Away from the Abyss

Borgesian Translation Reconsidered through Buddhist Philosophy

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Abstract

The English-language translations of Jorge Luis Borges's Spanish-language works undertaken by the author and Norman Di Giovanni went above and beyond what is generally perceived as acceptable in traditional Western practices. Their work, together with Borges's thoughts on translation itself, garnered criticism from within Western Translation Studies for its rejection of the status of the original text and the blurring of the distinction between author and translator.

Yet the pair's actions and Borges's views on translation cease to appear scandalous under the light of Buddhist philosophy, particularly through the use of the Buddhist principles that all phenomena are impermanent and interdependent. This thesis will seek to use these ideas to legitimize the actions of Borges and Di Giovanni.

To do so, we will trace the history of opposing and convergent theories from Western philosophy and describe our Buddhist concepts in detail. In order to better understand Borges, we will examine the array of philosophies that influenced the writer and how they both align themselves and differ from Buddhist ideas. This thesis will end by directly applying impermanence and interdependence to the translation practices of Borges and Di Giovanni and considering what potential effect legitimacy for such practices would have on translation overall.

Résumé

Les traductions vers l'anglais des œuvres espagnoles de Jorge Luis Borges, créées par l'auteur et Norman Di Giovanni, sont allées loin au-delà de ce qui est généralement perçu comme étant acceptable dans les pratiques traditionnelles occidentales. Leur travail, en plus des prises de position de Borges sur la traduction, a été la cible de critiques de la part de la traductologie occidentale pour avoir rejeté le statut des textes originaux et pour avoir estompé la frontière entre auteur et traducteur.

Or, les actions des deux hommes tout comme les opinions de Borges sur la traduction perdent leur air scandaleux sous la lumière de la philosophie bouddhiste, en particulier avec l'appui des principes bouddhistes qui affirment que tout phénomène est impermanent et interdépendant. La présente thèse a pour but de faire appel à ces idées afin de donner une légitimité aux actions de Borges et Di Giovanni.

Pour ce faire, il faudra tracer l'histoire des théories opposantes et concordantes dans la philosophie occidentale et procéder à une analyse détaillée des concepts bouddhistes sélectionnés. Afin de mieux comprendre Borges, nous nous pencherons sur gamme de philosophies ayant influencé l'écrivain et la façon dont elles s'alignent et diffèrent des idées bouddhistes. La présente thèse terminera sur une application directe de l'impermanence et l'interdépendance aux pratiques de traduction de Borges et Di Giovanni, et par une réflexion sur l'effet potentiel de la légitimité pour de telles pratiques sur la traduction dans son ensemble.

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Table of Contents

1.0 Introduction

In 1968, American translator Norman Thomas di Giovanni flew to Buenos Aires to work alongside the great Argentine writer Jorge Luis Borges. This was to be a partnership with the stated aim of translating Borges's Spanish-language short stories, poems, and other works into English.

They worked in some very remarkable and unorthodox ways. As they translated Borges's work together, the two would write and translate simultaneously, changing the original to reflect the translation; going a step further, they would treat the original as a full-on target text; reversing the traditional flow envisioned by Western Translation Studies (TS), they would sometimes treat the original as a "middle text" or an intermediary between the translation and what they imagined to be a "deep text" that preceded it; finally, they occasionally treated the translation as the "true text" culturally and linguistically, elevating it over the original (Fraser 2004: 67-70) and deciding that future translations be based solely on it (63). These intellectual and physical manipulations amounted to translation carried out with little regard for the notion of the conventional order of things and the so-called sanctity of the original; by the same token, it was translation freed of many of its traditional restrictions.

As far as Western Translation Studies is generally concerned, the Borges-Di Giovanni partnership seems to reveal some kind of deep-rooted nihilistic need of Borges's to negate himself by lowering both his status as author and that of the original through "the crime of infidelity" (Fraser 2004: 58), or elevate that of the translator. These are described

as "infamous" (59) tendencies and are equated with a lack of respect for all that is traditionally accepted in translation. This kind of "disrespectful" and "destructive" (76) behaviour simply doesn't fit the model of translators who spend "decades humbling themselves" (72) in service of the original.[1]

For practicing this sort of destructive translation, the Argentine writer has been criticized within Western Translation Studies as a mistranslator and as suffering from a "nihilistic impulse" (59). This is on top of being labelled "irreverent," "subversive" (Waisman 2005: 50), and "profane" (66) for some of his thoughts on the subject of translation. These twin streams of criticisms led to the following, central questions for this study: can Borges be absolved of what the Western tradition perceives as his crimes, real or imagined? This thesis will argue that there is a way of looking at Borgesian translation that gives it legitimacy within Western TS.

This thesis will reconsider Borges's supposed misdeeds from the viewpoint of Buddhist philosophy, specifically, through the central metaphysical concepts of impermanence and interdependence as discussed by the Buddhist philosopher Nāgārjuna (c. second century CE).[2] These concepts are some of the fundamental "characteristics of reality" as seen through Buddhism (Siderits 2007: 18). They describe "the impermanence of all phenomena" (Bhushan, Garfield & Zablocki 2009: 100) and state that "all phenomena are dependently originated" (Edelglass & Garfield 2009: 26) or interdependent on one

[1] While we speak here of "traditional" views on translation, we will not neglect more recent voices in TS that have pushed for different kinds of equivalence between translation and original. These theorists will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 2.

[2] The exact timeline of Nāgārjuna's life is unknown, but the philosopher is said to have lived in southern India between 150-250 CE.

another. We will fully define and clarify these terms further on. In moving away from the notion of treason to the underlying truth of impermanence and interdependence, this argument serves, in part, as a reminder to translators "that [their work] is the responsibility not to preserve a permanent past but to manage transformation in a productive way" (Bhushan, Garfield & Zablocki 2009: 102).

For the purposes of this study, we will use the idea of "translation as a paradigm" to define translation as it was practiced by Borges and Di Giovanni. In this definition, translation consists of the "philosophical and theoretical framework encompassing any kind of controlled and ethical transformation pattern" (Basalamah 2010: 72), a description that fits well with the hybrid nature and multiplicity of influences at work in Borgesian translation. This definition validates the use of Buddhist principles in that they provide this very sort of philosophical and theoretical framework to our central question.

Considered through the lens of impermanence and interdependence, Borges's practices and beliefs align themselves with the philosophical reality of Buddhism. Shifting the perspective towards Buddhist philosophy frees translation as practiced by Borges and Di Giovanni of the charges levelled by Western discourse and removes the air of controversy from their actions. From this perspective, the controversy is replaced with a sense that the two men were acting in harmony with the Buddhist view of reality, and working as a real-life example of Buddhist philosophy in action. By translating as they did, Borges and Di Giovanni were acknowledging, either knowingly or otherwise, the fundamental characteristics of reality in Buddhism. Theirs was a legitimate translation practice that accepted the ideas that change is to be expected and that the various aspects

of that process of change are mutually reliant and connected.

In this attempt to legitimize Borgesian translation, particular emphasis will be placed on Western and Buddhist philosophy in addition to delving into the core Buddhist ideas operating at the centre of this thesis. We will also explore the personal beliefs held by Jorge Luis Borges on philosophy and translation and their relation to both Western and Buddhist traditions. The remainder of this first chapter will discuss the various sorts of criticism faced by Borges and the relevance of using Buddhist philosophy to legitimize his practices and beliefs.

In chapter two we will begin by reviewing some of the trends from Western philosophy that have come to influence how Western TS judges translation methods. By considering the philosophical traditions inherited by Borges and Di Giovanni, we can better understand why their actions often appear controversial. We will touch on some of the streams of thought, or memes, that have dominated Western translation over the centuries. The final section of this chapter will explore the effect of postmodernist thought on these trends along with the underlying themes of "permanence" and "autonomous authority" in order to juxtapose them with our central Buddhist concepts of impermanence and interdependence.

Chapter three will take a more in-depth look at Buddhist philosophy and the central concepts of impermanence and interdependence, which will be central to our attempt to legitimize Borges and Di Giovanni's translation practices in subsequent chapters. In addition, the importance of causality will be introduced along with the ties this concept has to the work of Western philosophers. This chapter will also investigate the applicability of

impermanence and interdependence and their overall validity despite some reservations within Western academia.

We will delve into the philosophy of Borges himself in chapter four, the wide variety of works and references that influenced his writing, and his views on translation. This will include parallel and divergent philosophical traditions from the Western tradition, including nominalist and realist ideas, as well as Western thinkers whose work mirrors our central concepts from Buddhist philosophy. We will highlight the idea of causality as explored by philosopher David Hume and its importance to Borges. The last section of this chapter will look into evidence of Buddhist influence on Borges at different periods of his life and the author's statements on the subject.

Chapter five will look in more detail at the translation practices of Borges and Di Giovanni before highlighting four specific cases of wrongdoing as seen from the perspective of traditional Western TS.

Chapter six will focus on the application of impermanence and interdependence on Borgesian translation, discussing the paradigm shift that occurs when they are used in the context of translation. We then use impermanence and interdependence to reject specific charges against Borges and Di Giovanni from the four specific cases outlined in the preceding chapter. After giving legitimacy to the duo's translation practices, this chapter applies Buddhist philosophy to specific statements Borges made regarding translation.

In our conclusions in chapter seven, we will discuss the greater implications for using impermanence and interdependence in Translation Studies and offer a rethinking of

translation in which the ideas of change and interconnectedness are natural parts of the process.

Before proceeding further, it is important to address the definition of the term "Western" that is used throughout this thesis, especially given the imprecise nature of exactly what now constitutes the Western world.

For our purposes, the ideas of "Western philosophy" will encompass a body of work beginning with the first known Europe written accounts on translation and translation-related philosophy, specifically from Plato and Aristotle, and extend to present-day post-modern theorists of the subject. While it may be pointed out that Western philosophy can be traced to even earlier origins, to the sixth century Greek philosophers in Miletus (Jordan 1990: 20), the writings we associate with Plato and Aristotle, which includes the origins of relativism (Tiles 2000: 97) are of greater importance to our topic. Of the vast array of references in the definition of Western philosophy, it is certainly necessary to include Christian European thinkers beginning with Saint Augustine and his contemporaries. This is due to the importance of Christianity on European translation traditions and because they allow for a comparison with Buddhist traditions. Our definition of Western philosophy inevitably grows with the Christian European tradition as it has branched out over centuries to include Renaissance and Enlightenment thinkers, the idealism and skepticism of the 17th and 18th centuries, and the many philosophers in Europe, the Americas, and Australasia in the centuries since whose work is a result of these long traditions. References to "Western Translation Studies" will be understood as being a product of this broad array of philosophy.

While there are many other traditions, literatures, systems, and beliefs that could arguably be included in our definition of Western philosophy, the major streams of thought that will be used in comparison with Buddhist philosophy find their beginnings with the Greek philosophers and the evolution of Christianity on philosophy and translation.

It is equally relevant to touch on the apparent dichotomy at work in this thesis, which arguably pits the Western tradition against Eastern philosophical tenets. In fact, the notion of an ideological battle between East and West goes well beyond the claims of this work. The putting to use of impermanence and interdependence cannot be equated with a representation of Eastern philosophy in a larger sense. Moreover, the Buddhist philosophy employed in the Western sphere has itself been culturally translated. We find that "imported Buddhist teachings are adapted as much as they are adopted" (Bhushan, Garfield & Zablocki 2009: 89-90) in accordance with the host culture. Consequently, the Buddhist philosophy discussed in this thesis should be viewed as a Westernized version of Buddhist thought and an academic interpretation required for the purposes of this work; this Western reading of Buddhist ideas will be used to critique the Western tradition within its own academic framework. It therefore cannot be said to represent and entire Eastern tradition and fuel concerns over an East-West philosophical struggle.

Finally, a note on the ultimate goals and potential contributions of this work: although this thesis will primarily discuss the particulars necessary to legitimize translation by Borges and Di Giovanni, it is not intended as a practical guide for those wishing to emulate their brand of translation. Rather, beyond achieving legitimacy for the pair's actions, the purpose of this work is to reveal the false bottom of philosophical issues

and underlying beliefs that lead to the perception of their work as controversial. By substituting some of the fundamental philosophies in these criticisms with ideas from another tradition, we may begin to have a different sort of conversation about translation and to reconsider some of the things Western translation takes for granted.

1.1 Criticism of Borges's Practices and Philosophies

In his essay, "Past Lives of Knives: On Borges, Translation, and Sticking Old Texts," Ryan Fraser examines the work of the Borges-Di Giovanni duo. What he uncovers is nothing less than a slap in the face to the modern translation status quo. He finds that Borges and his American friend "appreciably altered" (Fraser 2004: 59) the original, adding new chapters, rewriting entire sections and deleting others. This way of translating was "'detonation' in its explosive and nihilistic sense," (62) a process that ended up "casting shade on previous texts," texts that were "detonated and buried" (63) in a series of "brazen acts" (71). This was a profoundly transformative sort of translation, one "peppered … with *clin d'œil* references and insider jokes" (59). It was translation that even dared to write the translator into the text (59).

Other scholars have delved into the quagmire of Borges's philosophical side, examining how a wide range of philosophical influences affected the author's outlook on translation. Translation was important to Borges, and his opinions on it were not limited by the views of others or what was commonly accepted. Drawing from the work of thinkers such as David Hume, Baruch Spinoza, and even from an early introduction to Buddhism,

Borges became a wellspring of bombshell statements on writing and translation, ideas that helped define his intellectual career. In these statements, he conjured up a world that had said its goodbyes to definitive texts because here, every original was a draft (Waisman 2005: 51). He pushed for the "valorization of translation … a creative effort in and of itself" (68) by stressing the importance and value of the "translator's preferences and omissions" (68) over the idea of an impossible fidelity (Johnson 2012: 51). In fact, taken together, the Argentine's practices and beliefs seem targeted at just that: the notion of "an impossible fidelity to that which [translation] institutionalizes, to that which takes place only through it" (51). For Borges, translation was such a fundamental phenomenon that "there is never a moment in which there is literature (*letras*) without the constitutive possibility of translation … one language or literature becomes at least two" (51).

In *Borges and Translation,* Sergio Waisman also discusses the anxiety felt by the traditional Western approach to translation when faced with the change that it brings, also known as the "disarticulation of the original" (Waisman 2005: 62).[3] This anxiety leads us to see what is imaged as the abyss, an expectation of loss through translational change. Borges instead saw a translation "rife with possibility" (63).[4]

[3] Waisman is quoting Paul de Man.

[4] The word "abyss," referenced in the title of this thesis, signifies not a fall into damnation—as found in the Christian tradition's concept of hell or nihilism that influenced innumerable Western sources ranging from Nietzsche to Hugo—rather, the idea of fear; specifically the fear of change through translation. In this regard, "abyss" provides an important commonality between how Borges translated and the perspective of Buddhism. The idea of moving away from the abyss refers both to the Western fear expressed by Waisman and an idea of the abyss that also resonates in sources on Buddhism. The latter describe the difficulties and fears that are often associated with accepting the idea of complete interdependence as a leap into an "abyss of emptiness [interdependence]" (Garfield 2002: 85). Similarly to how Borges saw possibility where others saw an abyss and destructive change, the leap for Buddhists merely results in interconnectedness and not annihilation.

The common thread in all of these efforts, it appears, was a desire to call into question the primacy of the original and any sense of loss through translation, with valorization of the translator as a by-product.

These ideas, however, remain controversial and structurally impossible under regular Western translation, which operates unidirectionally, leading from an original to a translation. An excellent illustration of this traditional model is to show that, viewed through it, Borgesian translation "take[s] the ground on which we were just comfortably standing out from under us" (Waisman 2005: 112-113) and shakes a largely stable status quo. Borges is perceived, depending on one's politics, either as a brazen author/translator working free of any normal restrictions, or as a reckless nihilist bent on destruction. At best he is seen as playful, someone fond of having his work monkeyed with (Fraser 2004: 62), resulting in downright strange translations (Monegal 1988: 461). In either case this polyglot and renaissance man shows it is possible to move away from the abyss and offers a source of lingering controversy and fascination.

