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Sergio Waisman. *Borges and Translation: The Irreverence of the Periphery*. Associated University Press, 2005, 267 pp.

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*Borges and Translation: The Irreverence of Periphery*, by Sergio Waisman, a Professor of Spanish at George Washington University, is based on the importance of translation and theory in the work of Jorge Luis Borges. The author has three main strategies for analyzing Borges' theories of translation: First, he considers Borges' theories of translation in

the Argentinean context itself where they originated. Second, Waisman studies these theories as an essential part of Borges' literary discourse. In the third strategy, Waisman expands on the theories of Borges by comparing them to other 20<sup>th</sup> century thinkers who have written on the same subject.

This book is divided into five chapters: "Argentina and Translation: Delineating a Cultural Context," "Borges on Translation: The Development of a Theory," "Writing as Translation," "The Aesthetics of Irreverence: Mistranslating from the Margins," and "Borges Reads Joyce: A Meeting at the Limits of Translation."

In chapter one, Waisman explores Argentina in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and describes the importance of key literary events such as the Salón Literario of 1837 and Domingo F. Sarmiento's *Facundo* (1845). It is in these moments, according to Waisman, that one finds "the seeds of the polyglot nature of Argentine literature," or "polyglossia." He also discusses how the polyglossia flourishes during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century in Buenos Aires, where several translators worked on numerous projects. It is also at this time when Borges develops his ideas on translation which are outlined in the following chapters.

In chapter two, Waisman analyzes three essays as a means of understanding how Borges developed his theories of translation: "Las dos maneras de traducir" (1926), "Las versiones homéricas" (1932), and "Los traductores de Las 1001 Noches" (1935). In these key essays, Borges challenges the idea that original texts are superior to translations and rejects the concept of a "definitive text." In the first essay, Borges says, "En cuanto a mí, creo en las buenas traducciones de obras literarias y opino que hasta los versos son traducibles." In the

second essay, Borges states, "la Odisea, gracias a mi oportuno desconocimiento del griego, es una librería internacional de obras en prosa y verso." In the third essay, Borges only compares the translation, and does not refer to the original text unless the translator has mentioned it.

In chapter 3, Waisman illustrates how rewriting, misreading and his translating become a unified practice for Borges in his own narrative techniques. Waisman mentions the *Historia universal de la infamia* in Borges' "Prólogo de la primera edición" in which he explains how the translator needs to understand the importance of a reader who is manipulating the text into a translation. Borges places his translations in an Argentine context through linguistic and cultural appropriation which produces unexpected meanings. Waisman, of course, also mentions Pierre Menard, the author of *El Quijote*. In this famous essay, Waisman states, "Pierre Menard creates a web of readers and writers, of rereadings (or misreadings) and rewritings interlayered and interlayered: Menard the reader/rewriter of Cervantes; the narrator who reads Menard's partial texts; and we, readers of an Ar-

gentine narrator's sarcastic commentaries about Menard. But what is the difference between a rereading and a misreading?"

The author continues to examine Borges' theories of mistranslation in chapter four, by making a connection between "El escritor argentino y la tradición" and Borges' writing as a translator. Waisman analyzes well-known short stories such as "La muerte y la brújula", "La busca de Averroes" and "El Sur," demonstrating how the peripheral translation of Borges functions and how different it is from mainstream translation.

In chapter five, the author uses Borges' textual dialogue with James Joyce on translation, readings and rewritings. Waisman compares Joyce's *Ulysses*, to Borges' stories, "El acercamiento a Almotásim" and "Funes el

memorioso" to discuss metempsychosis, the representation of verisimilitude, and the potential limits to translation.

*Borges and Translation: The Irreverence of the Periphery* discusses a fascinating topic relating to a major writer of the 20<sup>th</sup> century: "intimate links between Borges' theories of (mis) translation and his theories of reading and writing," which, in Sergio Waisman's opinion, "represents a contribution to the field of translation studies, including consideration of center-periphery dichotomies in the theorizing of translation." The intended audiences for this book are those who are studying or interested in the field of translation and Latin American literature.

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