b, 76). And he contrasts this dominant strand with a marginal alternative based, surprisingly, on a rather unusual translation of Gombrowicz's *Ferdydurke* produced in collaboration with the author. According to Piglia, Gombrowicz utilized translators from elsewhere in the Spanish speaking world (that is, outside Argentina) in order to ensure that it retained a 'foreign' style. For Piglia, the resultant text is an almost perfect blend of the literary styles of Arlt and Macedonio Fernández, and thus he completes his marginal stylistic genealogy (2000b, 74–78). When it is remembered that this particular translation was not published until 1947, that is, after Arlt's death, it becomes clear that, once more, Piglia is utilizing the logic of 'Kafka y sus precursores' to reorder Argentine literary history. Indeed, arguing that, *if he had* chosen to write in Spanish Gombrowicz would have essentially reproduced Arlt's literary style, it is evident that Piglia reads the latter's work *as if it were* written by Gombrowicz. This is a liberty Borges's narrator claims has been won for us through Pierre Menard's magisterial project (Borges 1990, 450). Regarding *Respiración artificial*, in something of a role reversal, the argument Piglia delineates also underpins and reinforces Renzi's proposal that Arlt *intentionally* wrote badly as a means of resisting the nationalistic policing of language promoted by Lugones (Piglia 2008, 138).

As brilliantly demonstrated by Marzena Grzegorzczuk, Piglia's novel also resonates with Gombrowicz's own conception of 'form' which, in turn, explicates the manner in which Tardewski closes 'la larga sucesión de europeos aclimatados en este país' (Piglia 2008, 113). Recognizing a hierarchized binary opposition between cultures considered to be 'superior' and 'inferior', Gombrowicz advocated 'lo amorfo', the formless, to counteract dominant cultural 'forms'. Thus, as Grzegorzczuk explains, 'Gombrowicz sugiere una modificación del sistema de preferencias estéticas' in order to unleash 'el poder transformador que crea forma y no la forma misma', so that 'los complejos culturales' could be 'reconvertidos en valores culturales' (1996, 25). Reading *Respiración artificial* from this perspective, Grzegorzczuk goes on to argue that, just as Gombrowicz proposed that national cultures beyond the bounds of Europe were necessary to revise European 'form', so, too, Maggi 'necesita a Tardewski para interpretar su propia cultura' (1996, 26).¹¹ What must be added to this analysis, however, is recognition of the reciprocal nature of the exchange. Not only does Maggi need Tardewski, but the Polish exile needs Maggi, and later Renzi, in order to share and be acknowledged for his intellectual discovery and triumph. Similarly, in Piglia's analysis of Argentine literary style, the European plays an essential role (through Groussac and Gombrowicz) in the creation of both dominant and marginal literary culture. These exchanges can easily be understood as forms of cultural hybridity as theorized by Homi Bhabha (2004) and Néstor García

Canclini (1995), but the persistent emergence of binary oppositions producing new syntheses suggest that Piglia is still heavily indebted to a dialectic understanding of history. Notably, John Sturrock has argued that Menard is also eminently dialectical in its construction (1986, 162), and ultimately it is by applying the principles of deliberate anachronism and erroneous attribution that Piglia ensures a place for all the named writers within Argentine literary history, despite their oppositions.

Postcolonial Piglia?

Beyond mentioning the context of the last Argentine dictatorship of 1976–1983 and the persistence of the dialectic, it is noteworthy that, thus far, I have made little comment on the political critique which runs through *Respiración artificial*. By this I mean the invocation of Nazi Germany as a means indirectly to criticize the military dictatorship. While this reading of the novel is now particularly well established, I do believe that, from the postcolonial perspective, one particular facet is worth revisiting: the fact that Tardewski's fortunate discovery is made within the reading rooms of the British Museum. While the more famous example is Tardewski's argument that the origins of *Mein Kampf* are to be found in Descartes and that Hitler's book is 'la realización de la filosofía burguesa' (Piglia 2008, 193), the selection of this particular location (arguably another monument to colonial power) contributes to broadening Piglia's critique from a straightforward parallel between Nazi Germany and the dictatorship and incorporates the military's 'Proceso' into a wider denunciation of European geopolitical dominance. That Argentine dictators since (at least) General Juan Carlos Onganía viewed themselves as defenders of 'Western Civilization' in the face of 'foreign subversion' supports the argument. Nonetheless, utilizing the British Museum as stage for Tardewski's discovery serves another function in the text, and somewhat complicates the picture.