1.2 Borges & Di Giovanni viewed through Buddhism

Why apply Buddhist philosophy in this way? First, because its core ideas fit extraordinarily well in this context and have a lot to give modern translation in the way of teaching power. It is important to note that what this study purports to demonstrate using Buddhist ideas could also be accomplished using Western philosophy: there are, for example, obvious parallels between the impermanence and interdependence found in Buddhism and those in

postmodern theories. But there is an important rationale for applying Buddhist philosophy instead: the latter offers a holistic approach and a clean break with a Western translation heritage that has consistently struggled between extreme demands of fealty to the original and forces urging the opposite. This is a tradition that has, over many centuries, consistently returned to the idea of original texts that are somehow imbued with a permanent aura and operate independently, only to revert back to a policy in which change is permissible; this two-poled paradigm has always pitted original against translation. As legitimizing as Western philosophies such as postmodernism may be, they represent a fragmented body of philosophies and are simply more recent participants in this fluctuating contest. Such dualistic systems are generally rejected in Buddhism. Using impermanence and interdependence to reconsider the foundations of translation allows us to move away from the duality that characterizes so much of Western Translation Studies in favour of a single metaphysical reality in which these two concepts are fundamental components of the path to enlightenment. Moreover, what Buddhist thought offers is a long-standing philosophy that encompasses all phenomena, while postmodernism and related schools are only half a century old and more restricted in scope. Our chosen concepts offer Borgesian translation a coherent paradigm and a single metaphysical reality in which to exist, and much of the focus in this thesis will be on the Buddhist philosopher Nāgārjuna, whose work provides a full metaphysical model that offers explicit fundamentals for reinterpreting how Borges and Di Giovanni worked.

Second, translation in the Western world has traditionally focused on its own philosophical tradition. It does not have to be so. There is no directive forcing translation to profit only from certain sources.

Translation theorist Maria Tymoczko has been emphatic in advocating for the relevance and need for Translation Studies to involve ideas from outside the discipline's regular go-to list of references, most of which lean heavily on Western philosophy:

> Translation research will move away from linguistic approaches as narrowly conceived and even from the circumscribed cultural studies approaches currently in use. The growing edges of translation research will go beyond current approaches based on humanistic research, to embrace thoroughly diverse branches of the social sciences and natural sciences, particularly the biological sciences and technical aspects of cognitive science. What follows is that research in translation studies will increasingly require scholars with broader training than is currently customary in the field.
>
> It follows that not only is there the necessity to encourage students to become proficient in the social and natural sciences, as well as linguistic and textual subjects, but current teachers and scholars in translation studies must "retrofit" themselves by becoming more conversant with research in other fields so as to be able to transcend the current limitations of research in translation studies and remain at the cutting edge. (Tymoczko 2005: 1094)

Individuals in Western academia who study Buddhist philosophy are responsible for a growing body of work intent on showing the value of Buddhist concepts in a Western

framework. This work is an important reminder that "the West has no monopoly on good philosophical ideas" (Garfield 2002: 231).

One of the reasons that Buddhism has not been widely considered applicable to Western philosophy is that it continues to be identified with religion. Indeed, some of the criticisms of Borges found in "Past Lives of Knives" can easily be transferred to Buddhist philosophy. These include a sometimes "tongue-in-cheek-sensationalistic" (Fraser 2004: 57) introduction to the classic Western view that treats Borges's tendency towards denial of self, which is directly linked in Buddhism to dependent origination or interdependence, and impermanence as nihilistic and perhaps self-loathing.[5]

Yet to label Buddhist philosophy as religious in nature and therefore inapplicable to use in translation theory is a huge mischaracterization. In general terms, Buddhist philosophy and its Western counterpart have followed different paths, but end up working towards the same goals. Much of this has to do with the post-Enlightenment lessons learned in the West. In India and China, Buddhist philosophy was never forced to take sides in what is often perceived as the Western conflict between science and religion. In its philosophical form, "Buddhism is atheistic, rejects revelation as epistemically authoritative, and is committed to infinite human perfectibility through empirical inquiry and rational analysis, culminating in full awakening, or buddhahood" (Garfield 2002: 256).

This is not to suggest that Buddhism the religion does not exist. It retains all of the "trappings and social functions" found in any religion, including prayer, spiritual practices, and so on (256-257). As with any other religious practice in the world, "there could be good

[5] Impermanence and interdependence and related concepts will be discussed in more depth in the third chapter.

reason to reject any part or all of Buddhist religion as a rational or efficacious practice" (257). This leaves Buddhism the philosophy, which has the same fundamental characteristics as the Western branch:

> Buddhist philosophy, like Western philosophy, aims to understand the fundamental nature of reality, the nature of human life, and so provides a hermeneutical context in which those in Buddhist cultures constitute and understand the meaning of their lives. Buddhist religious practice, like Christian religious practice, aims at similar goals. But in the Buddhist context, religious and philosophical practices have never been prised apart as distinct and independent cultural practices, as opposed to connected parts of a seamless cultural artefact. (256-257)

So we see that Buddhism, despite never formally breaking with its religious background, and never having had "a formal schism between science and religion" (Garfield 2002: 255), is still able to function on the same epistemological level as any branch of Western philosophy. Critics who dismiss it on the grounds of its religious nature have simply chosen to ignore its philosophical, non-mystical aspect.

This brings us back to the central idea of this study. That is, when we allow ourselves to work within the paradigm of Buddhist philosophy, and we accept the possibility that some of its ideas—specifically the concepts of impermanence and interdependence—are relevant to translation, Borges loses his air of controversy. In their work, Borges and Di Giovanni repeatedly attempted to subvert both the concepts of a

definitive text and the secondary status of the translation and translator. When we apply Buddhist ideas to the process, their efforts are able to exist in conformity with a philosophical worldview rather than in opposition to one.

In fact, the things Borges practiced and preached align themselves extremely well with Buddhism on a number of levels, which we will explore in depth in the fourth chapter. In short, what appears to be wilfully destructive, nihilistic, and dismissive of tradition in the culture where he was translating can instead be seen as a reflection of reality as understood through Buddhist principles. The charge of nihilism, particularly, ceases to be an issue.

When viewed as a reflection of Buddhist philosophy, Borgesian translation is granted the same space and freedom it derived from the author's favourite Western philosophers, but with the added advantage of having them positioned as fundamentals, as well as being unencumbered by the longstanding cultural emphasis on concepts such as fidelity to a permanent original.

2.0 Western Philosophy

To properly situate how impermanence and interdependence affect the perception of what Borges and Di Giovanni were doing, we must briefly examine the history of Western philosophy for some context. There is in the Western tradition, and certainly in Western TS, a "concept of authorial originality" that has come to dominate attitudes to translation and continues to inform general opinion on the subject (Venuti 2005: 802).

This idea, which "treats every textual feature [of a work] as the author's self-expression" (802), is incompatible with the Buddhist concepts of interdependence and naturally delegitimizes what Borges and Di Giovanni were up to, or relegates them to the margins of acceptability. The idea of authorial originality can be traced to the very roots of the Western tradition, partly the result, as some suggest, of the fall of Babel (cf. Derrida & Graham 1992) and the subsequent erasure of the perfect universal speech, the Bible and the "notion of a God-given meaning, one which transcended the text itself" (Le Blanc 2012: 18), and even the "quasi-sacred status" and authority of messages imparted by Zeus to the messenger god, Hermes (18).

From this ancient spring has flowed a tradition that, in its most extreme form, marks the difficulties for translation as it necessarily attempts to alter a conceptual ideal of text that has both perfection and authority woven into it:

> Compared to the omnipotent Author, the translator is nothing; compared to the powerful Father of the gods, Hermes is an insignificant little lackey resentful of his duties. The task of the translator thus becomes truly problematic, since he must function both as interpreter and magician. Elevated to the status of the sacred, the original defies attempts to assess its truth-value in social and historical terms; translation becomes mysterious, ineffable, an activity which falls outside the grasp of language. The sacred status attributed to the original in both the esthetic and religious domains now extends to all texts; the act of translation is emancipated from objective considerations … and logical analysis is displaced by a mystique of meaning embodied in fuzzy concepts such as *fidelity*, *affinity*, *resemblance*, *inspiration*, and *intention*. (Le Blanc 2012: 18)

In contrast to the Buddhist concepts of impermanence and interdependence, this tradition has led to assumptions of permanence and an autonomous authority that encourage the perception of the primacy of the original. This is a tradition of binary thinking, one that relies on the dualisms that are rejected in Buddhist metaphysics. Incorporated into this viewpoint is the fear of loss through translation. This influence can be felt even in contemporary writing from within the translation discipline: "When we read a book in translation, we know we're not getting the full deal. We implicitly accept that something inherent in the original is lost, even if we don't know what. We place our trust in the translator and plough ahead with our reading" (Wilson 2009: 164). Clearly these ideas have a longstanding attachment to the practice and theory of translation.

Beneath these overriding assumptions, however, is evidence of a more varied translation practice in the Western tradition. This is a translation that has had to navigate between precepts exhorting authority, permanence, and perfection, even as it has felt the influence of opposing philosophies that embrace difference and change, in addition to practical considerations such as fluency or readability and the requirements of the target audience.[6] This facet of TS has been active to varying degrees throughout the history of translation, although it experienced a particular resurgence with the development of postmodernism in the 20th century. In many ways postmodernist thought offers a measure of support for the same ideas of impermanence and interdependence as does Buddhist philosophy, albeit following a completely different line of reasoning. In the latter part of this chapter we will take a closer look at postmodernism and associated philosophies and how they relate to permanence and autonomous authority.

2.1 Memes of Translation

The assumptions of permanence and autonomous authority can be found in several influential traditions described in TS as supermemes, "ideas of such pervasive influence that they come up again and again in the history of the subject, albeit in sometimes slightly

[6] Anthony Pym approached the topic of this duality of extremes in Western translation in the following manner: "There is common agreement, among even quite disparate theorists, that translators belong to one culture only, the target culture. As we have seen, this assumption is broadly in keeping with the attribution of dominant causality to target-side factors, in overreaction to the days when all causality was invested in source-side factors. Theory has been switched from one extreme to the other" (Pym 1998: 178).

different guises"[7] (Chesterman 1997: 8). We will look at each of these ideas in order to provide theoretical points of reference for the historical examples listed in the following section of this chapter. These are ideas that have come to dominate Western thought on translation.

The first on the list is the source-target supermeme, or "the idea that translation is directional, going from somewhere to somewhere" (8). Here, the dominant idea is of a container-like translation moving a source text along a path to a target text.[8] Source-target has long served to bolster the notion of the primacy of the original.

Following from this translation movement is the supermeme of equivalence, which describes the assumption that there should be some form of sameness between target and source texts and has been recognized as "virtually unattainable" (9) given the disputable nature of precisely what that sameness entails; linked to equivalence is untranslatability, or the idea that "since equivalence is unattainable, translation must be impossible" (10).

Untranslatability has religious and philosophical roots. These include the Tower of Babel legend, Aristotelian binarism in which "things are either absolutely translatable or not, and therefore mostly not" (11), and the "idea promoted by ecclesiastical authorities of more than one religion that the divine Word should not be tampered with, that it should remain the exclusive property of those initiated in its original language" (11). Untranslatability has done much over the centuries in support of the notion of permanence

[7] Andrew Chesterman lists five supermemes in total: source-target, equivalence, untranslatability, free-vs-literal, and all-writing-is-translating.

[8] This supermeme offers a clear contrast to the bidirectionality suggested by interdependence.

that is implicit in the primacy of the original.

Another important supermeme is summed up as the distinction of free-vs-literal translation, also known as creative versus faithful translation. In this supermeme we find various versions of two extreme positions—absolute accuracy contrasted with translation free of restrictions—and a lot of grey area in between (12-13).

A particularly important tradition is an offshoot to the free-vs-literal meme: the dualism known as foreignization versus domestication.[9] This supermeme "investigates the properties of the target text in terms of its naturalness or strangeness in the target language and culture, in relative abstraction from its relations with the source text" (Kwieciński 2001: 7). This dualism can be traced back to the very first translation theorists in the Western tradition and suggests a clear vision of competing extremes in translation in the place of the moderation of interdependence.

The last supermeme to touch on is that of all-writing-is-translating, and is different in that it reflects Borges's practice rather than some of the traditions we find in opposition. All-writing-is-translating reflects the idea that "no texts are original, they are all derivative from other texts, parasitical upon them" (Chesterman, 13). From this vantage point, "there are no 'originals'; all we *can* do is translate" (14). This meme stands in contrast to both equivalence and untranslatability since, in the case of the former "meaning is something that is negotiated during the communication or interpretation process itself" and that translation is an eminently natural thing in the latter (14). This meme is less relevant to our

[9] This is also commonly known as source-oriented versus target-oriented translation.

purposes than the four before it, but it does provide a good illustration of the complexity and variety of Western ideas on translation. It sits in contrast to the stability and authority found in other memes and for that reason emerged more visibly with postmodernism and ideas of intertextuality found in the work of Benjamin and Derrida (13).

By tracing the route of these memes through history, we can get a general sense of the complexity of Western translation as it vacillated between a yearning for permanence, perfection, and autonomous authority and demands pulling from the opposite direction. The memes of source-target, equivalence, and untranslatability in particular offer a sharp contrast to the impermanence, sequential time, and mutability found in Buddhist philosophy.

2.2 Permanence & Autonomous Authority in the Western Tradition

Much of the emphasis on permanence began with Plato and Aristotle, two of the founding philosophers of the Western tradition. While these two thinkers and the other names discussed here had a significant influence, the following list of references merely represents some of the better-known, applicable examples from the Western TS tradition and is not meant to represent a comprehensive overview of the subject.

Plato famously adopted a dualistic view of the nature of reality, which "applied not just to the visible and invisible realms but also to the human self, which was composed of

body and soul. As Plato saw it, the real self was the soul, which was deathless and indestructible" (Eire 2009: 44). Marking a point for permanence, the Greek philosopher emphasized "making eternity the goal of human existence, and assign[ed] it a huge ontological advantage over temporality" (Eire 2009: 44).

Aristotle took a different tack, while still insisting on the eternal nature of reality: "If anything exists at all, it must be derived from something that has eternal existence. In other words, in order for anything to exist, there must be a source of being that exists necessarily, for all times" (Eire 2009: 47). For Aristotle, translation was possible precisely because of this:

> [Aristotle believed that] reality remained constant: the *signification* of a word, its meaning, did not change when it was expressed via another *sonum*, or form.
>
> It has taken until the present century for this general conception of meaning to be toppled off its pedestal. It is therefore not surprising that it has also dominated (at least western) thinking about translation theory. The idea of absolute and invariant meanings has been a very long-lasting translation meme. Perhaps its survival had something to do with the need to cling to something permanent amid the flux of translation. (Chesterman 1997: 21)

When translation, by its very nature, challenges the constancy described by Aristotle, defenders of his ideals have at various times resorted to referencing an underlying untranslatability and the resulting idea of loss.

