

The Struggle for an Argentinean Linguistic Identity

Sonia Thon

Acadia University (Canada)

Abstract: A linguistic debate that followed the Argentinean independence from Spain took place in Buenos Aires. The struggle was initiated by those who wished to find a distinct form of expression that would differentiate the inherited language from its colonial past. The perspectives in the debate were varied: some feared the bastardization of the language and defended an idealized norm of Peninsular Spanish, others idealized the countryside and evoked a national sentiment based on the oral expression of the *gauchos*; and, yet others proposed a coexistence of different varieties of Spanish. The massive Italian immigration of 1857-1940 fueled new linguistic and cultural fears. This paper discusses the close relationship between language, ideology and socio-historical context with reference to the work of two Argentinean authors (Borges and Puig).

Key words: Argentina; Spanish; linguistics; dialect; literature; *gaucho*; nationalism; immigration; Borges; Puig

Résumé : Suite à l'indépendance de l'Argentine, un grand débat linguistique eut lieu à Buenos Aires. Il fut commencé par ceux qui pensaient que la jeune nation avait besoin d'une variété de langue nationale, différente de l'espagnol péninsulaire qui rappelait le passé colonial. Les différentes positions furent les suivantes : il y avait ceux qui avaient peur de la bâtardeur de la langue et qui défendaient une norme idéalisée de l'espagnol péninsulaire. D'autres idéalisaient la campagne et évoquaient un sentiment national qui se fondait sur l'expression orale des *gauchos*. D'autres, à leur tour, proposèrent la coexistence de variétés d'espagnol différentes. L'immigration massive d'Italiens, de 1857 à 1940, produisit des craintes linguistiques et culturelles nouvelles. Cet article traite de la relation étroite entre langue, idéologie et contexte socioculturel en référence aux œuvres de deux auteurs argentins (Borges et Puig).

Mots-clés : Argentine; espagnol; linguistique; dialecte; littérature; *gaucho*; nationalisme; immigration; Borges; Puig

The struggle for an Argentinean linguistic identity has been studied by critics such as Beatriz Sarlo, Walter Bruno Berg, and Mercedes Blanco¹ who demonstrated the existence of a close relationship between language, ideology and social context. The newfound interest in the oral expression of the written text explained further that narrative discourse embraced not only the rules and patterns of a normative language, but also the manifestation of traditional models of everyday verbal discourse². María Zulema Kulikowski highlighted the importance of the incorporation of the concept of “colloquial language” to the totality of discourse (with its indicators, registers and dialects) in order to ensure the inclusion of voices who speak to each other and describe each other from their own narrative and social experiences outside the established literary canon of linguistic expression³.

The linguistic debate that followed the Argentinean independence from Spain (July 9th, 1816) took place in the city of Buenos Aires, a major cultural centre with the country’s greatest population density. The struggle was initiated by those who wished to find a distinct form of expression that would differentiate the inherited language from its colonial past. Chiefly involved in the debate were authors, scholars and politicians whose linguistic positions were closely related to what

¹ For a sampling of studies in this area, see Beatriz Sarlo, *Borges, un escritor en las orillas*, Buenos Aires, Espasa Calpe-Ariel, 1995; Walter Bruno Berg and Marcos Klaus (eds.), *Oralidad y Argentinidad. Ensayos sobre la función del lenguaje hablado en la literatura argentina*, Tübingen, Narr, 1997, p. 28-41; Mercedes I. Blanco, *Lenguaje e identidad: actitudes lingüísticas en la Argentina 1800-1960*, Bahía Blanca, Gabinete de Estudios Lingüísticos, Departamento de Humanidades, Universidad Nacional del Sur, 1991.

² Wolf Oesterreicher, “Pragmática del discurso oral”, *Oralidad y argentinidad...*, op. cit., 1997, p. 87; David Olson and Nancy Torrance, *Cultura escrita e oralidade*, Sao Paulo, Atica, 1996.