On two occasions in the novel, Tardewski makes elusive references to Marx without naming him specifically (Piglia 2008, 190, 193). Interestingly, Piglia used the same form of thinly-veiled allusion to incorporate a quotation from Marx into his essay 'Ideología y ficción en Borges' (1979), which applied Marxist dialectics to Borges's family history to propose that 'en última instancia para Borges la leyenda familiar es la historia argentina vivida como biografía de clase' (5, 6). Presumably this was a means of escaping unwanted attention in the hostile and deadly environment created by the military regime. Certainly, within *Respiración artificial*, on one of the occasions that Tardewski mentions Marx in a cryptic manner, he also informs Renzi that Maggi was growing increasingly interested in 'el filósofo que pasó años trabajando en una sala de la biblioteca del British Museum' (Piglia 2008, 190). While Maggi's absence in the second half of the text is generally held to be an oblique allusion to the military's horrific practice of political disappearance, this is the only glimpse the reader is given of a possible political motive for the crime. Yet, if Piglia's novel denounces the Dictatorship as a colonial imposition exported from Europe, what then of Marx? There is no doubt that the dialectic underpins each of the theories espoused by Piglia's central characters to explain Argentine history. Thus I would suggest that Piglia's novel demonstrates what Dipesh Chakrabarty has denominated 'the everyday paradox of third-world social science'. Reminiscent of various postcolonial scholars, Chakrabarty takes as his starting point the idea that seemingly universal ideas promoted since the Renaissance were, in fact, derived from the 'singular and unique [...] histories

that belonged to the multiple pasts of Europe' and thus retained 'irreducible elements of those parochial histories [that] must have lingered into concepts that otherwise seemed to be meant for all' (2008: xiii). While such theories were produced in relative, if not absolute, ignorance of those living elsewhere in the world, the paradox that Chakrabarty identified is that those living in the 'third-world' 'find these theories, in spite of their inherent ignorance of "us", eminently useful in understanding our societies' (2008, 29). Piglia's novel testifies to much the same phenomenon.

Reading with Piglia

In concluding his postcolonial discussion of 'Pierre Menard', Fiddian makes the assertion that the story 'is, in addition to many other things, a masterpiece of cross-cultural impersonation' (2017, 77), and I hope to have demonstrated that Piglia's *Respiración artificial* is an equally masterful cross-cultural experiment. There is, however, one final issue I take with Fiddian's analysis which is that he asserts that 'Piglia is very much the puppet-master of his own narrative' (2017, 73). Entirely to the contrary, I would suggest that Piglia actually cedes control of his narrative to one of his characters, although which one is not entirely clear. Ultimately, the reader is left with the unanswerable question: who has compiled the various documents in the text? In my previous analysis, I proposed that, having been entrusted with Maggi's papers by Tardewski at the novel's conclusion; it is Emilio Renzi who arranges them to produce the final text (2019, 163). This would certainly be in keeping with the strange relationship between Piglia and Renzi described above. I would suggest, however, that there is another possible editor: Arocena. If my previous assertion were correct, it would seem almost impossible to account for the inclusion of those sections of the book in which Arocena is narrator. To be sure, reading the novel as if compiled by Arocena would mean that Renzi and Tardewski have been recounting their conversation to the censor or his associates following the conclusion of the novel, but then Arocena has already informed the reader that he has intercepted a letter from Renzi to Maggi and has each of their addresses. This is undoubtedly a far most sinister prospect, implying as it does a malevolent control of the narrative. It seems then that there are two modes of reading the novel, that it remains trapped between a hopeful narrative structure that blends Borges with Marx to gesture towards a possible revolution, and a controlling use of language and knowledge that leads only to totalitarianism. The former position is unquestionably derived from Piglia's reading of 'Pierre Menard' and, I would suggest, the latter indicates the creeping, insidious invasion of Tlön.

While a detailed discussion of Borges's 'Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius' is beyond the scope of the present article for obvious reasons, I invoke it here because it plays an important role in *Respiración artificial* and Piglia's literary output thereafter. Suffice to say that Borges's tale of the creation of an imaginary country, then planet, entirely based on idealist principles and which is gradually taking over the real world, has often been read as a critique of totalitarianism (see, for example Boldy 2009, 78–87; Sarlo 2001). In Fiddian's case, he draws on the publishing history of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, which features heavily in Borges's story, to propose that the story traces the expansion of Western power 'in the second phase of modernity as understood by sociologist Immanuel Wallerstein and Latin Americanists Aníbal Quijano and Walter Mignolo' (2017, 81–82). Similarly, he proposes that Borges's depiction of Ezra Buckley and the organization he founded, Orbis

Tertius, is a caricature of James Monroe and critique of his eponymous Doctrine (2017, 82–83). This brief precis of Fiddian's Foucauldian analysis is sufficient to see the parallels with *Respiración artificial*. As we have seen, Piglia places a central scene in the British Museum as a means of equating the National-Security Doctrine with Nazism and Western Power which he traces back to Descartes and the 17th Century. Nonetheless, it is equally the case that Piglia's novel draws on a tradition created by Pierre Menard, to which he adds a specifically Marxist component, in order to proffer a second, rather more hopeful reading of the text. In his critical meditation on literary representations of the reader, *El último lector*, this is precisely how Piglia describes the two modes of reading he derives from Borges.