For theorists in this debate, the loss depends greatly on the type of text being translated; part of this loss is due to what is understood as the mysteriousness of the original, especially when the original is poetic in nature. These works of art are what Walter Benjamin described as "communicable statements endowed with a mysterious, poetic significance" (Sallis 2002: 80):

> If even the most masterful of translation will always have been compelled by the force of linguistic difference to choose between significations that in the original are intact in their multiplicity, then translation will always involve loss. … It goes almost without saying that the extent and significance of the loss depend on the character of the text. With technical and business communications the loss is minimal and may be of no significance at all. With literary and philosophical texts, on the other hand, the loss is seldom insignificant. (79)

The English writer Samuel Johnson provided what may be the quintessential view on loss in the original when he stated that "the beauties of poetry cannot be preserved in any language except that in which it was originally written" (82).[10]

For translators working in this dynamic, the deviation from Plato's deathless and permanent ideal inevitably leads to some form of failure and loss; translation remains technically possible but is restricted to a form of reexpression that may only succeed to some degree and is never perceived as fully successful, especially in the case of poetry and philosophical texts (84). The changes required in these partially successful translations, the "reductions, transpositions, and shifts result in loss of signification and of syntactical and metaphorical force" (84-85). In such situations, it is this loss of force that is seen as proof of untranslatability. Yet even with such indictments from those convinced of untranslatability and loss, Western TS does consider the possibility of gain, but such gains are usually framed in terms of cultural conquest and acquisition. We will see more of this further on.

The supermeme of foreignization versus domestication runs parallel to the debate over where the authority resides between the translation source and target. This dualism has become a central focus of TS in the Western world, and at different times the tug of war between the two has been carried forward on the basis of moral, ideological, and economic reasoning. Societies ranging from the Sumerians to the Romans used translation not only to transmit existing culture but also as a means of transforming this heritage into new culture

[10] This was certainly not the last word on the subject, as illustrated as recently as during the 1980s by scholars who echoed Johnson's sentiment with the idea that "each [translation] exercise involves some kind of loss of meaning" (Newmark 1981: 7). This assessment of loss extended far beyond poetry and could be the result of unbridgeable differences between a source language's natural environment or institutions and those of the TL, dissimilar lexical, grammatical and sound systems between languages, the undue influence of a translator's personal style, and the possibly incompetent interpretation made by the translator (7-8).

(Ballard 2007: 54). Yet the influence of religious authority on translation, and certainly the rise of the Christian church, gave a new context to concern over the preservation of the message when changes were made to the form (55).

Historical sources show that there was "widespread anxiety felt in the ancient world" on the subject of the translation of holy texts (Robinson 1997: 4). The Jewish scholars assembled to translate Hebrew laws into Egyptian in third-century Alexandria purified themselves before translating these holy words and requested that their work "remain in its present form and that no revision of any sort take place," wishing ill upon those attempting any revisions or changes (6).

The following centuries showcase a conflict between the two extremes, with many thinkers and translators championing a mixture of both. Cicero, the Roman philosopher, provides what may be perhaps the first Western translation theory as well as an early example of a voice for domestication, advocating for "language which conforms to our usage" (Kwieciński 2001: 17).

One of the first examples of a mixed approach comes from the Christian Saint Jerome in the 4th century. This highly influential priest, theologian, and historian became "one of the first scholars to make the link between translation method and text-type … [and] argued that non-sacred texts should be translated more freely" (Chesterman 1997: 23). This amounted to the defence of a double standard when working with the Greek-language texts translated by his contemporaries: literal word-for-word translation was reserved for Holy Scripture, while free sense-for-sense translation was applied to other texts (Ballard 2007: 46). For texts considered to be non-sacred, Jerome criticized

literal renditions and praised those adopting an aggressive approach to translation. This era witnessed the appearance of translation that is seen as a dynamic process and likened to a struggle (49). This translation philosophy used militaristic metaphors in which the translator, "like some conqueror … marched the original text, a captive, into his native language" (Kwieciński 2001: 18).

Jerome's contemporary, Augustine, is one of the most influential voices in the history of Western TS. The creator of a "systematic translation theory based on his theory of sense" (18), Augustine believed there was an "ideal translation, the perfect transfer of a stable meaning from one language to another by the ideal interpreter" waiting just under the messy surface of the practice of translation (Robinson 1997: 31).

Augustine also expressed uneasiness over the use of unfamiliar Greek calques in translations due to the prospect of this practice upsetting members of the Christian population. In a letter to Jerome, Augustine noted how "his parishioners were dismayed at the disappearance of the familiar words they had come to expect during the liturgy" (Kwieciński 2001: 18). This early appeal to permanence was due to "fear of upsetting the flock … by publishing something new" (18). Augustine's reluctance to jeopardize the stability of the church reflected the fact that the latter's "institutional authority was vested in the 'alien word', i.e. a foreign word that is just domesticated enough to be elevated, solemn, sacred, powerful, taboo" (19).

Beyond the practical and political implications of Augustine's somewhat hybrid approach, bound up in the authority of the ruling institution, was an issue that would only grow in importance over the coming centuries: the perceived authority of religious texts

themselves and the resulting perception of their untranslatability. As Andrew Chesterman explains:

> [I]f you believe that the scriptures are indeed the Word of God, and if you believe that you have a mission to spread this Word, you quickly find yourself in a quandary. The Word is holy; how then can it be changed? For translation does not only substitute one word-meaning for another but also reconstructs the structural form in which these word-meanings are embedded.
>
> Yet in holy texts, it was felt, even the form was holy. To meddle with the original form of the scriptures was to risk blasphemy, heresy; a translator might even risk his life.[11] (Chesterman 1997: 22)

In response to the growing need for defenders of the holy Word, literal translation came into its own. On the subject of sacred texts, equivalence was taken as a given and a result of the absolute divine truth contained in Holy Scripture. It was felt that the very nature of these texts would preserve their truth and meaning through translation (22), although certain changes would have to take place. A translator working under such theoretical conditions understood that only a small number of necessary structural changes would be permitted. There were very "strong motivations" at work in this type of translation, namely

[11] This passage goes on to list the example of 16th century French scholar and translator Étienne Dolet, who was burned at the stake for allegedly mistranslating Plato in a heretical way.

fear of heresy and a "respect for the authority of the source text that originated in its worship" (22).

During the period when these concerns dominated translation practice, fear of heresy and the authority behind such potential charges led to the mindset that "translation is copying" (23). In this dynamic, "translators themselves have no authority, they are totally subservient to the source text; they are humble copiers; deviation from the original is a sin" (23). This mindset had a powerful impact and ensured that literal translation into Latin remained the dominant practice throughout the Middle Ages and even into the Renaissance, so that simplicity of content and exactness were often valued above all (Ballard 2007: 57).

The ensuing history of Western translation is peppered with forces that pulled notions of correctness and fidelity from one end of the spectrum to the other. This succession of alternating methods moved between emphasis on either the original or the translation, a variance that was subject to convenience, power requirements, ideology, and theology.

The translations of the 9th century King of Wessex, now known as Alfred the Great, were typical for the time in that they advocated a literalism to please the ruling institutions with occasional changes risked for the sake of clarity (Ballard 2007: 61). Conversely, a century later the English abbot Ælfric of Eynsham translated religious works for the general public and insisted that "idiomatic English is essential even when it demands the sacrifice of verbal accuracy" (63). In fact, the hierarchy between original and translation that is now seen as conventional was absent at certain points in Western history, including

during this period. In the Middle Ages, "we find writers like Chaucer engaging in a variety of literary activities that included original composition, translation, rewriting, pseudotranslation and imitation without there being an apparent hierarchy of textual practice" (Bassnett & Bush 2006: 173).

By the Renaissance, much had changed in Western attitudes to translation although there remained a complex mix of both extreme points of view. Literal translation gained new ground during this period, spreading "to certain other contexts in which the form of the original text was somehow felt to be particularly significant: philosophy, scientific and technical texts" (Chesterman 1997: 23). The same period also witnessed a shift in publishing from biblical to secular material led to a move in the opposite direction as "translation became more like interpretation, commentary … and [t]ranslators gave priority to the needs and tastes of their readers rather than the strict form of the source. To some extent, this move away from [source-text] dominance must have been a natural reaction to 'over-literal' translations" (24).

The 16th century French man of letters Étienne Pasquier provides an example from the latter part of this period of the concern regarding the translator's status. Pasquier was of the view that, through their work, translators "subjugate" themselves to a foreign language and "enslave [their] minds to the tyranny of another" (Robinson 1997: 113). He feared the changes to vernacular over time would lead to the obsolescence of translators' work (113). This fear of "remaining entombed in the gloom of a long history" (113) provides an excellent example of the fear of loss of permanence and authority that underlies many traditional Western attitudes to translation.

French Renaissance translators of this era were largely domesticating in their work, as were many of their contemporaries in Europe (Chesterman 1997: 26-27). Martin Luther was one of the loudest proponents of target-oriented translation. Yet in his works of translation, even he admitted to introducing "some exotic literality" after careful selection (24).

The tug of war eventually allowed moderate voices into the debate. By the 17th century, the likes of English poet and translator John Dryden were "advocating a middle path," seeking a way to "balance natural target-language style with a respect for the content of the original" (26).

The translation culture of the 18th century French neoclassical tradition was one that paid lip service to originals "so as to produce the illusion of transparency" even as members of his tradition admitted the importance of not "offending the delicacy of our language and the correctness of reason," code for producing fluent texts for their readership (Venuti 2005: 809). The importance of showcasing the French language, however, only came about after a long period in which the language of Molière was perceived as ill-suited and inadequate for translations of highly esteemed works such as those of Homer (Mounin 1955: 21); as French translators of this era tired of literal translations of classical works in Greek, Hebrew, and Latin, their more readable renderings gradually became associated with perfecting and enriching language (22-23). This was a reflection of the struggle occurring between the previous dominance of these languages, particularly Latin, and a desire within academic circles to place the French language on a more equal footing (Ballard & D'Hulst 1996: 86). Studies by theoreticians such as César

Chesneau Du Marsais helped to move away from the emphasis on maintaining the structure and unilingual grammar of Latin original texts in favour of a contrastive approach (86). This led to the rise of a "*traduction élégante*," an attempt to navigate between the pure commentary of free translation and the "servitude" of literal translation (89-90).

An important milestone for translation was the Romantic period, beginning in the 18th century, which witnessed a new set of contradictory views as theorists grappled with finding a middle position somewhere between extremes, often with unsatisfactory results. Certain poets and writers such as the Englishman Edward Young divided the writing world into originals and imitators, linking authorship with originality and, therefore, with genius. This was a vision that saw "the true author [as] radically independent, autonomous, and self-creating" (Bennett 2005: 59).

In France, the writer and politician Alphonse Lamartine promoted a similar view on original works and authorship, but with an emphasis on the copyrights that took as their inspiration the belief that written ideas are gifts from God (Basalamah 2009: 173). In this worldview, the published word was "indivisible," and destructive activities such as translation did not reflect the divine link underpinning authorship (173).

On the other hand, the German Romantics of the 18th and 19th centuries defined their translation "in opposition to a culture—that of French classicism" (Berman 1992: 175). In this period translation came to be considered essential to German culture, an attitude heralded by Luther's translation of the Bible, which represented the "self-affirmation of the German language against the Latin of [the Catholic church]" (12).

Under the influence of Luther's work, the various members of this movement came to the conclusion that "the development of a national culture … must proceed by way of translation, that is, by an intensive and deliberate relation to the foreign" (32). They believed, in the words of Goethe, that German translation could best succeed when its aim was turned to making "the original identical with the translation, so that one should be valued not instead of the other, but in the other's stead" (Venuti 2005: 813). Prominent literary and philosophical figures such as Herder, Goethe, Schleiermacher, and Humboldt gave legitimacy to this practice (Kwieciński 2001: 35). The target-language enrichment they devised saw source texts less in terms of preserving the autonomous authority of the original as "there to be exploited for the benefit of the receiving culture" (Chesterman 1997: 24-25). Indeed, the Germans aimed for "their language to become the language in which other languages may make their works' own voice resound" (Berman 1992: 57). The purpose of this was less domineering than it may seem: rather than become a "kind of 'chosen people' of world literature and translation," the movement's underlying intent implied "above all that translation be everywhere considered an essential, dignified task" (57-58).

For some in this movement, translation represented a means of according German its place among European literatures (13); for others, such as Novalis and A.W. Schlegel, it had an even deeper significance, with translation posing as "a structural double of criticism … and translatability [serving as] the very means of realizing knowledge" (14). The German method of accomplishing this was to practice translation that "serve[s] two masters: the foreign work and the foreign language; one's own public and one's own language" (35).

Berman notes that this boils down to a "double fidelity … incessantly threatened by the specter of a double treason" (35).

The idea of loss was still present for the German Romantics, albeit with a "compensatory gain, not only for the translator but also for the reader capable of reading the text only in translation. In this connection the loss of signification would be the price of extending the range of communication" (Sallis 2002: 79-80). Wilhelm von Humboldt expressed this as translation's ability to "[open] forms of art and humanity that would otherwise have remained wholly unknown to those who do not known foreign languages" (Berman 1992: 153). This push for foreignization can be summarized by Schleiermacher's assertion that the German language would only be able "to flourish vigorously and fully develop its own potential through repeated exposure to the foreign" (Chesterman 1997: 41).[12] Goethe admitted that foreignizing translations were likely to meet resistance in the target culture but believed public opinion could be changed to appreciate their foreignness (Venuti 2005: 813). This dual outlook illustrates an ongoing insecurity regarding changes to the perceived status of the original.

Arthur Schopenhauer, a "major transitional figure in German philosophy" (Robinson 1997: 245), represents a different viewpoint from this time. Schopenhauer's work acted as a strong defence of the original by virtue of his criticism of translation's inadequacy. He wrote that translation resulted in "an unconscionable distortion of great originals" and

[12] These ideas live on in present-day translation studies, including the postmodern example that treats "translation as cannibalism, absorbing the value of an original text and thus nourishing the target language and culture" (Chesterman 1997: 26).

called for a return to study of classical or, as he saw them, original languages. Schopenhauer famously held that "grammatically speaking, the older the language the more perfect it is," citing the "degradation" (246) that occurs over time as languages become "simpler and more wretched" (246). He expressed the view that the lack of perfect equivalence between different languages was proof of the "necessary inadequacy of all translations" (247).

Friedrich Nietzsche provides a representative voice of the German Romanticism of this era. He brought into question the actions of the domesticating translators of the past, including the French translators of the previous century who "took possession of Roman antiquity in a way for which we should no longer have courage enough – thanks to our more highly developed historical sense" (Robinson 1997: 262). Nietzsche saw the Romanticism as bucking a long historical trend, starting with the Romans who "deliberately and recklessly" brought the words of older Greek traditions into Latin, and who showed no sympathy for the experiences of the writers whose words they were seemingly obliterating (262). For Nietzsche, these translations of what was dead, alien, and embarrassing were clearly "a form of conquest" and verged on falsification due to their failure to express the "brave and happy tempo" of such original texts (262). The same aggressive translation tactics suggested by Jerome were now seen in a very different light.

The turn of the 20th century saw the appearance of Ferdinand de Saussure's semiotics, or science of signs, which proved to be a turning point for Translation Studies. The advent of this branch of study also represented the first chapter in a philosophical rivalry that would come to largely define Translation Studies in subsequent years: that of

structuralism versus postmodernism. Saussure's structural theory of language provided a powerful addition to permanence and autonomous authority and was a prominent component of the structuralist movement of the mid-20th century (Sim 2001: 191-192). Saussure's great contribution to the field was to investigate language as a structure rather than through its history (356). This view of language and systems, in which the material aspect, the signifier, and the concept being represented, the signified, together form the written word, or sign, assumed the authority, power and ubiquity of these signs (356). This in turn suggested that texts have a single, inalterable meaning and in fact led to the "the source text [being] considered a fairly stable object" (Venuti 2005: 135).

Working in the early 20th century, Walter Benjamin renewed efforts against the autonomous authority of the original when he argued in favour of the "autonomy of translation, its status as a text in its own right, derivative but nonetheless independent as a work of signification" (Venuti 2012: 71). Benjamin saw the interpretative act of translation as allowing an original work an "afterlife" by recreating "the values that accrued to the source text over time" (71). This was a more harmonious vision of the linguistic differences that are highlighted through translation, and rested on foreignizing translation advocated by Schleiermacher, "wherein the reader of the translated text is brought as close as possible to the source text through close renderings that transform the translating language" (72).