³ Zulema M. Kulikowski, “Oralidad en la literatura: ecos de lo cotidiano en Manuel Puig”, *Actas del Congreso Brasileiro de Hispanistas*, 2, 2002, p. 3, <http://www.proceedings.scielo.br/scielo.php>, Retrieved May 22, 2013.

Michel Foucault referred to as *la question du pouvoir*, a discourse of power based on social and political struggle⁴. Three groups distinguished themselves during the debate: those who feared the bastardization of the language, mainly the higher echelons of society who asserted their ideological nationalism by remaining loyal to the idealized norm of Peninsular Spanish⁵ based on literary classics; those who idealized the countryside and evoked, through literature, a national sentiment based on the idealization of the language spoken by the *gauchos*; and, those who believed that a coexistence of the various varieties of Spanish was possible. Although the *gaucho* (Argentinean cowboys of mixed ethnicity, mostly Spanish and indigenous as well as *criollos*, people of Spanish descent born in Argentina) was central to the second position, it was advocated by the bourgeoisie, who sought a linguistic identity in the exoticism of a countryside evoked by writers such as Hidalgo, Ascasubi, Lussich, and Estanislao del Campo. The publication of the Argentinean epic *Martín Fierro*⁶, written by José Hernández, in 1872, inspired even greater support for the integration of the language spoken by the *gauchos* as the poem pointed out the injustice inflicted on the *gaucho* Martín Fierro who lost his freedom through intrusive government rules created in order to implement modernizing European ideas. Martín Fierro becomes victimized by the system when he is forcibly recruited by the army, which he later deserts, to serve during the campaigns against the *malones*, sudden attacks conducted by native warriors from a number of indigenous tribes: Mapuches, Tehuelches, Ranqueles, and Pampas in defense of their land. The publication of this poem gave the middle class, dissatisfied with the political policies of the government, a legend of their own to fill their ancestral Argentinean

⁴ Michel Foucault, *L'archéologie du savoir*, Paris, Éditions Gallimard, 1969, p. 158.

⁵ Mercedes Blanco, *op. cit.*, p. 54.

⁶ José Hernández, *Martín Fierro*, Buenos Aires, Editorial Losada, 1872.

vacuum. The rural language evoked a rustic, remote space, populated by individuals tied to the land, and offered a sentimental background to human emotion, as an exotic stage or an ever-threatening telluric force⁷. Early advocates of the position favouring the balanced view were Enrique Banchs and Zum Felde, who believed that language is linked to the social and psychological reality of a community. Zum Felde's opinion was that although Spanish was the inherited language, it did not have to be identical to the language of Spain⁸.

As this debate was taking place, an extraordinary wave of immigration hit the port of Buenos Aires. Between 1857 and 1940, 44.9% of immigrants were of Italian origin compared with 33.4% of Spanish immigration. This phenomenon increased the linguistic insecurity, perceived as a destabilizing factor in the social and political structure that had evolved during the Colonial period. Xenophobia was rampant. Linguistic slurs targeting Italian, and other European languages, became frequent. Slurs against Russians had an anti-Semitic element because in Argentina, Russians were believed to be Jews since there had been Jews who arrived in Argentina from Russia. Moreover, those Jews who came from Poland, Austria or any other Eastern European country were also called Russians (*rusos*)⁹. Intolerance was fueled by linguistic

⁷ Sonia Thon, "El mito del campo argentino desde una perspectiva contemporánea", *Actas del Congreso Internacional de Hispanistas*, Barcelona, Promociones Universitarias, 1992, p. 1025-1026.

⁸ Alberto Zum Felde, *El problema de la cultura americana*, Buenos Aires, Losada, 1943, p. 229-230.

⁹ As anti-Semitism was part of the Argentinean fabric, even though the Russian immigration to Argentina at that time constituted a mere 2.7%, when the foundation of the Association of Jewish Colonization selected, in 1891, Argentina as a country in which to establish a colony of Russian immigrants, the news provoked violent accusations and great alarm, as it was believed that there was a plot to bring 2 million Jews to Argentina. See Wanda A. Vélez, "South American Immigration: Argentina", 1990, p. 6, <http://www.yale.edu.ynhti/curriculum/units/1990/1/90.01.06.x.html>, Retrieved January 10, 2008.

concerns whose chauvinism would be expressed in extreme statements such as those of Costa Alvarez:

The hybrid state of Spanish...does not represent a contamination nor an infiltration...but a fight to the death for life. It is a conflict in which, if Spanish is preserved with civilization, barbarianism will fall, finally, with its language. This fight epitomizes the numerous *gringocriollo* jargons, clumps and grafts in *gaucho* roots of all the Italian dialects, and of some European languages, Russian amongst them¹⁰.