Acknowledging the presence of numerous avid readers in Borges's fiction, Piglia argues that his literary forebear transformed the reader into a heroic figure. Nonetheless, in typical Piglian fashion, he subsequently divides these various readers into two categories. First, there is the reader modelled after Pierre Menard, the reader empowered by complete freedom 'en el uso de los textos' and 'cierta inclinación deliberada a leer mal, a leer fuera de lugar, a relacionar series imposibles' (2005, 28). Noting, however, that 'muchas veces, en Borges, la lectura lleva a la muerte' (2005, 29), Piglia identifies the second reader with Red Scharlach from 'La muerte y la brújula' who reads with duplicitous and murderous intent in order to entrap his foil Lönnrot, whose own mode of literary detection ultimately leads to his demise (2005, 34–35). It is in 'Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius', however, that these two modes of reading are brought together. On the one hand, reading is presented as a means of constructing a complete, controlling, and overwhelming universe, while on the other it remains 'un refugio frente a la hostilidad del mundo' (2005, 28). This conflict between literature as form of total control (Tlön), and one which produces radical freedom (Pierre Menard), is the foundation on which *Respiración artificial* and Piglia's literary work thereafter is built.

Conclusion: Becoming Menard

Before Macedonio, I had always been a credulous reader. His chief gift to me was to make me read skeptically. At the outset, I plagiarized him devotedly, picking up certain stylistic mannerisms of his that I later came to regret. [...] His genius survives in but a few of his pages; his influence was of a Socratic nature. I truly loved the man, on this side idolatry, as much as any.

(Borges 1971, 159)

Following the revolutionary fervour of his youth and the painful desolation of defeat, Piglia comes to divide his approach to reading (and by extension writing) into a new duality, a confrontation he delineates first in *Respiración artificial* and carries forward into *La ciudad ausente* (1992). I mention this later novel now because it returns us to the beginning of our discussion of Piglia's (2010) relationship with 'Pierre Menard', which is to say Borges's relationship with Macedonio Fernández. In this novel Piglia engages directly with Macedonio's *Museo de la novela de la Eterna* (1967) and imaginatively extends the life of the author's late wife, Elena Obieta, in the form of a machinic producer of apocryphal texts, such that she becomes 'la máquina de defensa femenina contra las experiencias y los experimentos y las mentiras del Estado' which are woven into narratives on control (Iglesia 1996, 102). Indeed, within the text,

Piglia also reimagines Macedonio's planned anarchist settlement in Paraguay as a linguistic utopia based on Joyce's *Finnegans Wake*, a text which he mentions briefly in his discussion of marginal literature in Borges and Gombrowicz (Piglia 2000b, 74). This is to say that, in this text, too, literature is viewed as an extension of political power and a continual struggle between freedom and control. I also invoke Macedonio once more for the simple reason that he played such an elemental role in the development of the authorial subject in Borges.

Importantly, Macedonio Fernández developed a discourse of 'egocidio en tanto que atributo principal de una poderosa figura de autor' (Premat 2009, 38). In Borges's hands, this becomes a dual inclination to question the essence and existence of the unified subject, while affirming the centrality of autobiography in literary creation. Thus in 'Profesión de fe literaria' (1926), Borges would claim that 'toda literatura es autobiográfica', while in 'La nadería de la personalidad' (1925) he would refute the very idea of a coherent self on which any autobiography would presumably rely. This contrast can be found throughout his career, for example when one compares the famous epilogue to *El hacedor* (1960) and the equally famous meditation on the divided self, 'Borges y yo', which the collection contains (1974, 854). Equally, as with Macedonio, such experiments with the authorial subject ultimately allowed Borges to become a celebrated literary figure in his own right. In Piglia's case, however, he followed Joyce and Valéry in producing a narrative substitute to represent him, to justify and explain his work. When it is recalled that Edmond Teste lies behind Pierre Menard, it is also apparent that, through the creation of Emilio Renzi, Piglia sought to become Menard, the inventor of his literary and political hopes and aspirations. As Maggi counsels Renzi in *Respiración artificial*: 'hay que pensar en contra de sí mismo y vivir en tercera persona' (2008, 111), a feat Piglia (2015) finally achieved by attributing the three published volumes of his personal diaries to Emilio Renzi, while simultaneously retaining his own name on the cover. In a short text entitled 'Una propuesta para el próximo milenio', Piglia suggests that the contribution to world literature that can be made from the 'suburbio del mundo' that is Argentina is precisely this: 'la distancia, el desplazamiento, el cambio de lugar', and the ability to 'dejar que el lenguaje hable también en el borde, en lo que se oye, en lo que llega de otro' (1999, 127). In this instance, Piglia's argument is based on analysis of a scene drawn from the writing of Rodolfo Walsh; however, when he expanded on the theme a few years later he described his process as 'un ejercicio de imaginación literaria, una ficción especulativa, una suerte de versión utópica de "Pierre Menard, autor del Quijote"' (2001, 12). It would seem to me that a trace of Menard can also be found in the Argentine author Martín Kohan's assessment that the play between author and alter-ego in Piglia allows for 'la construcción artificial de experiencias, de tal modo que las vivencias ajenas puedan pasar a funcionar como propias' (2017, 269).¹² A final bitter irony can be found, however, in that Piglia closes his proposal for the next millennium imagining a utopic future within which 'la literatura sea intemporal y sea anónima' (1999, 127). This is, of course, the vision of literary endeavour sustained by Pierre Menard, but the phrase is drawn from Borges's description of the literature of Tlön.