While the linguist Roman Jakobson was a decisive voice in 20th century structuralist thought, to a small degree he also represents a move away from the autonomous authority of the original. In his essay, "On Linguistic Aspects of Translation," Jakobson argued that

"the meaning of any linguistic sign is its translation into some further, alternative sign, especially a sign 'in which it is more fully developed'" (Roman Jakobson in Venuti 2012: 127). However, from this standpoint translation continues to act simply as a means of transmitting the source message, albeit with a bit more weight given to "creative transposition" with an awareness of cultural differences (112).

The meme of equivalence underwent noteworthy revision in the 1950s and 1960s thanks to the work of translation theorist Eugene Nida. Writing from a structuralist point of view, he argued that translation solutions must take into account differing ethnological realities (Venuti 2012: 110). In *Principles of Translation as Exemplified by Bible Translating*, Nida explained that "no translation in a receptor language can be the exact equivalent of the model in the source language" (Nida 1966: 13). This statement did not stop him from writing extensively on opportunities for attaining an equivalence that could be found through structural analysis of a text. Nida explained his apparent contradiction when he stated the following:

> Translating consists in producing in the receptor language the closest natural equivalent to the message of the source language, first in meaning and secondly in style. This type of definition recognizes the lack of any absolute correspondence, but it does point up the importance of finding the closest equivalence. (19)

In Nida's view, translators should strive for "very close approximations to the standard of natural equivalence … but only if the translations reflect a high degree of sensitivity to different syntactic structures and result from clear insights into cultural diversities" (31). In other words, equivalence could be inadequate if it did not take into consideration cultural differences that determine how words and information are to be arranged in the target text. For translation theorists, this represented a modern advance over earlier "controversy about whether a translation should incline towards the source or the target language" (Newmark 1981: 10); the previous free-vs-literal disputes gave way to a new emphasis on the reader (10). In terms of actually producing the closest natural equivalent, Nida relied on structural analysis of the source text and the distinction between dynamic and formal equivalence; the former method focused on "equivalence of effect" or sense-for-sense translation, while the latter opted for adhering as closely as possible to the form of a text in the word-for-word tradition (Venuti 2012: 136). Nida was not alone in promoting these practices: his contemporary, J.C. Catford, described selecting target-language equivalents "with the greatest possible overlap of situational range" (Catford 1965: 49). Writing on translation criticism during the same period, Katharina Reiss commented that "a rigid either/or approach to translation is neither objective nor practical. A translation method should be rather fully adapted to a text type" (Reiss & Rhodes 2000: 24); alternatively, she noted that in other translations the focus should be placed on "non-linguistic determinants" (89) and therefore required a functional, "goal-oriented" translation method (114).

Structuralist ideas that supported the autonomous authority of the original spread during this period to philosophical, scientific, and technical contexts where this practice

was deemed particularly significant (Chesterman 1997: 22). This push had its heyday in the late 1950s work of Jean-Paul Vinay and Jean Darbelnet, proponents of an exact, linguistics-centered translation, albeit with an aesthetic twist. In their *Stylistique Comparée du Français et de l'Anglais* the two admitted that there are certain translations that stem more from "artistic creation than strict methods proposed by linguists"[13] such as themselves, but fall back on the position that, in many cases, there is only one solution to a translation. These solutions require finding what they termed the deep motivation of the author and transposing it in the target language (Vinay & Darbelnet 1954: 21-22). This involves finding an "ideal equivalent" by going beyond the text in search of the underlying situation (22). From this perspective, translation can only assume its artistic side once it has been merged with solid linguistic techniques (24).

The following summary from the 1960s does a good job of illustrating the fear of loss at work during this period:

> The problem is this: does not the transforming of a written work from one language to another utterly alter its character? And, in performing this metamorphosis, does not the translator commit, if not a sacrilege, at least an offense against art and spirit? … Here the word constitutes its own universe, obeys its own laws, shapes its own significance, and the poetic principle remains of such a private, intimate nature that to violate it is also to destroy the secret core of the work – which is precisely what a

[13] The translations from this reference are my own.

translator ought to preserve. (Jean Paris in Arrowsmith & Shattuck 1964: 78)

There were many other important and influential voices that put their mark on translation during this period; the list includes far too many examples to list here in detail. Suffice it to say that even contemporary dictionary references to the term "author" are a product of this centuries-long heritage, which has resulted in a generalized, "common-sense" (Bennett 2005: 58) view of the author and original. Such references consider the author or originator of a text to be its inventor, and for that reason associate this individual "with God … [this individual] is thought to have certain ownership rights over the text as well as a certain authority over its interpretation" (58).

The tone observable in these sorts of references suggests that the authority of the original is entirely self-evident, and is a reflection of a certain stream of thought on exactly what constitutes acceptable translation. This thinking is apparent in much of the theoretical work of the writers and philosophers listed in this chapter. As we have seen, "what constitutes an accurate translation in one period may later come to be regarded not as a translation at all" (Venuti 2005: 801-802). As structuralism gradually shaped the attitudes of several generations of translation theorists, voices from competing visions of translation rose in response.

The rise of postmodernism, in particular, provided many dissenting voices to the "grand narratives," in Jean-François Lyotard's definition (Sim 2001: 8), of permanence and autonomous authority. We can describe postmodernist thought as "a form of scepticism –

scepticism about authority, received wisdom, cultural and political norms" (3). In turn, the poststructuralism and deconstruction that are considered facets of postmodernist thought "involved a rejection not just of structuralism and its methods, but also the ideological assumptions that lie behind them" (4).

Structuralist thought, founded on Saussure's linguistics, relied on the assumption that "every system had an internal grammar that governed its operations" and set out to uncover that grammar, whatever the system (4-5). In contrast, poststructuralism objects to the "tidiness" of this way of thinking (5). Poststructuralist inquiry into translation "called attention to the exclusions and hierarchies that are masked by the realist illusion of transparent language" (Venuti 2012: 274-275).

Where postmodernist thinkers truly distanced themselves from permanence and autonomous authority was in their "commitment to finding, and dwelling on, dissimilarity, difference, and the unpredictability of analysis" (Sim 2001: 5). This defence of difference touched on a variety of subject matter, including language systems, political thought, psychoanalysis, and feminism.

Deconstruction, as explained by Jacques Derrida, is a highly influential articulation of poststructuralism that sought to "demonstrate the instability of language, and indeed systems in general" (5). Fundamental to deconstruction is his concept of *différance*, rooted in the twin ideas of difference and deferral, which revealed the "inherent indeterminacy of meaning" (5), the instability of language, and language's capacity to produce new meaning (6). As soon as the concept of *différance* is applied to a given context, Derrida stated, all of

the "conceptual oppositions of metaphysics" (Derrida 1981: 28-30) found in the Western tradition—binary concepts such as signifier and signified, writing and speech—lose their significance. They are replaced with something more fundamental, the idea that "opposites really need one another, and always imply one another" (Butler 2002: 20); in other words, a form of interdependence. Deconstruction promoted the view that the systems that "purport to describe the world correctly … and the hierarchies they order them into, are not nearly so certainly in the 'right' order, and are much more interdependent than we thought" (20). Revealing this hidden interdependence was the key operation of deconstruction.

The interdependence Derrida referred to includes the concept of intertextuality, the theory, as explained by Julia Kristeva, that "*every* text takes shape as a mosaic of citations, every text is the absorption and transformation of other texts" (Sim 2001: 285). This is roughly analogous to the meme of all-writing-is-translating described above.

Poststructuralism reveals the instability of language and systems, together with the mutability and interdependence of meaning, and sits in stark contrast to the structuralist view that meaning can be "something fixed that holds over time for a series of different audiences" (Sim 2001: 6). This is a very different outlook to the one offered by permanence and autonomous authority in translation.

The core purpose of postmodernist and related theories is "to show that things—texts, institutions, traditions, societies, beliefs, and practices … do not have definable meanings and determinable missions, that they are always more than any

mission would impose" (Caputo 1997: 31). Postmodernist ideas such as Derrida's deconstruction question the stability that was argued through structuralism and the permanence sought throughout the history of Western TS. In deconstruction and poststructuralism, "every time you try to stabilize the meaning of a thing … the thing itself, if there is anything at all to it, slips away" (31).

The list of postmodernist thinkers to attack the stability and authority of Western philosophical systems includes Michel Foucault, who turned away from the exclusion of difference in marginalized groups in Western culture since the Renaissance (Sim 2001: 6). Foucault saw that Western culture has been "committed to the marginalization, even demonization, of difference, by its setting of norms of behaviour" (6).

Philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari added to the poststructuralist body of work by focusing on the suppression of difference in psychoanalytic theory (7), while others used poststructuralism to call into question the norms of specific gender traits in favour of a gender identity that "is not something fixed" (7).

French philosopher Jean-François Lyotard argued against what he called grand narratives, "theories that claim to be able to explain everything and to resist any attempt to change their form" (8). These are supposedly "impregnable" theories that are seen to remain constant over time "and whose authority must never be questioned" (8). In their place, Lyotard favoured what he called the little narrative, ideas that are impermanent by definition and whose goal was, above all, to "search for paradoxes, instabilities and the unknown, rather than an attempt to construct yet another grand narrative" (9). Underlying

the push for little narratives is antifoundationalism, "a rejection of the idea that there are foundations to our systems of thought, or belief, that lie beyond question, and that are necessary to the business of making value judgements" (9-10).

The poststructuralist tradition also includes Roland Barthes's famous 1977 publication, "The Death of the Author," whose main contribution was the idea that the text is constructed by the reader (Butler 2002: 24). Barthes argued that a text "is not a line of words releasing a single 'theological' meaning (the 'message of the Author-God') but a multidimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash" (Roland Barthes in Butler 2002: 23-24). This statement offers a clear parallel to the all-writing-is-translating supermeme, which reflects the translation practices of Borges and Di Giovanni.

The postmodernist thought outlined above has gone on to influence another wave of translation theorists who have used these ideas to argue for a different definitions of equivalence and who have opened the way for increased creativity in translation. We can cite the more recent example of the notion of pragmatic equivalence, a theory that considers factors other than the formal grammatical structure often insisted upon by those seeking fidelity to an original (Baker 1992: 11-12).

The brief summary above showcases a centuries-long rivalry in Western translation thought. This history first reveals a Western tradition in which unidirectional source-target translation and the primacy of the original remain alive and well. That said, there exists a competing stream of thought whose advocates have pushed for a different understanding

of these two concepts. Translation supermemes that can be traced back to some of the earliest references in Western philosophy demonstrate the complexity of these long traditions and how translators and philosophers have vacillated between a yearning for permanence, perfection, and autonomous authority and demands pulling from the opposite direction. The tug-of-war relationship between these opposing forces was exemplified by the differing visions offered by structuralist and postmodernist thinkers. Whereas the structuralist emphasis on form largely adhered to the requirements for equivalence and literal translation seen throughout the history of permanence and autonomous authority, the postmodernists who followed in their wake committed their energies to dissimilarity, difference, and interdependence.

Overall, this history demonstrates that the Western TS tradition can be referenced in support or in opposition to Borgesian translation. We can find a certain degree of legitimacy for the methods of Borges and Di Giovanni through the Western writers, thinkers, and philosophers who have worked against underlying assumptions of permanence and autonomous authority, just as it is possible to find long list of references to delegitimize the Argentine and his American translator. Nevertheless, the Buddhist concepts of impermanence and interdependence offer considerably more weight to arguments in support of Borges and Di Giovanni: as we will see in the following chapter, Buddhist philosophy cleaves through the centuries-old duality illustrated above as it describes a reality that naturally rejects ideas such as permanence and autonomous authority.

3.0 Buddhist Philosophy: Impermanence & Interdependence

Having touched on the philosophical traditions in Western TS that offer either opposition or support to the practices of Borges and Di Giovanni, we will now look in more depth the areas of Buddhism that will be used to legitimize their work.

Buddhist philosophy includes a wide range of schools and interpretations of the fundamentals articulated by the historical figure of the Buddha. These different schools offer "a substantial and internally diverse philosophical canon comparable to that of Western philosophy" (Edelglass & Garfield 2009: 3). In this long philosophical tradition, it is unsurprising that metaphysics has retained its importance since Buddhism is primarily concerned with ending suffering in the world (4). The main ingredient of this world of suffering is "confusion regarding the nature of reality, and liberation from suffering requires insight into that nature" (4). Metaphysics is one of the key ways to study this reality.

Buddhist philosophy is sometimes mistakenly perceived as obsolete or tainted from a Western academic point of view since it is closely intertwined with (and even indistinguishable) from Buddhist religious thought. This is due to the fact that the Buddhist path to liberation "consists in the combined practice of philosophical reasoning and meditation" (Siderits 2007: 6).

The negative characterization of Buddhism as purely religious in nature misses the point. Moreover, it ignores the religious roots of Western academic philosophy, which has "never fully repudiated its Semitic religious background" (Garfield 2002: 255). As discussed

earlier, Buddhism did not experience a tumultuous conflict similar to the one between science and religion during the European enlightenment.

While there are many influential metaphysical teachings in Buddhist philosophy, this thesis will expand on the following central ideas: impermanence, selflessness, interdependence, and emptiness (Edelglass & Garfield 2009: 9). These concepts are consistent with the Buddhist nature of reality in which "all phenomena are impermanent, without essence (or selfless), and interdependent" (4), which naturally lies in opposition to views that would perceive phenomena as enduring, independent, or existing in and of themselves (4). These concepts are what make up the "heart of Buddhism" (Bhushan, Garfield & Zablocki 2009: 100).

We will highlight and consider the two that have the most resonance and applicability in our current translational context: impermanence and interdependence. To accomplish this, we turn to the 1st century CE Buddhist philosopher and metaphysicist, Nāgārjuna, whose work remains extremely influential within Buddhist teachings today. He was the founder of the Madhyamaka, or Middle Path, school of Mahāyāna Buddhism (Garfield 2002: 24). The Mahāyāna and Theravāda traditions are considered the two main branches of Buddhism.

Nāgārjuna is important to us as a philosophical reference because of his adherence to pure philosophy, and because "he is undoubtedly the most important, influential, and widely studied Mahāyāna Buddhist philosopher" (24). His work has increasingly been studied in Western academia over the last three decades and has been the subject of numerous comparisons to the Western philosophical tradition. One of Nāgārjuna's main achievements was to anchor the generalized ideas expressed by the Buddha in a more

structured and logical framework, offering pared-down metaphysical statements in place of the Buddha's long dialogues based on a question and answer format. His legacy is a "set of penetrating metaphysical and epistemological treatises that represent the foundation of the highly skeptical and dialectical analytic philosophical school known as Madhyamaka" (25). This rigorously-developed body of work helpfully allows us to place Buddhist Madhyamaka ideas on the same ontological level as Western philosophy.

We will begin our comparison by considering the idea of impermanence, which we understand in two ways, as gross and subtle impermanence.

The gross impermanence of phenomena points to the idea that "nothing has been here forever, and nothing lasts forever" (Edelglass & Garfield 2009: 5). This facet of impermanence reminds us that all phenomena come into being, begin a process of aging and changing, only to "eventually pass out of existence" (5).

The subtle aspect of impermanence speaks to the momentary nature of phenomena, the idea that "nothing retains its identity from one moment to the next" (5) since that would require phenomena to share all properties. In effect: "everything arises, exists, and ceases at each and every moment. On this view, the observable phenomena that we take to be enduring, including ourselves, are causal continua of momentary phenomena to which we conventionally ascribe an identity that is nowhere to be found in the things themselves" (5).

The Buddhist vision of impermanence, as clarified by Nāgārjuna, is a radical departure from the search for permanence known to the Western tradition. From this philosophical vantage point, impermanence encompasses all of temporal reality. It states very clearly that nothing has been around forever or lasts forever, and that all things are

only momentary in nature. Nāgārjuna does not consider the struggle for permanence because it simply does not factor into this metaphysical reality.