With the exception of the English, who were considered immigrants of a superior caste, every foreigner was mistrusted by the landowning class and the Colonial elite, and considered invasive “trash” (*chusma*). This term was applied broadly, and included those immigrants who belonged to the middle class of skilled trades and professions¹¹. The fear that immigrants would influence various levels of society was highlighted by Ramos Mejía, an Argentinean physician and sociologist, who in 1899 complained about immigrants, maintaining that they invaded it all: the theatres, the promenades “because they are free”, the churches “because they are devout and tame believers”, the streets, the squares, and the markets. What was most worrying to him was that a new elite was emerging from this amorphous mass¹². This situation changed dramatically in 1912, when President Roque Sáenz Peña passed legislation granting citizenship to all immigrants with full voting rights. All successive elections were won by the middle class, who included immigrants, thus frustrating the political manipulations of the landowners who had constituted an aristocratic elite. Their very

¹⁰ Mercedes Blanco, *op. cit.*, p. 78. This and all translations from Spanish to English in this article are mine.

¹¹ Nicholas Fraser and Marysa Navarro, *Evita. The Real Life of Eva Perón*, New York/London, W.S. Norton, 1996, p. 3-15.

¹² Associazione Culturale Due Sicile, “Inmigración italiana en la Argentina”, 2007, <http://www.adsic.it/2007/11/20/inmigración/italiana/en/la/argentina>, Retrieved January 10, 2008.

restrictive definition of who had the right to be called an Argentinean, reflected an outlook that glorified their ancestors who had fought against the natives, the Spanish, and the *caudillos*.

Jorge Luis Borges (1899-1986, an Argentinean writer who eventually attained great recognition in Argentina and abroad with books translated into innumerable languages), participated in this linguistic discussion with an essay entitled “*El idioma de los argentinos*”, published in 1927, in which he defended the *porteño* dialect against the norms imposed by university “purists”¹³.

Although not all university professors were Spanish, the institution as such still followed the Peninsular normative curriculum based on the models of its most revered authors. However, it was not until Américo Castro, a renowned philologist, declared critically that Argentina was the only Latin American country that honoured the local tradition of the *gaucho*, and described Ricardo Güiraldes’ novel *Don Segundo Sombra* as “*el arquetipo de todos los frustrados*” (“the archetype of failure”)¹⁴ that Borges got angry. The publication at the same time of an article in the *Gaceta Literaria* in which Madrid was proclaimed the “intellectual meridian of the Hispanic world”¹⁵ made matters worse. Borges proceeded to attack academics, accusing them of “linguistic colonialism”, and criticized Madrid bitterly for its ignorance regarding Spanish America. Borges’s response was as follows:

The seditious new Spanish generation invites us to establish ourselves in Madrid! The intellectual meridian of this America (...) Madrid does not understand us. A city whose orchestras cannot attempt to play a tango without ruining it; [...] a city whose Yrigoyen is Primo de Rivera; a

¹³ Jorge Luis Borges, *El idioma de los argentinos*, Buenos Aires, M. Glazer Editor, 1928.

¹⁴ Américo Castro, *La peculiaridad lingüística rioplatense y su sentido histórico*, Buenos Aires, Losada, Segunda edición, 1941, Madrid, Taurus, 1962.