Notes

1. Borges's himself was rather more circumspect. While he would laud Cervantes's book as 'one of the greatest novels in the world', passionately devoted to concision, he would also suggest

- that 'the reader would be able to do very well without the first part and could rely on the second, [...] since he would find it all in the second part' (Sorrentino 2010, 120).
2. In this, the text seems to belie Menard's own assertion that 'no hay ejercicio intelectual que no sea finalmente inútil', that 'una doctrina filosófica es al principio una descripción verosímil del universo; giran los años y es un mero capítulo — cuando no un párrafo o un nombre — de la historia de la filosofía' (Borges 1990, 449-50). Borges's story seems rather to suggest that Ihab Hassan was in fact correct: 'New lines emerge from the past because our eyes every morning open anew' (Hassan 1971).
 3. In a second companion article, I will turn my attention to César Aira's engagement with Borges's 'Pierre Menard' and thus develop certain parallels between these seemingly antithetical authors.
 4. As Graciela Speranza notes, Piglia's text also invokes 'la definición del plagio como "inocente abstemio de las comillas transcritivas" de Macedonio Fernández' (2006, 271).
 5. Many authors have made similar economic and political arguments (see, for example Deredita 1980; Fornet 1994; Gnutzmann 1992; McCracken 1991).
 6. Indeed, Piglia specifically records in his diaries that one of his revolutionary friends sustained the claim that 'Mao es el Marx del Tercer Mundo' (Piglia 2016, 102).
 7. Teresa Orecchia Havas alternatively suggests that Piglia's 'período de ilusiones revolucionarias se cierre quizás con el viaje a la China de Mao en 1973, que representaría a la última esperanza de una coincidencia entre la utopía revolucionaria y la realidad del socialismo' (2005, 1216).
 8. Strengthening the connection between Teste, Menard, and Renzi is the fact that Valéry meditated on the creation of a new form of card game in which the rules of play change with every new deal. As Daniel Balderston argues, this is echoed in Pierre Menard's article on possible alterations to the rules of chess (1993, 19). In *Respiración artificial*, the arguments are synthesized and Renzi's interlocutor Tardewski proposes a revision to the game of chess in which the position and function of each piece is modified with every new turn (Piglia 2008, 23-24).
 9. The division of Argentine history into binary pairs echoes 'Homenaje a Roberto Arlt'. As Bosteels notes, in that story 'it is not an exaggeration to state that absolutely everything in its structure is divided into two, as is only to be expected from a writer who at this point is still a loyal follower of Mao' (Bosteels 2003, 234).
 10. References in this essay are to the version contained within *Formas breves* (2000). The essay also appears in *Crítica y ficción* (Piglia 1993, 50-57).
 11. I also draw on the work of Grzegorzczuk in my analysis of *Respiración artificial*, providing a parallel between Gombrowicz's conception of 'form' and Deleuze and Guattari's idea of 'becoming-minor' (2019, 160-63). Similarly, Berg reads Piglia's essay on Gombrowicz and Borges through Deleuze and Guattari's related concept of 'minor literature' (1998, 51-52).
 12. Kohan instead invokes Borges's 'La memoria de Shakespeare' and the image of memory transplantation which appears in *La ciudad ausente* (2017, 269). In 'El último cuento de Borges', Piglia argues that Borges's story describes the form of literary tradition (Piglia 2000a).

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