Now that we have delved more deeply into impermanence, we will turn to the topic of interdependence. To do so, we must first explain how the idea of self (or lack thereof) is situated in Buddhist philosophy. The concept of selflessness, also known as non-self, is closely linked to interdependence and impermanence. Buddhism offers a view of the self that differs significantly with Western attitudes, the latter of which leads to "thinking of selves as personal, and as attached to human beings" (4). Assigning ourselves permanent and independent "I" entities leads us to "at least implicitly, ascribe to them a substantial core that endures through superficial changes … The idea of a self, then, is the idea of this enduring, independent core, common to the attribution of the self to persons or subjects and to external phenomena or objects" (4-5). In other words, faced with the impermanence of the phenomena around us, the Western tradition builds an enduring identity for both the "I", a created self figure, and the physical world.[14] In the Buddhist tradition, this self figure is known as the "the core of our ignorance" (Siderits 2007: 27). It is selflessness or non-self that plays the central role here, even though impermanence is what first awakens us to suffering (27). The two concepts are innately linked as the following passage illustrates:

> Buddhists argue that there is no such self, in the case of either persons or external phenomena. Persons, as well as the objects of their experience, in virtue of being

[14] The concepts of selflessness (or non-self) and essencelessness stretch beyond the theoretical and continue to play an important role in everyday Buddhism. As the current Dalai Lama explained, "One of the principal premises of Buddhism is the rejection of any form of enduring, intrinsically real self, or soul" (Bstan-ơdzin-rgya-mtsho 2006: 199).

> merely continua of causally connected episodes, lack a substantial core. Moreover, since all phenomena, including persons, exist only as causally connected continua, and since the causes and conditions of any episode in any continuum are themselves dependent on indefinitely many causes and conditions, both within and external to the conventionally identified continuum of a person or an object, all things exist only in thoroughgoing interdependence on countless other things. (Edelglass & Garfield 2009: 5)

As we can see from the description above, there is a degree of overlap between selflessness and interdependence in Buddhist philosophy. In addition, that which is said to be selfless is also what Buddhism calls empty, in that it has no "inherent existence, or essence" (6). This idea of being empty, also understood as not having any inherent existence, once again simply means that "nothing is independent of causes and conditions … nothing is permanent; nothing has any characteristics on its own that makes it the thing that it is." (6)

In Nāgārjuna's most important work, the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* (abbreviated to *MMK*), he follows emptiness as far down the rabbit hole as possible. The focus of this work is the idea of emptiness, "the Buddhist technical term for the lack of independent existence, inherent existence, or essence in things" (Garfield 2002: 24). Nāgārjuna uses the *MMK* to systematically argue that various phenomena thought to exist independently do not, in fact, do so. His most important argument here is that, despite the illusions stemming from "naïve common sense or sophisticated realistic philosophical theory" (24) that convince us to believe phenomena or processes exist as independent entities, these things are not nonexistent. They are "conventionally real" (24). The point here, according to Nāgārjuna, is

that it is precisely our conventions that dictate how we understand reality:

> For Nāgārjuna and his followers this point is connected deeply and directly with the emptiness of phenomena. That is, for instance, when a mādhyamika philosopher says of a table that it is empty, that assertion by itself is incomplete. It invites the question, 'Empty of what?' And the answer is, 'Empty of inherent existence, or … self-nature, or, in more Western terms, *essence*.' (25)

Whenever the topic of emptiness**,** and by extension interdependence or dependent origination, comes up in Buddhism, a fundamental misunderstanding tends to crop up in the Western mindset: the idea that this represents nihilism and signifies that nothing exists. This is a well-known objection in Buddhist philosophy, and one that has been dealt with extensively. For Nāgārjuna, the notion of emptiness is "emphatically not nonexistence, but, rather, interdependent existence" (Garfield 2002: 91). Using the example of a table, he provides ample evidence that these objections are entirely out of place.

In Nāgārjuna's example he explains how stating that "the table is empty is hence simply to say that it *lacks essence*, and importantly *not* to say that it is completely nonexistent" (25). This lack of essence means the table does not exist completely independently, or "from its own side" (25). The existence of the table depends on external factors such as the observers of the table. For "if our culture had not evolved this manner of furniture, what appears to us to be an obviously unitary object might instead be correctly described as five objects: four quite useful sticks absurdly surmounted by a pointless slab of stick-wood waiting to be carved" (25).

This scenario illustrates all the different factors that must be present in order for the table to exist as such. There could be no table as we understand it without the right parts, material, and commonly-understood referent. The table is empty in that it has no independent character of its own (25). All this to say that "emptiness" is just another way of expressing interconnectedness, interdependence, and a product of causality. In contrast, a true nihilist "would believe in nothing, have no loyalties, and no purpose other than, perhaps, an impulse to destroy" (Pratt 2001). Charges of nihilism in Buddhism ultimately boil down to semantics. This comment is important, because it will help us later on to definitely move beyond the classic misunderstanding.

Nāgārjuna carries forward this line of thinking in his work, ending up in a deep analysis of the emptiness of emptiness itself (Garfield 2002: 25). However, the basic understanding of emptiness as interconnectedness and interdependence outlined in the above sections is what we will rely on in the context of this thesis.

Nāgārjuna's main point is that emptiness, being merely interdependence, represents the middle way, the path to enlightenment. A passage from the *MMK* shows how Nāgārjuna viewed the core concept of dependent co-origination, or interdependence:

> Whatever is dependently co-arisen
> That is explained to be emptiness.
> That, being a dependent designation,
> Is itself the middle way.
> (86)

As the preceding passages illustrate, the terms we began with in this section—emptiness (essencelessness), selflessness, dependent origination, and interdependence—are often a source of confusion. While they are slightly offset from one another, all are very closely related. As a group, they refer back to the same fundamental concept and are, in many ways, synonymous with one another.

We will use the term interdependence to summarize these ideas: interdependence is useful in linking to the writing of Western philosophers, especially the postmodernists such as Derrida and his affirmation that the original is indebted to its translation (Derrida 2007: 207), in addition to being marked by its antecedents.[15] It also operates as a relatively straightforward term that allows us to integrate the corresponding Buddhist concepts into a Translation Studies context.

Importantly, now that we can finally allow ourselves to move away from speculative accusations of nihilism and delve a little deeper into impermanence and interdependence, what we find is an emphasis on causality that parallels thought among European philosophers who apparently so influenced Borges. We find that the connections between the two traditions are quite deep on this level. The comparison begins with Descartes, who famously placed the mind at the centre of the self:

[15] This subject will be discussed in greater depth in Chapter 4.1.

> [Descartes] concluded that the true 'I' is not the body but the mind — a substance that thinks (that is, is conscious), endures at least a lifetime, and is immaterial in nature. … The Buddha's point is that the conclusion that the mind endures at least a lifetime rests on an illusion. For what we call the mind is really a continuous series of distinct events, each lasting just a moment, but each immediately followed by others. There is no such thing as the mind that has these different events, there are just the events themselves. But because they succeed one another in unbroken succession, the illusion is created of an enduring thing in which they are all taking place. (Siderits 2007: 42)

Similarly, philosopher David Hume responded to Descartes's claim of being aware of the mind as "the subject of all one's mental activities" (42) by stating that he only ever discovered momentary mental events and never something that could be called enduring when he looked within. These observations forced Hume to conclude that it was simply "the relations among those mental events that make us invent the fiction of the self as an enduring subject of experience" (42).

We have now been able to demonstrate the importance of causality to impermanence and interdependence, as well as the similar outlook on the topic shared by Western philosophers such as Hume. Given this similarity, we must ask what new perspective impermanence and interdependence actually bring to an attempt to legitimize Borgesian translation; what do these ideas offer when used in a Buddhist philosophical context rather than a Western context?

For our purposes here, one of the most significant differences between these concepts in Buddhist philosophy and parallel Western thinking is that where philosophers such as Hume came to focus on causality as a reaction to the Cartesian tradition, Buddhism puts causality to work as a part of a foundational metaphysical framework for understanding reality. Interdependence is a core feature of Buddhist thought and offers "a phenomenal reality so dynamic and interrelated that categorical subject-object distinctions dissolve" (Edelglass & Garfield 2009: 434). The understanding of the self as the result of a long sequence of short-lived experiences breaks down the notion as the Western tradition understands it. It undermines originals that have been "elevated to the status of the sacred" (Le Blanc 2012: 18) and the idea of authors able to exert influence through their work without being subject to any themselves. Buddhism sees the concept of an enduring individual self "as the foundational delusion of human life. It is the motive force behind our attachments and aversions, and these in turn exacerbate it" (434).

In the Buddhist tradition, these attachments and aversions are seen to grow continuously stronger within a vicious circle. What emerges from breaking this cycle, from rejecting the idea of self, is "a vision of radical and sustaining interdependence" (434). Nāgārjuna's work demonstrates how the emptiness at the root of these ideas simply involves deeper levels of co-dependence.

Buddhist philosophy combines the rejection of a permanent self with the rejection of autonomous authority for the self in an essential step to seeing reality as it truly is. It has the advantage, relative to the application of these ideas in a Western context, of making impermanence and interdependence key aspects of the path to enlightenment rather than

existing as a marginal aspect of one philosopher's work. The Buddhist perspective on these concepts will allow us to reconsider what we know about translation and our perceptions of the actions of Borges and Di Giovanni. In the following chapter we will see that while there was most likely some Buddhist influence in the vast repertoire of Borges's philosophical background, he mostly took Western paths to arrive at some of his Buddhist-sounding conclusions.

4.0 The Philosophy of Borges

In the preceding chapter we were able to explore more deeply where impermanence and interdependence are situated in Buddhist philosophy. We were also able to show that the Buddhist view of causality, as explained by Nāgārjuna, has parallels from within the Western philosophical tradition. This leaves the philosophy of Borges himself to investigate further.

Jorge Luis Borges was a product of many influences, including many from the traditional canon of Western philosophy and other traditions, and there are certainly parallels that can be drawn between those influences and concepts from Buddhist philosophy. Borges also claimed to believe a lot of things. Put more delicately, Borges was a renaissance man and a wellspring of ideas, contradictory statements, and paradoxical opinions. In his lifetime, the virtuoso thinker, writer, poet, and lecturer could be counted on to make statements on the nature of reality, writing, and translation stemming from a full spectrum of influences and passions. This background led him to some very unorthodox conceptual places in his beliefs and practice of translation. As a result, Borges came to perceive translation concepts such as fidelity to the original and the status of classic works as essentially misleading.

What is certain is that philosophy left its mark on this man, colouring his thinking from the time of his childhood, and leading him to name his father's library, the site of his first philosophical adventures, the "chief event in my life" (Borges in Bossart 2003: 2). Several characters in these adventures even had a Buddhist facet to them. The family library showed the effects of the nineteenth century Orientalist craze. "Thus, among his

father's books, Borges also found numerous volumes dealing with Buddhism, Taoism, Sufism, and other diverse forms of mysticism and philosophy that would influence his writings" (Hadis, 2001).

Borges was introduced to a wide range of Western philosophy in that library, influences that led him to divide the world into "a single overriding conceptual framework" (Bossart 2003: 3), what Borges described as two "immortal antagonists," the realists and nominalists (3).

The realists to which Borges refers were Parmenides, Plato, Spinoza, Kant, and F. Bradley. The realism to which they are attached asserts that "what a general or abstract term names is an independent and unitary reality" (50). In other words, to paraphrase Plato, universal forms are possible and individuals are made according to these patterns (50).

The nominalists include Heraclitus, Aristotle, Locke, Hume, and William James. The nominalism represented by this group roughly states that "there are no universal essences in reality and that the mind cannot even frame a concept or image which corresponds to any universal or general term" (50). In other words, the terms we use for things have no corresponding objective reality.

With the aid of this philosophical smorgasbord, using both sides of his realist-nominalist dichotomy, Borges was able to compile a library of his own, a collection of mythologies, metaphysics, and esoteric wisdom (3) that informed and fueled his literary work throughout his life. Certain thinkers allowed him to do certain things, to find the philosophical grounding for ideas he put into practice in his writing. Many of these ideas were positioned around the notions of self, temporality and, by extension, causality.

For example, Spinoza's pantheism, which asserts that since God is everything and that modes [independent beings] cannot begin or cease to exist (6), allowed the self to vanish "as the phantom it is" (6) through the concept of eternity. Pushed further, Borges was able to use Spinoza in his work to find a "constantly changing world of everyday life in which nothing endures" (7).

4.1 Parallel and Divergent Traditions in Western Philosophy and Buddhism

The philosophers who influenced Borges can be placed in one of two other categories, of two new sets of antagonists: those whose ideas generally run parallel to our central Buddhist concepts, impermanence and interdependence in Nāgārjuna, and those whose ideas do not.

Drawing from the deepest roots of Western philosophy, Borges borrows Greek thinker Heraclitus's vision of impermanence whereby "experience [is] an everchanging river" (Bossart 2003: 8). The Greek philosopher believed that "not only is human life and experience always changing, but the elements of the universe themselves are continually coming into being and passing away" (Jantzen 2008: 156). For Heraclitus, all things are impermanent (157).

On the subject of interdependence, Heraclitus found "the lived experience of change parallel to the endless play of opposites, in which all things are mutable and all things are interdependent" (157). Borges later expanded on Heraclitus's influence with ideas of

purification and identity through forgetfulness, suggesting "a cyclical theory of time, one of ceaseless birth and rebirth" (Bossart 2003: 8).

David Hume is foremost among those whose ideas can offer a parallel vision of what we find in Buddhist philosophy. More importantly, this British philosopher had a huge influence on Borges. British idealism from the 17th and 18th centuries provided "a fundamental vision for Borges's approach to literature. This idealism culminates in the skepticism of David Hume, with its complete disintegration of reality and its rejection of any possibility of knowing about it" (Jaén, 1992: 50). For Borges, with his "ingrained distaste for the cult of the self and personal immortality" (Bossart 2003: 54), Hume offered an appealing vision of causality and perception. Among other benefits, Hume's work offered direct access to the negation of the self, something that appealed to Borges early on. Hume stated the following:

> Whenever I enter most intimately into what I call *myself*, I always stumble on some particular perception or other, of heat or cold, light or shade, love or hatred, pain or pleasure. I never can catch myself at any time without a perception, and never can observe any thing but the perception. (Johnson 2012: 58)

In this conception of reality, for Hume, "all of 'mankind' is 'nothing but a bundle or collection of different perceptions, which succeed each other with inconceivable rapidity, and are in a perpetual flux and movement'" (58). In this view, we are therefore but a long string of our own perceptions. Identity, then, is a mistake (61).

Yet according to Hume's thinking, humans are so predisposed to making this mistake, and so hard-wired in this regard that we are caught in the trap. Time after time, we succumb to the urge to construct identities for ourselves and, "in order to justify to ourselves this absurdity, we often feign the continu'd existence of the perceptions of our senses" (61), convincing ourselves of the realness of concepts that grant us permanence through time: soul, self, substance, and mind (61).

Thus, central to Hume's view of reality is the idea of causality, although he does not take it for a fundamental part of the nature of reality. According to Hume, causality "is itself a mere fiction, an accident that results from a certain forgetfulness. What is forgotten, however, is that identity or what is taken for necessary connection or relation is 'mere repetition'" (62).