¹⁵ *La Gaceta Literaria*, Madrid, 15 de abril, 1927, año I, número 8, p. 1.

city whose actors cannot distinguish a Mexican from an Oriental; a city whose only invention is the Gallicism – at least, nowhere else is there so much talk about it – a city whose humour is based on puns; an “enviable” city to praise. How can it understand us, what does it know of the terrible hope in which we Americans live?¹⁶

Manuel Puig (1932-1990), another Argentinean writer who gained popularity within and without the Argentinean borders, became part of this linguistic identity debate years later by transcribing in his writings the language of his youth which recreated the new social reality produced by the immigration wave in Argentina. Although both writers gave priority to the spoken language by incorporating the new voices developed through linguistic contact, they were motivated by different reasons originating in personal and social anxieties. For Jorge Luis Borges, it was a longing for a distant reality sprinkled with what he considered acceptable lexical and syntactic turns of phrase; in the case of Puig, it was a mission to recover the immigrants’ voice of his childhood. Together, they affirmed Argentina’s literary linguistic identity and transcended their geographic borders.

Borges, a descendent of early European settlers, idealized his *criollo* family (those born in Argentina of Spanish descent) by taking great pride in the military deeds of his maternal grandfather who, on August 6th, 1824, at the age of 24, commanded the battle of Junín, a major victory obtained by the forces seeking Independence from Spain. Borges despised his Spanish relatives, he considered them to be soldiers of little intelligence, products of an historical period with which he did not want to be associated. He understood the War of Independence as a “rebellion of sons against their fathers¹⁷”, thus interpreting this

¹⁶ Angela Di Tullio, “El Idioma de los Argentinos: Cultura y Discriminación”, 2002, p. 1, <http://www.lehman.cuny.edu/ciberletras/v06/bordelois.html>, Retrieved December 30, 2007.

¹⁷ Edwin Williamson, *Borges, a life*, New York, Viking Press, 2004, p. 4.

break in the relationship as a conscious resolution of the *criollo* population not to be Spanish any longer. A new identity had to be forged. Edwin Williamson explains that:

They had made an “act of faith” in the possibility of creating a national identity distinct from that of Spain, and it followed that if the Argentines did not persevere in the struggle to forge this new identity, “a good many of us” “would” run the risk of reverting to being Spanish, which would be a way of denying the whole Argentine history¹⁸.

Borges proceeded to invent a past for himself idealizing the *gauchesco*, all that was related to the life of the *gaucho*, not the *gaucho* himself. His opinion of Martín Fierro was very negative: he considered him to be a deserter, a fugitive, and a drunk. He preferred to associate with the *compadrito arrabalero*, a working class immigrant who lived on the outskirts of the city and attempted to imitate the taciturn qualities of the *orillero* and the showy style of the *compadrito*¹⁹. As for the language spoken by the *compadrito* he liked it free from *lunfardo*, the slang used, originally, by the criminal elements of Buenos Aires, mainly those who did not want the police to understand what they were saying. In Borges’s opinion, tangos that had a *lunfardo* content were acceptable only if they were in old tangos. He considered *lunfardo* vulgar in new songs²⁰.

Sarlo points out that:

the “lunfardo” and the “arrabalero” [dialects] are marked by social illegitimacy which is argued as an aesthetic illegitimacy. They are simultaneously, an exaggeration and a deformation: “lunfardo” is an

¹⁸ Edwin Williamson, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

¹⁹ The *orillero* lived in poor and remote areas bordering the prairies. He would work mostly in the slaughterhouses or refrigeration plants. The *compadrito* was a newcomer trying to belong.

²⁰ Beatriz Sarlo, *Borges...*, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

artificial slang of those living on the fringe; “arrabalero” is an impoverished mimesis of the language spoken in the outskirts of Buenos Aires²¹.

According to Sarlo, Borges tries to convey that *lunfardo* does not have its roots in Argentina, therefore it cannot translate the range of tonalities, the system of connotations and the irony, which can only be perceived by those who have a spontaneous relationship with their inherited language.

Borges’ search for a linguistic identity implied a pursuit of his own identity, which, much like Argentina, was on the periphery. An eminent Borges critic, Beatriz Sarlo, refers to this perception as “that ex-centric place that was his country²²”. Borges had moved to Switzerland with his family at the age of fifteen; and, upon his return at the age of twenty-two, encountered “an insipid territory that was neither savage nor cultured²³”. In order to fit in, he invented an Argentinean cultural past by fixing some linguistic traits to satisfy his need to belong, while continuing to read foreign literature, as part of his cosmopolitan upbringing. This national and cosmopolitan simultaneity characterizes the tension of Borges’s early work, tension that invites reflection on his cultural reality and the impossibility of stopping arbitrarily the evolution of the language. Years later, in the prologue to the biography of Evaristo Carriego (1955), he would admit to having believed that he grew up

in a suburb of Buenos Aires with hazardous streets and visible sunsets. The truth is that I grew up in a garden, behind a fence in the shape of spears, and in a library of unlimited English books. Palermo of the knife

²¹ Beatriz Sarlo, “Oralidad y lenguas extranjeras. El conflicto en la literatura argentina durante el Primer tercio del siglo XX”, *Orbis Tertius*, I, (1), 1996, p. 35-36.

²² In Antonio Fernández Ferrer, *Borges de la A a la Z*, 2ª Ed., Madrid, Siruela, 1991, p. 103.

²³ Jorge Luis Borges, *Obras Completas*, Vol. I, Madrid, Círculo de Lectores, 1992, p. 125.

and the guitar²⁴ was (they tell me) around the corners, but those who inhabited my mornings and brought horror to my nights were Stevensons' blind buccaneer, agonizing under the horses' legs, and the traitor who abandoned his friend to the moon, and the time traveler who brought a withering flower from the future, and the imprisoned genius who for centuries was imprisoned in the Salomonic pitcher, and the veiled prophet Horasan, who was hiding his leprosy behind stones and silk²⁵.

Linguistic registers of a language depend on semantic context and, if the spoken language is to be emphasized, it will have to be expressed according to the socio-cultural reality of the character. Borges used the spoken language as an authentic testimony of a recreated past in order to find a heritage to which he could attach himself.

But it is important to notice that the vernacular language sought by Borges was that of the *porteño* of lineage. Olea Franco points out that by affirming the supremacy of that which is *porteño*, Borges establishes the cultural power of his class over the new immigrant linguistic combinations. They are the only ones capable of using the typical *porteño* expressions instinctively. This excludes the authoritarian Spaniards, the reactionary provincials, and the newly arrived Italians. Interpreted this way, Borges's programme is simultaneously nationalistic, unitarian, and bourgeois. A winning programme in Franco's view²⁶.

It is interesting to note, in later years, Borges's nostalgia and sarcasm when speaking about the vernacular language used by the authors who were in his camp during the linguistic debate:

Our elders did it much better. The tone or their writing was that of their voice; their mouth was not a contradiction of their hand. They were

²⁴ Palermo is nowadays known as "Old Palermo", a former Italian neighbourhood located in the northeast of Buenos Aires, famous for its hoodlums, gauchos, and prostitutes.

²⁵ Mercedes Blanco, *op. cit.*, p. 113.

²⁶ Angela Di Tullio, *op. cit.*, p. 2.

Argentines with dignity: their criollo identity was not that of an arrogant people living in the outskirts of the city, nor was it bad tempered. They wrote in the normal dialect of their time. Their intent was neither to revert to Spaniards nor degenerate into criminals. I am thinking of Esteban Echeverría, Domingo Faustino Sarmiento, Vicente Fidel López, Lucio V. Mansilla, Eduardo Wilde. They spoke well in Argentinean: an outdated thing. They did not need to disguise themselves as others nor pride themselves on being newcomers in order to write. Today, this naturalness is spent. Two opposite views direct the writings: the pseudo-plebeian, and the pseudo-Hispanic²⁷.

The paradox which is established throughout Borges's linguistic debate is, precisely, the importance that he gave to the spoken language, which had already become solidified in the pages of the "*literatura gauchesca*" (literature pertaining to the *gaucho*) while hoping to fix it around the figure of the *compadrito* within the parameters he, himself, imposed. It was a language that would cut out what he disliked, sharing some aspects of the moralizing campaign of those who claimed that *lunfardo* would corrupt minds and customs, as it was considered a dialectal deviation propagated by soap operas which were contrary to public morality²⁸.