This mere repetition, as it happens, boils down to belief. It seems clear that Borges was offering a basic paraphrasing of Hume when he stated that identity is the result of absentmindedness, that concepts gain significance over time through sheer repetition. Considering that the concept of fidelity to an original or to a classic work refers expressly to the perceived identity of said original, it follows that fidelity should be affected by the same ideas relating to identity. Indeed, Borges demonstrated this link when he called upon Hume's work on belief once more while examining the idea of fidelity in translation. In "The Homeric Versions," Borges suggests that the concept of a definitive text only results from "religion or exhaustion" (74) and that the belief system at the root of this notion is the product of "forgetting or distraction [*una distraída experiencia*]" (Borges in Johnson 2012:

74). The question of fidelity in individual translations eventually led Borges to the topic of literal translation:

> As Borges notes, the question always asked of translation concerns its faithfulness: "Which of these many translations is faithful?, my reader will want to know. I repeat: none or all of them … except for the literal versions, whose virtue lies entirely in their contrast to contemporary practices". The problem or limit of the *literal* translation haunts Borges: the literal translation is both the *most* faithful and the *least* faithful; it is the least faithful because it is the most faithful. Ultimately, it is the literal translation that exposes the role of belief in translation and in the original. (74)

Borges took these ideas to heart, extending them for use in several of his works. On the topic of Cervantes's *Don Quixote*, he stated that "[a] classic is that book which a nation or group of nations or history have decided to read as if in its pages everything was deliberate, fatal, profound as the cosmos and capable of interminable interpretations" (Borges in Johnson 2012: 75).

According to Borges, reading such classics requires "a mysterious loyalty," and "demands an act of faith" to accomplish (75): "The constitution of the classic and by extension of the text *itself* or *as such*—hence as inalterable, as necessary—requires a certain distractedness, an absentmindedness, an irresoluteness; in short, it requires

accidentality, contingency, chance" (75). With these ideas, Borges was effectively mirroring the Buddhist concepts of impermanence and interdependence as they relate to the classic text. He was aware of the illusion lying beneath the surface of celebrated texts that have come to be seen as both inalterable in their form and disconnected from both their ancestors and inheritors; Borges named the absentmindedness, exhaustion, and acts of faith that prompt readers to ignore realities such as causality and regard a text as an unchanging thing unto itself.

Having understood the accidental and ever-shifting cultural status of the classics, Borges put these ideas to work. He reacted with delight to news that there were typesetter's errors in his short story, "Pierre Menard: Author of the Quixote." For him, it represented what he called the "modest mystery of letters" (76), the very real possibility of change in a text:

> Despite the *Quixote*'s monumentality and definitiveness, the introduction of editor's and typesetter's errors—which are in the main variations of the letter, of the graphic element of the text—indicates that every text is constitutively open—in its very production—to chance, to change, to alteration, hence to a necessarily accidental corruption that cannot be ascribed to any authority or authorial intention.
>
> The possibility of such unauthorized additions and deletions, of typographical and editorial errors, makes clear that, in fact, letters do not always remain where they were. On the contrary, letters wander, stray. (Johnson 2012: 76)

In due course, Borges moved off in a direction of his own after becoming critical of Hume's failure to "push his skepticism beyond the impossibility of a temporal succession given in and guaranteed by indivisible sense impressions" (72). Using the empiricist's work as a philosophical base, Borges arrived at the analysis that time is not a substance. "[This analysis] is a refutation of Hume's … understanding of time as grounded in indivisible instants and, therefore, it is a refutation of time *qua* existent or being" (72). Through this, he came to the conclusion that "time does not exist" (72):

> Borges's analysis of time is correct: time does not *exist*; it is not of the order of *being*. Time is not a *substance*. The mistake is to think that the refutation of time *qua substance* refutes time. It does not. Indeed, the nonsubstantial conception of time, that is, the understanding of time as divided between the *no longer* and the *not yet*, no part of which *is*, makes possible *both* the critique of substance (the *in itself* or the *as such*) *and* the belief in substance *qua* sameness or identity over time. (72-73)

Here, in Borges's conclusions on Hume, we are able to discern the beginning of resemblance to the ideas in Nāgārjuna's metaphysics. Hume's causality helped to steer Borges towards the idea that we adhere to misleading notions regarding fidelity, which are simply the result of repetition, belief, and loyalty.

Yet, since to say "Borges" is to say "paradox" in the same breath, Borges states that he does not believe in the above ideas on refutation of time! But he believes it is the "inevitable consequence of their philosophical arguments"[16] (73).

Several philosophers who were not foremost on Borges's personal library shelf nevertheless also espouse ideas that have resonance in Buddhist philosophy. Many of the ideas that Borges seems to have acquired through the influence of European empiricists, skeptics, and idealists—and very probably from exposure to Buddhist texts—are also recognizable in postmodernism. In fact, Borges's work anticipates at least two prominent postmodernist theories: Julia Kristeva's theory of intertextuality, and Jacques Derrida's deconstruction (Sassón-Henry 2007: 53).

Derrida, one of the eminent representatives of postmodernist thinking, offers perhaps the clearest parallels. In *Des Tours de Babel*, Derrida notes that within the paradigm of Babelian myth, "the structure of the original is marked by the requirement to be translated. … In laying down the law, the original begins by indebting itself as well with regard to the translator. The original is the first debtor, the first petitioner; it begins by lacking and by pleading for translation" (Derrida 2007: 207).

On impermanence, Derrida talked about the absolute unrecoverability of the moment, an idea he learned from the philosopher Hegel (Walsh 2008: 354-355):

[16] This statement alone may explain the massive and ever-expanding pool of academic work spawned by this champion intellectual contortionist.

> [In writing] every "beginning" is marked, traced and haunted by that which stands before it, and which, though invisible and apparently mute, is that to which we therefore respond, and from which we depart through the myth or fiction of a start, a beginning, an opening, an *incipit* – *as if* one could start from zero. Yet something makes that system, that law and the structures of both possible. … We shall call this *différance*. (Wolfreys 2008: 45)

Derrida's now-ubiquitous *différance* states that, "[s]o long as we exist, we differ and defer from an origin, which is the blind spot of the movement of existence itself" (Walsh 2008: 341). Together with his ideas in *Babel*, this concept can be linked to interdependence. It also offers a parallel statement on identity, an important issue for Borges.

> The trace [the movement of Derrida's *différance* (cf. Johnson 2012: 81)] responds to the problem that most preoccupied Borges and that also vexed Hume, namely, that of the synthesis of succession or of the time that passes and the identity that endures. In Derrida, the trace provides for a synthesis of temporality that does not recur to the impossible thought of an indivisible now. The thought of an unmoved, incorruptible original—whether Greek, Latin, Holy Writ, the text, or Hume's indivisibly present impression—depends on a caption of temporality grounded on an indivisible now as the origin or the original. (Johnson 2012: 82)

Like Borges, Derrida went to great lengths to dismantle "the frameworks that hold in place concepts of truth and fiction, illusion and reality, original and copy" (Wolfreys 2008: 100).

Approaching the topic through language, we find a link between Derrida and Borges's absentmindedness. Derrida perceived the practice of establishing our subjectivity through linguistic means as proof that "both stable selfhood and any coherent relationship between consciousness and objects in the world are illusions" (Seigel 2005: 631).

The French philosopher found at least some inspiration for these ideas in Empiricism, which illustrates the common ideological background of the two men:

> Derrida is concerned with Husserl's assertion of a living present … a moment which is fully present in consciousness and which is completely separate from other moments in time. For Derrida, all metaphysics contains such an idea. That is one reason why standard Empiricism is caught up in metaphysics: it strongly relies on the idea of moments in experience, which can be isolated as pure moments, undivided within themselves, and unrelated with other moments. (Stocker 2006: 178)

Looking again at Derrida's work on truth, writing, and art, we find thoughts that have a great deal in common with Borges's statements on translation. On the subject of books, Derrida saw them as being "already conceived as copy" [of the living voice or present *logos*] (Wolfreys 2008: 104) and therefore as revealing truths that destabilize the relationship between original and copy:

> [Books, paintings or images illustrative of a truth] expose the inherently ineluctable iterability of the copy, and the signs of the copy within what is supposedly any

> "original" or "unique" meaning, destabilizing in advance the truth. It therefore follows from this that the mimetic work, the text as copy is … both a double and a displacement. (104-106)

This definition roughly mirrors Borges's statements in which he describes all originals and their translations as interchangeable since "we are all copyists, and all the stories we invent have already been told" (Kristal 2002: 35). Derrida, then, acts as further confirmation that Borges the thinker certainly did not operate in a philosophical vacuum during his lifetime, but instead shared some key influences and ideas with prominent postmodernists, a movement he is often linked to but not formally associated with.

We can also find echoes in Heidegger, a "major figure in renouncing selfhood," who replaced "the notion of a stable selfhood with a different, fluid, and 'temporal' understanding of the self" (Seigel 2005: 568). Heidegger argued against a Cartesian *cogito* view of the world that "depicted the 'I' as a self-positing subject, and as such wholly detached and independent from the world it located outside itself, the lone judge of the objectivity that gave other entities their being" (568).

As a final example in this list, which is far from exhaustive, Roland Barthes mirrored some of the thinking noted above in his work on intertextuality, noting that "a text is no more than a 'tissue of . . . citations' from multiple other texts" (Bennett 2005: 12). In his well-known work, "The Death of the Author," Barthes "abolishes authorial voice, eliminates voice as origin and source, voice as identity, unity, as what Foucault will call the 'principle of a certain unity in writing.' 'It is language which speaks,' Barthes declares, 'not the author'" (12).

Looking at the preceding list of writers and philosophers in Borges's library, we see that there was a wide range of influences at work on the Argentine. Several of these, including the likes of Hume, profoundly shaped how Borges thought and wrote, while others such as Derrida demonstrate that Borges was certainly not as alone in wilderness as it may appear. In addition to his early exposure to Buddhism itself, there are also parallels to be drawn between some of the philosophers found in Borges's library and Buddhist philosophy.

4.2 Skirting the Issue: Borges and Evidence of Buddhist Influence

It is clear that there are philosophical similarities between some of the Western thinkers listed above and Buddhist philosophy, especially non-self and causality. This is not surprising given that Borges was also directly influenced by Buddhist thinking, something that was especially apparent in his early years of writing.

Ever the moving target, though, Borges took pains to distance himself from Buddhism in his later life and explicitly stated, "I am not sure I'm a Christian, but I'm sure that I'm not a Buddhist" (Jaén 1992: 79). Furthermore, in his own book on Buddhism,[17] he seemed more interested in the fantastical and mystical aspects of Buddhism the religion, saying that he wanted to "exhibit that strange world that is the world of Buddhism … There were things that attracted me by their strangeness: the whole of Buddha's legend, the

[17] This compilation of his lectures on the subject, entitled *What is Buddhism?,* was co-written with Alicia Jurado.

astronomy, the cosmology of Buddhism" (Borges in Jaén 1992: 80). The same skimming over the subject matter can be seen in his lectures on Buddhism, although he qualifies himself just a bit more:

> What I have said [in this lecture] is fragmentary. It would have been absurd if I had expounded a doctrine to which I have dedicated some years—and of which I have actually understood little—with the intention of displaying a museum piece. Buddhism is not a museum piece; it is a path to salvation. Not for me, but for millions of men. I hope that I have treated it with respect. (Borges & Weinberger 2009: 75)

Despite these assurances of incomprehension and of interest at only a mystical level, at various times in his life Borges produced texts with explicit links to some of the philosophical concepts at the base of Buddhist thinking, making assertions that illustrated their influence, regardless of later denials or overall degree of importance to him.

The following is an excerpt from a 1923 essay entitled, "The Nothingness of Personality," written by twenty-four year old Jorge Luis Borges. This essay provides an early demonstration of the importance Borges placed on moving away from ideas of the self, ideas which show at least a possibility of influence from Buddhist philosophy:

> I want to abate the exceptional preeminence that today is usually given to the self: I am spurred to this by a very firm certainty, and not by the whim of accomplishing an ideological deception or a rashly premature intellectual cleverness. I intend to prove

> that personality is a dream consented to by conceit and habit, but without any metaphysical basis nor essential reality.
>
> Furthermore, I want to apply to literature the consequences emanating from these premises and to construct upon them an esthetic hostile to the psychologism bequeathed to us by the last century, an esthetic inclined towards the classics and yet encouraging the most disparate tendencies of our day. (Borges in Jaén 1981: 19)

Borges uses the remainder of this essay to "expound different arguments that undermine the belief in the existence of a permanent self, as well as of objective reality, with a climax which goes beyond Berkeley's doctrine, not only in the rejection of a divine reality but also in the affirmation of apparent reality as the only reality there is" (19). This early work underscores the appeal of negating the self for Borges, who was drawn to the idea of redefining reality through his literature. It also shows a young Borges struggling with the idea of the self, a situation that changed as the man matured. Later in his life he was quoted as saying simply: "*Le moi n'existe pas*" (Brunel 2006: 36).

The essay also explains his attraction to the empiricists and idealists whose work in these areas offered a welcome contrast from more recent ideas inherited by Borges's generation, philosophies that tended to put the self front and centre. This is evident with rationalism, which puts human intellect and reason at the centre of the universe; romanticism places humans psychologically at the centre (Jaén 1992: 60). Borges chose to reject his contemporary influences and hearken back to an older tradition:

> Although the tendency toward a displaced self is predominant in modern literature and art, the idea was present in previous centuries. … Through Borges, we can trace a connecting line from ancient esoteric Buddhism, through esoteric movements of the Western world, to contemporary Zen Buddhism. … Using philosophical idealism as a point of departure, he adopts as the basis for his literary works the negation or downplaying of the self. (60)

This background played a very important role in his literature: "Most of [Borges's] stories depend on a set of equivalences that tend to deny or undermine that dearly held Western notion of the value of the individual self or the personality" (61).

It is apparent that this mixed bag of philosophical influences produced a young man with a keen interest in dispensing with the idea of the self, for starters. As he moved forward in life, these influences continued to work on the author, producing a flow of pronouncements on translation and writing with oddly Buddhist-sounding overtones.

Borges demonstrates a parallel between the topic of non-identity or selflessness and the reader response theory, which investigates the role of the reader in the narrative (Herman, Jahn, & Ryan 2007: 484):

> [In *Las dos maneras de traducir*] Borges … indicates an important aspect of all texts, originals and translations alike: that they have different values for different readers, even if the readers speak the same language. … This point alludes to the temporal

> and spatial displacements that exist between the time and place a text is written, and when and where it is read. (Waisman 2005: 45-46)

Borges puts his finger on the causality that underlies translation, stating that "to translate is to produce literature, just as the writing of one's own work—and it is more difficult, more rare. In the end, all literature is translation" (Borges in Kristal 2002: 32). Put another way, "a translation is not the transfer of a text into another. It is a transformation of a text into another" (32). Some of Borges's statements made clear reference to what Nāgārjuna would have recognized as interdependence:

> I do not write, I rewrite. My memory produces my sentences. I have read so much and I have heard so much. I admit it: I repeat myself. I confirm it: I plagiarize. We are all the heirs of millions of scribes who have already written down all that is essential a long time before us. We are all copyists, and all the stories we invent have already been told. There are no longer any original ideas. (35)

And again:

> The superstition about the inferiority of translations is the result of absentmindedness. There is no good text that does not seem invariable and

> definitive if we have turned to it a sufficient number of times. Hume identified the habitual idea of causality with that of temporal succession. (Borges in Johnson 2012: 52)

Likewise, in his essay, "Las versiones homéricas" [The Homeric Versions], we can see the reflection of interdependence in what Borges said on intertextuality. In a characteristically dramatic and grand way, he labelled the many versions of Homer's *Iliad* translated over the centuries a "movable event, if not a long experimental assortment of omissions and emphases" (Borges in Waisman 2005: 50).

But Borges went further still, concluding that this fundamental interdependence of written works invalidates the higher status given to what we call the original. "To presuppose that every recombination of elements is necessarily inferior to its original, is to presuppose that draft 9 is necessarily inferior to draft H—as there can only be drafts. The concept of a *definitive text* corresponds only to religion or fatigue" (51). This bombshell of a statement, which removes the idea of the definitive text in one fluid motion, is happily reinforced by Borges, who pillories the "superstition of the inferiority of translations" (51).