Manuel Puig, on the other hand, surprised readers in 1968 with his first novel, *Betrayed by Rita Hayworth*²⁹, by incorporating the linguistic reality of the spoken language of Buenos Aires of the 1930s and 1940s into the evolutionary dynamics of language. He recalled the voices he heard in his childhood, and brought them to the present in the

²⁷ Jorge Luis Borges, *Obras completas, op. cit.*, p. 125.

²⁸ Serialized radio dramas became extremely popular in Argentina in the 30s and 40s. The themes were usually unrequited love, adultery, single mothers, etc. The language employed was colloquial, and immigrant characters would deliberately mix their native language with Spanish in order to emphasize their ethnicity in the play.

²⁹ Manuel Puig, *La traición de Rita Hayworth*, Buenos Aires, Sudamericana, 1968. *The Betrayal of Rita Hayworth*, trans. by Suzanne Jill Levine, New York, Dutton, 1971.

form of a conversational narrative³⁰. Puig was of Catalan and Italian descent, he left his small provincial town, Coronel Vallejos, to attend an American school in Buenos Aires; later, he gained a scholarship to study film in Rome, and from then on he lived in New York, Paris, Rio, and Cuernavaca, in Mexico, where he died in 1990. It is important to refer to the trajectory of Puig in order to understand his quest for wellbeing, physical as well as spiritual, outside of Argentina. Only his memories, kept from Argentina, of his aunt and other members of his family, enabled him to reproduce the autobiographic narrative of his first novel. Manuel Puig wrote as therapy, he needed to clarify and understand some of his problems, and the best way was to use an intermediary, a character³¹.

Puig's characters are the children of immigrants who are forging a new future for themselves in a land that does not include them. Patricia B. Jessen accurately explains that

Puig's search is the search of a lost reality. When the immigrants came to Argentina they did not find established institutions with which they could associate; instead, they found a stage to be infused with total reality. Puig's characters represent the newly arrived. They are a work in progress. For all of them reality is outside; the others are reality: the honest bourgeoisie, the legitimate families, those who have name and fortune, and those who have titles³².

Puig also rebels against the ruling classes. But, while Borges saw in his time the Spanish cultural hegemony as an imposition on the incipient

³⁰ Carolina Casillo, "Manuel Puig y la novela de la conversación – El gesto de un narrador vanguardista", 2004, p. 6, <http://www.ucm.es/info/especulo/numero28/narvang.html>, Retrieved May 22, 2013.

³¹ Jorgelina Corbatta, "Brief Encounter: An Interview with Manuel Puig", trans. by Ilan Staans, *Review of Contemporary Fiction*, Vol. II, No. 3, Fall 1991, p. 165-176.

³² Patricia B. Jessen, *La realidad en la novelística de Manuel Puig*, Madrid, Editorial Pliegos, 1990, p. 53-54.

Americanism and created a personal myth by looking towards the past, concentrating on that which was picturesque or invented, Puig, in contrast, faces a reality evoked as a collective myth³³. The Galician, Italian, and Jewish characters that inhabit Puig's works acquire a voice that reveals the essence of their lives, in a socio-cultural context full of prejudice and stereotypes, in a language filtered through radio, film, and the local dialect in which they are immersed.

In an interview conducted by Danubio Torres Fierro, Puig explained the situation of the newly arrived immigrants, pointing out their urge to find a model to fill the socio-cultural vacuum in which they found themselves:

The mass of the Argentinean population was formed by the immigration of the beginning of the century, mostly Italian, and those farmers who arrived to change their status were people who came to forget their traditions, not to continue them. That's why they didn't contribute culturally to their children, as they preferred to forget all that was their tradition. This explains that their children had, first of all, to invent a language because at home they were not learning Spanish; only dialects were spoken there. This life style and this language that they had to learn, mostly on the street, had to employ totally unreal models, such as, songs, film subtitles, radio, popular journalism, the aggressive tone of the tango. Those models were also rhetorical. Oh! I almost forgot, there was also the ultra-rhetorical language of the primary school texts. All of that cornered them into a dead end. They all wanted to improve themselves, to attain a higher level, but the ideal of refinement and elegance only drove them to bad taste ³⁴.