The point here is that, despite the fact that Borges led a very non-Buddhist existence and claimed that Buddhism interested him only as an "intellectual adventure" (Bossart 2003: 196), we can find clear parallels with Buddhist philosophy in some parts of the mixed stream of influence on Borges from Western philosophy.[18] In addition, some of the

[18] Borges clearly had a great deal of fun with his supposedly minor Buddhist philosophical adventure given that he "[wrote] more pages about Buddhism than about any other religious-philosophical tradition" (Bossart 2003: 172).

above statements and writing on translation have a clear Buddhist ring to them: this was a man who repeatedly made statements rejecting the idea of self as an enduring phenomenon, who relished his own impermanence, and who felt strongly the influence of those "millions of scribes" who came before him and to whom he was interconnected through the traditions of language and writing. Borges was attempting to move beyond his Western philosophical origins and into a philosophy that could encompass not only his beliefs on writing and translations, but on all phenomena.

It is not surprising that the variety of philosophical influences on Borges came together as they did, in such a Buddhist-sounding manner. The academic world has discovered that other configurations merging Buddhist philosophy and the pantheon of Borgesian thought work as well:

> If we combine Hume's description of experience with the nominalism of Nagasena,[19] it is not difficult to see how Borges arrives at his "refutation of time". Borges introduces Leibniz's principle of the identity of indiscernibles, according to which there cannot be two things in the universe exactly alike, and combines it with a version of the Platonic doctrine of forms. (Bossart 2003: 95-96)

It is out of this wide array of influences, mixing competing viewpoints from the Western tradition, the realists and nominalists, that Borges derived his own, often

[19] A Buddhist thinker from 2nd century BCE.

Buddhist-sounding, ideas. While it appears impossible to extract any conclusive evidence of the influence from Buddhist philosophy on the Argentine writer, especially considering that he went out of his way to deny this possibility, the thread of references to Buddhism remains nearly constant throughout his life and serves to further show the complexity of the man.

5.0 Borges & Di Giovanni: Setting up the Crime Scene

Now that we have fully explored the conceptual links between the philosophies of Borges, Buddhism, and the Western tradition, it is necessary to demonstrate how these various ideas translate into practice in our chosen examples. We will begin by taking a closer look at exactly what kind of translations Borges and Di Giovanni were producing together. "Past Lives of Knives" outlines four different examples of the philosophical and translational leaps the pair was taking. This chapter will look more closely at those four examples and discuss the pair's stated intentions at the time before examining how they appear from the vantage point of both Western TS and Buddhist philosophy. We will then apply the concepts of impermanence and interdependence to each example in the following chapter in order to illustrate the contrast with Buddhist philosophy.

When Borges and Di Giovanni began translating together, it quickly became apparent that this would be a close collaboration (Monegal 1988: 460). Borges, the Argentine cultural icon, took pains to include his new associate in his life and to show off the Buenos Aires of his youth (461). According to Di Giovanni, their stated intent at the time was to produce translations that made full use of the target language:

> [A] translation should not sound like a translation but should read as though it had been written directly in the language into which it is being made. … Borges and I

> wanted his translations to read like original works.[20] He once confessed to me that when earlier versions of his stories were read to him he recognized the particular piece as his but always thought he wrote better than that. (Di Giovanni 2003: 170)

They were conscious that their brand of translation stepped outside certain limits. At times the ever-contradictory Borges appeared conflicted by their unorthodox approach and perhaps unwilling to completely jettison the original's accepted status; this despite his many statements on the absentmindedness that leads us to revere classic works. This last gasp of deference can be seen in the preface they composed for one of their collaborations, *The Aleph and Other Stories*:

> Perhaps the chief justification of this book is the translation itself, which we have undertaken in what may be a new way. Working closely together in daily sessions, we have tried to make these stories read as though they had been written in English … We have therefore shunned the dictionary as much as possible, and done our best to rethink every sentence in English words. This venture does not necessarily mean that we have willfully tampered with the original,[21] though in certain cases we have supplied the American reader with those things—geographical, topographical, and

[20] In itself, this statement does not express anything particularly out of the ordinary for translators. It is the degree to which the pair went beyond the limits of this description that makes it noteworthy.

[21] Even here, in the words of the offending duo itself, we find reference to the ever-present dominance of the original in our collective consciousness.

historical—taken for granted by an Argentine. (*The Aleph* in Monegal 1988: 460)

Di Giovanni is not remembered for his humbleness in this process. The role of his personal ambition while working with the venerated Argentine is certainly guessed at. The article "Past Lives of Knives" makes note of the American's "notions of linguistic and cultural appropriation through translation" (70) while pushing Borges to begin publishing new content.

As Di Giovanni became aware of the reserve of stories Borges had saved up, the American began what he called a "subtle campaign of egging him on" in an attempt to have the writer begin dictating new material for publication and translation (Williamson 2004: 386). Ultimately, Borges relented and agreed to this "crazy idea" (Monegal 1998: 380). Perhaps another indication that this was to be an atypical translation partnership was that it was marked with an egalitarian sign from the start: Borges agreed to an equal split of the royalties from the English-language translations that he and Di Giovanni prepared together (Williamson 2004: 378).

These beginnings boil down to a mix of personal ambitions that betray, at most, an author's penchant for domesticating translations and a knack for second-guessing himself, along with a translator lacking in humility. The real crimes had yet to be committed.

From this starting point, however, Borges and his new friend went above and beyond what translators are theoretically supposed to do in the Western tradition. Specifically, they added new content and chapters to their target texts, manipulated Borges's work with very little regard for the notion of the sanctity of the original, and

otherwise generally did as they pleased. This was translation freed of many of its traditional restrictions:

> They peppered their new texts with *clin d'œil* references and insider jokes … Some of these winks and nudges actually *wrote the translator into the text*. But we'd never know it if Di Giovanni didn't confess: "We concocted four [new entries], working into them all manner of silly things, like the long Dutch name of one of my friends, a family surname, and my Buenos Aires street and flat number. It was all in good fun and the kind of thing Borges took glee in." (Fraser 2004: 59)

This practice gradually coalesced into a different idea: the translation would clearly highlight the source text even as the two men found ways of making the final product something unique. The duo was now blurring the line between original and translation, inserting direct writing alongside traditional translation; they had given the translation something suggesting equal status. This leap was governed by some seemingly far-fetched ideas, "metaphysical extravagances" (67), something the philosophically minded Borges excelled at. Their mix of atypical practices coalesced into the following four examples.

The first example involved working backwards from an English target text and making changes to its Spanish source text:

> While Borges and Di Giovanni were writing and translating simultaneously, they often practiced "retro-active editing." Di Giovanni would alter something in the translation and show it to Borges, who would edit his original accordingly … Suffice it to picture a Borges translating backwards from Di Giovanni's source. And to wonder how nebulous the boundary between source and target text actually became. (Fraser 2004: 67)

In traditional, source-oriented Western TS, this practice is a clear violation of the unidirectional flow of translation; from the Buddhist standpoint, we see instead a clear illustration of interdependence between source and target texts.

The second example completely reversed the standard flow and treated the original Spanish text as a full-on target text to be translated. Like the main character from Borges's story "Pierre Menard: Author of the Quixote," the author "had 'memories of prior texts unwritten,' of English source texts buried deep in the palimpsest, below the Spanish language surface. Texts he would finally unearth with Di Giovanni" (68). In short, the idea of a phantom source text.

A voice from the Western tradition cries foul here at what it perceives as a conceptually improbable scenario, perhaps demanding proof that such phantom texts even exist. However, observed through a Buddhist lens, it appears that no crime has been committed, only another instance of interdependence showing that source texts do not exist in a vacuum and are revealed to be impermanent after all.

Going a step further, the third example involved Borges and Di Giovanni translating to and from what they described as a Spanish middle text:

> Borges refers to his Spanish text as the translation of a phantom English source. In the same breath however, he refers to it as the flawed rough draft—in other words the source—of an inevitable, and far superior English language version. … In other words, springing from an English deep text and evolving toward an English surface text, is an "insignificant" Spanish *middle* text. (69)

This example is evidence of how troubling the idea of an original text revealed as flawed rough draft can be to a translation culture that expects immutability in its written works. Nonetheless, impermanence suggests that all texts are exactly that: temporary drafts that are necessarily subject to change.

In the fourth example, the pair treated the translation as the "true text," giving it a new status and elevating it above the original. Anglophile Borges was a product of the profound childhood influence of his English grandmother, from whom he learned English (Borges 1972: 107), and this practice offered an opportunity to grab hold of the identity he never fully had through his American translator's previously mentioned linguistic and cultural appropriation. As Di Giovanni explained, "in a way, since English made Borges and since he is giving Spanish an English cast, he fulfills himself in English, his work becomes more itself in English" (Fraser 2004: 70).

In this case, the Western tradition is again outraged by the careless betrayal of the original; Buddhist philosophy, on the other hand, sees no crime, rather more evidence of the deep interdependence between all phenomena, which flows in two directions instead of one.

These four examples, then, are the crimes in question, together with nihilism and what is interpreted as a plain lack of respect. In all of the cases outlined, the controversy from the Western point of view stems from changes to the translational status quo.

There is an important point to make here: while Fraser speaks to the deep concern over any perceived harming of the original, in the end the two men appear merely troublesome, engaged in the sort of games that "are really only petty mischief" (59). The Western viewpoint remains content in a belief that, despite the duo's "ballsy intentions" (71), Borges's work represented an "Argentine institution" and his reputation as such was too firmly entrenched to worry about any masochistic, aggressive, or self-glorifying attempts to alter his established status (71). As far as Western translation is concerned, this kind of disrespectful and destructive translation simply doesn't fit the picture of the humble translator. In this paradigm, Borges and Di Giovanni were an irregularity, an upsetting footnote in a stable universe where the original remains rightfully supreme.

The next chapter will show more concretely how these concerns dissolve when the traditional Western viewpoint is replaced with one from Buddhist philosophy.

6. Applying Buddhism to Borgesian Translation

We have so far examined Borges and Di Giovanni in collaboration together and criticism of that process, the Argentine's beliefs concerning translation, and the massive philosophical catalogue that provided the basis for the entire undertaking. We will now apply the Buddhist concepts of impermanence and interdependence to translation in general and then more specifically to the Borgesian translation practices found in the four cases from the previous chapter.

When viewed from the mainstream perspective of Western TS, the way Borges translated with Di Giovanni appears destructive, disrespectful or, at best, mischievous. However, when the twin concepts of impermanence and interdependence are applied to the same scenario, that which is traditionally seen as controversial is stripped away. For example, in response to the careful list of objections found in the cases noted above, Buddhist philosophy introduces a paradigm shift that forces a reconsideration of the underlying fundamentals. In what amounts to a very simple exercise—that is, the replacement of one view of the nature of reality with another—the supposedly common sense ideas about translation that are at work in these objections dissolve; they are replaced with new assumptions and consequently lose their formerly solid footing.

In this transposed philosophical reality, in which we have applied impermanence and interdependence, these two concepts act as philosophical umbrellas, or a different underpinning, to everything that happens in translation. Just as the Western tradition turns automatically and repeatedly to anxious questions about fidelity in translation and about the correct position of the translator vis-à-vis the author, Buddhist philosophy allows for

the opportunity to turn naturally and automatically to new concepts.

6.1 The Paradigm Shift of Impermanence & Interdependence

Looking at these two concepts in the most basic sense possible, let us ask what they do in a translation context. In the case of impermanence, it tells us that all phenomena are impermanent, and that, as a result, the concept of authorship and the texts that authors produce are impermanent. Whereas before, there existed an unstated expectation of permanence for these texts in our culture—as evidenced by the countless references to protection for the original in the media, and by authors, translators, and Translation Studies academics—that expectation can now be removed because the underlying philosophical assumptions have changed.

This means that even though such texts do exist in a very real sense, they are not somehow written in stone, as we are occasionally led to believe by those touting the immortal and immovable genius of some work or another. Not only are they impermanent and will they therefore not always exist, but in a more immediate sense, they are subject to change. As a result, it is natural and expected in this context for texts to undergo change, rather than the other way around. In this reality, texts cannot be expected to maintain their form indefinitely; they are subject to the Buddhist nature of reality and are therefore naturally subject to change.

As for interdependence, it tells us that all things are interdependent, that they do not exist in and of themselves, cut off from other things. They form part of a continuum of causally connected phenomena. The real upheaval is due to the fact that interdependence

breaks with that implicit belief in our culture that the phenomena of "me" and the "mine" are stable and somehow sacrosanct. Interdependence completely destroys the boundary between object and subject. Suddenly, the impulse to eternally protect the self is recast as the "foundational delusion of human life" (Edelglass & Garfield 2009: 434). As the "greed, hatred, and delusion of ego" (434) fall away in consequence, the previously ironclad concepts of author and translator, original and translation, fall away in turn to reveal a "sustaining interdependence" (434). For the author, there is suddenly no immovable concept of a self to fight for, to defend to the bitter end. The translator is removed from an automatic position of subservience or secondary role and is made part of a much larger, connected process.

In this reality, the traditionally unidirectional relationship of translation now flows in both directions; authors know that their works are impermanent, subject to change over time, and dependent on outside factors for their existence. Translators understand that their translations, in addition to the work being translated, are themselves impermanent, subject to change over time, and dependent on outside factors for their existence. The two sides are both subject to the Buddhist nature of reality and are therefore part of a sustaining interdependence.

6.2 Applying Buddhism to Specific Charges against Borges

In the previous section of this chapter we demonstrated what the Buddhist nature of reality can bring to translation in a general sense; we will now show that under its influence the formerly ridiculous-sounding translation ideas concocted by the purportedly mischievous

Borges and the arrogant Di Giovanni become very plausible, and even normalized.

To begin with, impermanence and interdependence remove the controversy from the process of "retro-active editing" (Fraser, 2004: 67), or working as though Borges's Spanish original was a draft that could be altered by virtue of changes made to the translation. These two Buddhist concepts replace the philosophy that was responsible for our fear of having a diminished original should some subsequent, and therefore lesser, person or process be allowed to make changes to it.

The same mindset of fear can also be seen in the astonishment due to the apparent lack of respect the young American showed the venerable Argentine, wherein the translator apparently "took as much credit for realizing Borges's texts as for representing them" (74). Di Giovanni is charged with treating Borges as a "doddering old Granddad," but "ended up crossing a much more sensitive line, raising an important ethical question: to what extent can the translator exercise his right to represent a writer, to advocate in his interest?" (74). The Western tradition reacts with concern over the upstart American challenging the sanctity of the original and the negation of the clean, unidirectional, and supposedly stable line of influence and representation, from author to translator, that we have come to expect in translation.[22]

We will now look at how impermanence and interdependence legitimize the translations produced by the duo, and allow us to reconsider each of the four examples in question. In the first and second examples, that of working backwards from an English target text and making changes to its Spanish source, as well as treating the Spanish as a

[22] Their partnership also contradicted the Romantic model of solitary, privileged authorship and role of the translator reflected in the author-as-genius and the author-as-reflection-of-God scenarios discussed earlier. Borges and Di Giovanni replaced this with a kind of group production that was in direct opposition to that model.

full-on target text, our two Buddhist concepts alter the translational relationship: the unidirectional source-target process, in which the original affects the translation, is replaced with a bidirectional variant in which the two are necessarily interconnected and depend on one another for their existence. We can make use of an anecdote from Nāgārjuna to illustrate this point: identically to the various parts of the table he described, the original and translation literally depend on one another for their existence. If this were not so, according to Nāgārjuna's logic, Borges's original would exist from its own side as a sort of primordial text that has always existed and always will. Instead, the act of making changes to the original based on the translation simply reflects the interconnected reality in which the two operate. This applies equally to treating the original as a target text, since there is no longer any unwarranted expectation that the original will remain the same in its target-text form.