Those feared, voiceless immigrants were stuck to their radios listening to popular music (tangos, boleros), attentive to the lyrics that evoked

³³ Jorgelina Corbatta, *Mito personal y mitos colectivos en las novelas de Manuel Puig*, Madrid, Orígenes, 1988.

³⁴ Quoted in Patricia Jessen, *op. cit.*, p. 53-54.

love, friendship, and loss in a language that became their own. In terms of space, they preferred to be transported to the dazzling world of Hollywood from the working class neighbourhoods in which they lived. Their parents' past was alien and unimportant to them, as was the imposition of prescriptive rules that did not translate into the linguistic reality of their daily lives.

Rejecting the omniscience of the narrative voice, Puig equips his plot with the movement of a camera that focuses on the characters, allowing them to express themselves freely, following models provided by soap operas, popular songs, and comedians that exaggerated grammatical and syntactic errors in the spoken language of the working class of Buenos Aires. Such as, the extremely popular character of "Catita" created by the Argentinean comedian Niní Marshall (1903-1990), who popularized a number of expressions ("déale", "haiga", "fulbo", "anédotá", and the famous question: "¿lo qué?") which, to this day, make teachers cringe. Puig transfers these expressions to literature with total acceptance, mainly in *Betrayed by Rita Hayworth* (1968)³⁵ and *Heartbreak Tango* (1969)³⁶, polishing the language meticulously in order to represent faithfully and artistically its meaning. Puig believed that he needed to relate reality to beauty; so, when working with an alienated and degraded language, it was important to transform and enhance its meaning through social connotation³⁷.

Both Borges and Puig drenched their literature in emotion and ideology that satisfied their concept of what was Argentinean in relation to

³⁵ Manuel Puig, *La traición de Rita Hayworth*, *op. cit.*

³⁶ Manuel Puig, *Boquitas pintadas*. *Folletín*, Buenos Aires, Sudamericana, 1969. *Heartbreak Tango*, trans. by Suzanne Jill Levin, Illinois/London, Dalkey Archive Press, 2010.

³⁷ Myron L. Lichtblau, "Conceptos del lenguaje literario expresados por algunos novelistas hispanoamericanos contemporáneos", *Centro Virtual Cervantes*, 1986, p. 619, http://cvc.cervantes.es/obref/aih/aih/_ix.html, Retrieved May 22, 2013.

themselves. Both reflected in their work the language of Buenos Aires; one, the countryside and the other, the outskirts of the city, each focusing on a specific aspect of the population. Their enormous success, compounded by other Argentinean writers of the “boom” and the “post-boom”, mostly from Buenos Aires, created in the reader a representative illusion that is immediately identifiable with what is considered to be the Argentinean linguistic expression, disregarding local linguistic differences and dialectal and polyphonic aspects of the rest of the country.