Similarly for the third example, where the original is viewed as a sort of middle text preceded by an imagined prior text, inputting Buddhist interdependence merely reflects the long chain of causality at work in the Buddhist nature of reality. Where the Western mindset sees an absurd exercise in fantasy, Buddhist philosophy perceives an obvious understanding of the way its metaphysical universe functions. To the objections of absurdity, we can now answer just the opposite: clearly something came before Borges's original! Undoubtedly an intertextual pool of influences and causes resulted in Borges writing this text, which we call his original.

In the fourth example, treating the translation as the so-called true text, since impermanence and interdependence remove the focus from ideas of the original's autonomous authority or special status, there is no longer any reason for anxiety when we

imagine the translation as elevated above it: we now understand that this cannot be. Buddhist philosophy has levelled the playing field; both the translation and the original text are temporary members of a much larger process. They are what Nāgārjuna would have described as "momentary phenomena" (Edelglass & Garfield 2009: 5). When it is objected that subsequent translations may be based solely on the initial translation instead of on the original, we may respond that this scenario is, in fact, impossible in our adopted, Buddhist paradigm. Since it is part of a chain of causally connected phenomena, the translation is inescapably tied to the original and, in turn, to everything that came before it. Buddhist philosophy may respond to this concern by noting that, clearly, future translations will not be based solely on the translation: all of these components are now part of the same chain of causality.

Applying impermanence and interdependence to these four examples is a clear demonstration of the paradigm shift that can be achieved in Western translation when Buddhist philosophy is substituted for more traditional concepts. The four charges against Borges and Di Giovanni, rooted in centuries-old expectations of permanence and autonomous authority of the original, quickly dissolve when we challenge conventional beliefs passed down through the Western tradition of translation.

6.3 Applying Buddhism to Borges's Statements about Translation

Now that impermanence and interdependence have been used to challenge the cases against Borges and Di Giovanni, we can also use these concepts to support some of Borges's

earlier statements on translation. This was a man, after all, who saw nothing threatening and no implication of loss in translations that are "sincere, genuine, and divergent" (Waisman 2005: 63). For Borges, then, we see that:

> There is no anxiety associated with this veritable explosion of possible versions diverging from an ultimately unknowable—and unprivileged—original. The translator does not—cannot—fully know the original. … Just as there is no exhaustion in Borges's fictions, there is no implication of loss … from original to translation. (63)

In "Las versiones homéricas," Borges upholds a view of translation in which all texts are drafts, or unstable objects, because all originals are also recombinations of elements (51). In other words, he maintains that there can be no original, no definitive text to measure up to. Both original and translation hold the same position, have the same value or, as he saw it, are granted legitimacy. For Borges, this was because both original and translation are continuously subject to change: they are impermanent, just like all things in Buddhist philosophy (51). Moreover, the original is unstable because it is always being perceived in new and different ways. Borges's views on the variety of ways an original is perceived has a link to reader response theory, which states that "the relation between reader and sign on the page proceeds in a to-and-fro spiral in which each is continually being affected by what the other has contributed" (Davis & Womack 2002: 54); this theory has been influential in both the structuralist and post-structuralist movements in translation.

Let us consider at another example in which alterations are made to the traditional unidirectional relationship in translation: Borges's "Los traductores de *Las 1001 Noches*."

> Borges compares only the translations of [*A Thousand and One*] *Nights*; he makes no attempt to refer back to the original, except through what the translators themselves have to say about it. Once again deviating from the traditional approach of comparing the original with the translation, Borges displays a profane attitude toward the concept of a "definitive text." As he looks at the series of European versions of the *Nights*, Borges considers how each translator varies from the previous one, making it clear that he is discussing versions of versions, without assuming that any is necessarily inferior to the original. (Waisman 2005: 66)

Once again, Borges's "profane" attitude makes sense according to Buddhist philosophy, in this case thanks to the causality that underlies interdependence. For here he was naturally adhering to a worldview that values "maintaining the longevity of the continuum" (Bhushan, Garfield & Zablocki 2009: 100), rather than always referring back to the authority of a purportedly immutable original. By emphasizing the various translations of *Nights* throughout the centuries rather than the original document, Borges takes pains to examine causality itself. From a generalized Buddhist perspective, this approach can be viewed as an attempt to find a way out of the suffering that is inherent to traditional views of translation—that is, to do everything possible to hold on to and make permanent original works that have already and naturally undergone subtle or unsubtle transformation and that are predestined to be impermanent.

Borges's approach allows him to sidestep the great vexation at the heart of how the Western tradition generally perceives translation. As Buddhist scholar Matthieu Ricard explains: "[I]f we grasp at something as being permanent though it is not—it is transitory, changing every moment—when we lose it, we are going to suffer. … All phenomena are just a stream of constant transformation. If we don't see it like that, we are at odds with reality" (Ricard in Bstan-ơdzin-rgya-mtsho 2006: 207).

Being at odds with this mutable reality can only result in frustration and suffering (207). This is the suffering of the author and of the translator. As for Borges's statements on the ego, impermanence and interdependence remove the self-loathing and nihilistic aspect that Western discourse so easily finds. One of his offending quotes on this topic is as follows: **"**I do not want to be remembered; and—this is most important—I am tired of being myself. In fact, I am tired of being an ego, an 'I'; and I suppose that when I'm dust and ashes, then I'll be nothing. I'm looking forward to that prospect" (Fraser 2004: 59). Borges restates this in *Labyrinths* (1964): "I am not sure that I exist, actually. I am all the writers that I have read, all the people that I have met, all the women that I have loved; all the cities that I have visited, all my ancestors" (Borges in Pérez & Llorens-Cubedo 2008: 180).

The admission of ego fatigue and his uncertainty regarding his existence have been offered as proof of Borges's endemic nihilistic impulses (59). Yet these statements align themselves with the Buddhist idea that human experience is the result of causality rather than an enduring self. Interdependence and the causation theory that underlies it can be used to legitimize or explain Borges's assertion that he is the product of the domino effect of his life, one made up of his influences, experiences and encounters, rather than simply existing as Borges, in and of himself, disconnected from all other things.

In the world that Borges was illustrating with these statements, reality functions according to the rules of causality. In this reality:

> Nothing holds the self together; nothing holds causes to their effects. Raw interdependence is all we encounter, and there is no hope of an explanation to end all explanations. That is the manifestation, in the philosophy of science and in the existential understanding of the nature of the self, of the abyss of emptiness into which [we are commanded] to leap. But that leap is a leap into emptiness, and not into nihilism. …
>
> [W]e have seen that in facing the emptiness of interdependence, while the inefficacious occult cement of the universe vanishes, the empirical world and the possibility of meaning life therein are affirmed, its mere interdependence providing all the coherence one could coherently desire. (Garfield 2002: 85)

Just as the table (in the earlier example discussing Nāgārjuna's emptiness) can depend for its existence on its parts, on its causes, on its material, and so on, so too does the author's self; by extension the original depend on its parts, on its causes, and so forth. Apart from these, there is no self; there is no original; there is no Borges.

Rather than a terrifying prospect of oblivion and annihilation, Borges's wish to be done with his ego can be viewed as an expression of a reality shaped by interdependence. Regardless of exactly what influence Buddhism played in his life, Borges was indeed making a "leap into emptiness, and not into nihilism" (85). This leap meant freedom for Borges, something that was reflected in the way he translated with Di Giovanni.

Perceiving himself to be an impermanent and interdependent being, Borges displayed none of the usual fear when dismissing his ego and the idea of his self. He did not display the sort of pride and rigidity that would have rendered impossible his non-traditional translation practices with his American translator. Thanks to statements such as the one above, there was "no implication of loss" (Waisman 2005: 63) in making such choices, only the "possibility and potential of such translations" (73).

7.0 Conclusions

Impermanence and interdependence provide the necessary support to legitimize Borges and Di Giovanni and absolve them of their would-be crimes, beginning with their supposed motives. Regardless of whether Borges wished to negate and forget himself, or whether Di Giovanni was a domineering presence, jostling to be more than a translator typically should be, the controversy surrounding their way of working dissolves under the gaze of Buddhist philosophy.

In the paradigm of Buddhist philosophy, their reimagining of the original no longer represents the same cause for concern; when we ground the translational process in the expectation that everything within it is necessarily impermanent and interdependent, we no longer have to feel outraged on behalf of Borges or his original texts. The original and the translation are rethought as impermanent components within a long, interconnected chain.

In truth, the process of legitimizing or absolving the two men relative to their unorthodox translation methods could also be accomplished using ideas put forward by the likes of Derrida, who spoke of the original as the first debtor, as pleading for translation. Buddhist philosophy allows us to go beyond the ever-changing relationship to original texts that afflicts Western TS, including postmodernism, which stems from the Western tradition, in favour of having an impermanent original that is naturally and unquestionably linked to its translation. It represents a move towards wisdom as understood by the Buddhist tradition:

> [I]mpermanence must be understood as a middle path: no phenomenon is immutable; but no continuum terminates. Instead, any extended phenomenon is a constantly changing continuum of causally connected but distinct events … Authenticity can be understood only in these terms, and the transformation through translational transmission is part and parcel of maintaining the longevity of the continuum, not in spite of, but because of its constant change and adaptation. (Bhushan, Garfield & Zablocki 2009: 100)

From this perspective, going back and changing the original after the fact actually had a beautiful aspect to it. Rather than causing mischief or detonating something (Fraser 2004: 63), the two were knowingly or inadvertently aligning themselves with the idea that constant change and adaptation are, in this Buddhist metaphysical universe, the underlying laws of reality.

To those who would fall back on that mainstay of criticism in translation and label our translators "traitors" of some sort, we can answer with this: the core Buddhist concepts described in this thesis allow us to reveal the myth behind ideas of the permanence and autonomous authority of the original. The treason so often referred to in Translation Studies is in fact the acceptance of the impermanent nature of reality and the interconnectedness of everything within. In moving away from the notion of treason to the underlying truth of impermanence and interdependence, we allow translators to "remember that [their work] is the responsibility not to preserve a permanent past but to manage transformation in a productive way" (Bhushan, Garfield & Zablocki 2009: 102).

As for objections on the grounds that the idea of fidelity cannot so easily be thrown

out in the name of productive change and must be maintained for at least a certain amount of time, we can respond in affirmation. Impermanence does not force the idea of change or suggest that a work must be changed; rather, it insists on the inevitability of it, that a text or a work will necessarily change due to its impermanence. The idea of fidelity to an original remains but can now be viewed as one more temporary phenomenon rather than an immovable thing that is somehow able to remain the same in perpetuity.

In "Past Lives of Knives," a point is made regarding the "metaphysical extravagances" that led Borges and Di Giovanni to treat the texts they translated together as "one, totalized, undifferentiated entity. A palimpsest" (Fraser 2004: 67). However, this point of ridicule fails to hold in our adopted paradigm. Impermanence and interdependence suggest precisely that—clearly indicating the "nebulous" (68) boundary between source and target text. Imagine for a moment that impermanence and interdependence were accepted as a fundamental basis for translation in Western TS. Once implemented, what do these Buddhist ideas suggest for the future of translation?

As we have seen, the criticisms of Borges betray an underlying expectation of permanence in how we think about translation. In our attempts to make this permanence a reality, we convert it into an expectation of fidelity—impossible fidelity, given the change involved and the undefined nature of the term. If we replace that natural expectation of permanence with one of impermanence, we allow translation to move forward beyond the trap of autonomous authority of the original and fidelity and look at more useful, productive questions.

The controversy surrounding Borges's self-subversion or nihilism, the altering and apparent weakening of his originals while granting power and status to the translation,

betrays an expectation of the inviolability of the concept of the original or the author figure. In our attempts to make this inviolability a reality, we convert it into added cultural legitimacy for the author and an impression that the work of translators is inferior.

If we replace this expectation of inviolability with one of interdependence, translation can shed its affectation of inferiority and act fully as the next step in the chain of casually connected events; as something that is fully dependent on the original that came before it, and whose existence will allow for the following step to arise. Roland Barthes might well have described this next step as the rise of the reader after the death of the author.

Western discourse reacts with worry to the impermanence and interdependence of all things in Buddhism, exclaiming that all things perish within this paradigm, a place where the promise of the stability of an enduring self or original has, disturbingly, been shelved. A look at this same notion from the Buddhist perspective reveals a very different picture in which all things are subject to change. Gone is the expectation of permanence to fight for, along with the fear of ultimately being unable to grant the original eternal life.

Applied to translation, a Western philosophical perspective interprets impermanence of a work, of an original, as death[23] (and sees the result of a nihilistic view of things), while a Buddhist philosophical perspective interprets the impermanence of a work as the possibility—or, rather, the inescapability—of change. This change suggests a kind of translation that looks beyond one short journey in the long chain of causality. This

[23] Echoes of this are apparent in present-day copyright legislation and the refusal within the traditional Western paradigm to accept anything other than enduring original texts that continue to enjoy autonomy. So keen was the desire to render these creations immortal and free from change that attempts to the contrary are now punishable by law.

is translation that understands that it has responsibilities relative to the original but is equally aware that the original depends on it.

Western TS exists within a culture that both translates and is the product of translation. This culture displays a certain degree of discomfort when demanding an indefinable fidelity even as we go about producing change through translation. Although we can follow some of the roots of these contradictory beliefs down to the foundations of Western philosophy, there remains an uncomfortable feeling that comes from trying to accomplish this balancing act, trying to maintain this contradiction. Our Western philosophical heritage incites us to maintain this uncomfortable position in which change appears to be destructive and a chronological hierarchy must be upheld. But we are not confined to this spot, whatever stories we may tell ourselves about what constitutes supposedly proper translation. It is possible to tell ourselves a different story.

In effect, rethinking translation on the basis of impermanence and interdependence allows for a different conversation. These ideas are not completely foreign to translation; we have experienced variations of them over the centuries, including through the more recent influence of postmodernist thought. We already generally accept change in translation as long as it falls within the parameters we set for it, rules that often include assurances that the correct amount of time has elapsed and that the process is controlled by the correct authority. We applaud changes when we perceive them as having been done correctly, as adhering to established translation norms.[24]

[24] A fairly recent pertinent example would be Robert Fagles's widely appreciated 1996 translation of Homer's *Odyssey*, roughly a century after the last major version. This updated interpretation of Homer's work involved change on several levels, but fell within what Western translation norms deemed acceptable.

If we restart this conversation with an acceptance that change is an integral part of translation, then we can perhaps observe our hypocrisy as a translating culture. If Western TS accepts change as fundamental and not as something purely negative that engenders loss, we can have a completely different kind of dialogue regarding translation. This would be a conversation centered on the bigger picture, one that takes into account multiple stages in the causal chain. This sort of conversation would consider both where the original and translation are coming from and imagine where they are going, but would operate in the certain knowledge that both individually represent small steps along a much greater path. This is a conversation that accepts change as the heart of translation.

The alternatives proposed through Buddhist philosophy reveal many possibilities that the Western culture of translation has completely ignored. Talk of an arrogant Di Giovanni influencing Borges into co-writing an autobiography, or going back to change the original on the basis of changes made in a translation loses its controversy as there ceases to be a rigid, pre-established author/translator relationship to attack and capsize. Translation seen through impermanence and interdependence offers no primacy of the original for Borges to defend. Moreover, Buddhist philosophy allows us to abandon any concerns over whom exactly is being represented when translators move beyond the lines our culture has drawn for them.

The original does not disappear, nor is there anything to be lost: the abyss simply dissolves in this paradigm. In its place, the original gains its position in the chain of change, a reflection of Borges's translation of possibility. When Borges gives himself permission to make changes to his original on the basis that it is in fact a draft, or when Di Giovanni "sordidly," "absurdly" (Fraser 2004: 75) goes about influencing the material that he will

help Borges to write, they are acting out the interdependence and the bidirectional symbiosis at the heart of translation, something we are able to see clearly through Buddhist philosophy. Borges and Di Giovanni, together, are a real-life example of Buddhist philosophy in action.

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