Works cited

- Associazione Culturale Due Sicile, "Inmigración italiana en la Argentina", 2007, <http://www.adsic.it/2007/11/20/inmigración/italiana/en/la/argentina>, Retrieved January 10, 2008.
- Berg, Walter Bruno and Marcos Klaus (eds.), *Oralidad y Argentinidad. Ensayos sobre la función del lenguaje hablado en la literatura argentina*, Tübingen, Narr, 1997.
- Blanco, Mercedes I., *Lenguaje e identidad: actitudes lingüísticas en la Argentina 1800-1960*, Bahía Blanca, Gabinete de Estudios Lingüísticos, Departamento de Humanidades, Universidad Nacional del Sur, 1991.
- Borges, Jorge Luis, *El idioma de los argentinos*, Buenos Aires, M. Glazer Editor, 1928.
- Borges, Jorge Luis, *Obras completas*, Vol. I, Madrid, Círculo de Lectores, 1992.
- Casillo, Carolina, "Manuel Puig y la novela de la conversación – El gesto de un narrador vanguardista", 2004, <http://www.ucm.es/info/especulo/numero28/narvang.html>, Retrieved May 22, 2013.
- Castro, Américo, *La peculiaridad lingüística rioplatense y su sentido histórico*, Buenos Aires, Losada, Segunda edición, 1941, Madrid, Taurus, 1962.
- Corbatta, Jorgelina, *Mito personal y mitos colectivos en las novelas de Manuel Puig*, Madrid, Orígenes, 1988.
- Corbatta, Jorgelina, "Brief Encounter: An Interview with Manuel Puig", trans. by Ilan Stavans, *Review of Contemporary Fiction*, vol. II, No. 3, Fall 1991, p. 165-176.
- Di Tullio, Angela, "El idioma de los Argentinos: Cultura y Discriminación", 2002, <http://www.lehman.cuny.edu/ciberletras/v06/bordelois.html>, Retrieved December 30, 2007.
- Fernández Ferrer, Antonio, *Borges de la A a la Z*, 2ª Ed. Madrid, Siruela, 1991.
- Foucault, Michel, *L'archéologie du savoir*, Paris, Éditions Gallimard, 1969.
- Fraser, Nicholas and Marysa Navarro, *Evita. The Real Life of Eva Perón*, New York/London, W. S. Norton, 1996.
- Hernández, José, *Martin Fierro*, Buenos Aires, Editorial Losada, 1872.
- Jessen, Patricia B., *La realidad en la novelística de Manuel Puig*, Madrid, Editorial Pliegos, 1990.
- Kulikowski, Zulema M., "Oralidad en la literatura: ecos de lo cotidiano en Manuel Puig", *Actas del Congreso Brasileiro de Hispanistas*, 2, 2002, <http://www.proceedings.scielo.br/scielo/php>, Retrieved May 22, 2013.

- La Gaceta Literaria*, Madrid, 15 de abril, 1927, año I, número 8, p. 1.
- Lichtblau, Myron L., "Conceptos del lenguaje literario expresados por algunos novelistas hispanoamericanos contemporáneos", *Centro Virtual Cervantes*, 1986, http://cvc.cervantes.es/obref/aih/aih/_ix.html, Retrieved May 22, 2013.
- Oesterreicher, Wolf, "Pragmática del discurso oral", in Walter Bruno Berg and Marcos Klaus (eds.), *Oralidad y Argentinidad. Ensayos sobre la función del lenguaje hablado en la literatura argentina*, Tübingen, Narr, 1997, p. 86-97.
- Olson, David and Nancy Torrance, *Cultura escrita e oralidad*, Sao Paulo, Atica, 1996.
- Puig, Manuel, *La traición de Rita Hayworth*, Buenos Aires, Sudamericana, 1968.
The Betrayal of Rita Hayworth, trans. by Suzanne Jill Levine, New York, Dutton, 1971.
- Puig, Manuel, *Boquitas pintadas. Folletín*, Buenos Aires, Sudamericana, 1969. *Heartbreak Tango*, trans. by Suzanne Jill Levin, Illinois/London, Dalkey Archive Press, 2010.
- Sarlo, Beatriz, *Borges, un escritor en las orillas*, Buenos Aires, Espasa Calpe-Ariel, 1995.
- Sarlo, Beatriz, "Oralidad y lenguas extranjeras. El conflicto en la literatura argentina durante el Primer tercio del siglo XX", *Orbis Tertius*, I, (1), 1996, p. 28-41.
- Thon, Sonia, "El mito del campo argentino desde una perspectiva contemporánea", *Actas del Congreso Internacional de Hispanistas*, Barcelona, Promociones Universitarias, 1992, p. 1025-1032.
- Vélez, Wanda A, "South American Immigration: Argentina", 1990, <http://www.yale.edu/ynhti/curriculum/units/1990/1/90.01.06.xhtml>, Retrieved January 10, 2008.
- Williamson, Edwin, *Borges, a life*, New York, Viking, 2004.
- Zum Felde, Alberto, *El problema de la cultura americana*, Buenos Aires, Losada, 1943.