

“LAS VARIANTES RALEABAN”:
TWO DRAFTS OF *EVARISTO CARRIEGO*

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Over the last five years I have gradually gained access to a wide variety of Borges manuscripts and notebooks, and have been giving presentations and writing articles toward a book that I hope to finish in the coming months that will be entitled *How Borges Wrote*. I now have seen originals, facsimiles or photocopies of more than half of Borges's works from 1930 to 1955 (before that the manuscripts are few and far between, and after that almost all the drafts and clean copies are in other hands than his own because of his growing blindness). In the last few months I have been fortunate to make photocopies of manuscripts and notebooks of the totality of the 1930 *Evaristo Carriego* and most of the 1935 *Historia universal de la infamia*. What follows is an analysis of a chaotic early stage of *Evaristo Carriego* and of a complete notebook version of that book. *Evaristo Carriego* is crucial to an understanding of the mature Borges's ideas about the representation of Buenos Aires (and more generally of Argentina), and it is here that he refines his ideas about *criollo* culture and *criollismo*; it is also arguably the only book that Borges wrote with the idea of writing a book (with the possible exceptions of the much later manuals on British and US literature, on Buddhism and on the *Martín Fierro*). Borges was almost always a writer of poems, stories and essays that were conceived one by one and only later, sometimes in a rather chaotic fashion, collected into books. *Carriego* is different: from its first pages on Palermo through the biographical chapter and the chapters on Carriego's books of poems it is conceived as an organic whole, one that extends into

the original appendices (on *truco*, inscriptions on horsecars, and documents related to Carriego's life, but not including the 1950s additions). It is therefore crucially important to be able to say something precise about the way in which it is written; I hope that what follows is both surprising and illuminating.

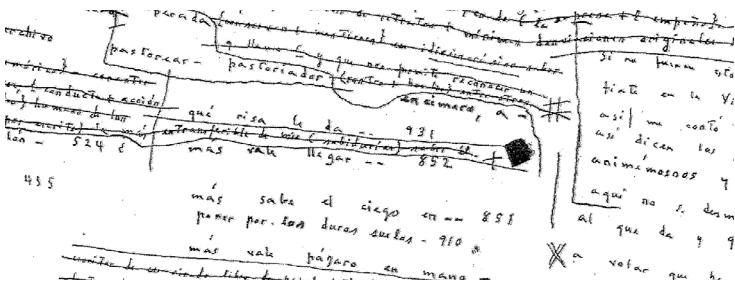
Evaristo Carriego was written in what French genetic criticism calls two "campaigns": the first in an apparent whirlwind of activity of which we have a record that can only be called extraordinarily chaotic, in the front and end papers of a dictionary; the second, also very intense but easier to follow, in a notebook wholly dedicated to the book. The notebook includes almost all the 1930 book, but as is characteristic in Borges's manuscripts it also records a vast panoply of possibilities and shows an unexpected degree of uncertainty about the order in which the chapters should proceed in the book.

SCRIBBLES

Borges uses the front and end papers of his copy of Lisandro Segovia's *Diccionario de argentinismos* for diverse purposes: the organization of the essays that were included in *El tamaño de mi esperanza* (1926), reflections on possible poems that would comprise *Cuaderno San Martín* (1929), and above all some first drafts of crucial parts of *Evaristo Carriego* (1930). The Segovia dictionary that he had in his possession was bound with several more blank pages than the copy that I acquired many years later, and he covered all available space in these pages with a dizzying amount of writing. A few of these notes have to do directly with the contents of the dictionary itself—there are page numbers and beginnings of proverbs, as the Segovia book includes a collection of Argentine proverbs, mostly rural in inspiration, and some words noted down whose definitions are to be found within—but it seems to have been used above all because it was a favorite source during his *criollista* period, and all three books mentioned above have something to do with *criollismo* and with local culture. In fact, one could claim that the period from 1925 to 1930 marks Borges's coming to terms with the questions of the relations between the local and the global; *Discusión* in 1932 and even more so *Historia universal de la infamia* in 1935 are already part of a different way of inscribing the local in

the global, one which will sustain the brilliant central period of *Ficciones* (1944), *El Aleph* (1949) and *Otras inquisiciones* (1952).

I should clarify that I was permitted brief access to this book some five years ago and have not been able to examine it again, so what follows is based on some fifty-five photographs that I took of the scribbled pages, some of which came out a bit blurry, and on a few images of pages from it that are reproduced in books including Miguel de Torre Borges's *Borges: fotografías y manuscritos* (in the 1987 edition, on pages 62–63, and in the 2005 edition on pages 78–79).¹ Nevertheless I have been able to do a diplomatic transcription of almost all of the annotations, and the rest of this section is an analysis of this transcription. One problem with this is that I am not certain of the sequence of the pages (except when the edge of one page is visible in a photograph of the edge of another, or where the ink bled through from one side of the page to another), so that these considerations will to some extent consider each page as a separate entity.



One final clarification before taking on the difficult task of reading and interpreting the manuscript. Most of the latter is crossed out, which seems to mean here not that it was discarded but that it was copied elsewhere. That other notebook is the one I will talk about a bit later; the crossing out after copying or typing was a practice that Borges followed during

1 On the pages reproduced by de Torre Borges, there are interesting examples of Borges's mining of the Segovia dictionary for interesting words (*largada*, *paseandero*, *volvedor*, *visteo*, *soguerio*) and phrases (*más vale llegar a tiempo que ser convidado*, *más sabe el ciego en su casa que el tuerto en la ajena*, *poner por los duros suelos*). I have mentioned just a few; the examples on the first of the two pages are very numerous.

this period (and that I have also seen in the manuscripts of Juan Carlos Onetti from three or four decades later).

The page that is the focus of my photographs 244–57 begins thus:

{Las (muchas) divergencias + L. (¿muchísimos?) desacuerdos } {entre + los}
 (la opinión)
 {entre ??? los dictámenes { (expresados _) en + de} este (libro) {con + y} los
 de mis
 predecesores en este asunto + la materia} han sido siempre lo bastante
 {sencillos

Milton y su condenación de la rima XV.

Las coplas acriolladas XII.

+ definidos + marcados} y lo

señalarlos. Carta en la defunción de Proa X.

???larlos. El tamaño de mi esperanza I.

el arrabalero

investiva contra el arrabalero VIII.

La aventura y el orden XI

Evaristo Carriego y el arrabal IV

reverencia al árbol en la otra banda IX

examen de un soneto de Góngora XVII

la balada de la cárcel de Reading ————— (una o

palabrería para versos VII [XIX] Wilde

el idioma infinito VI El alma del suburbio

la supervivencia del Ángel X

el Fausto criollo II ————— Residuo de fábrica lo único

la adjetivación VIII ————— significativo tal vez,

{el c ejercicio de análisis XV — imperfección, una culpa

El guapo (composición) inscrito al también matón electoral (

evidente pero quizá más real, está en los énfasis laterales

la Tierra Cárdena V

unavinculación (forzada) con Dumas — ??? considerar el

la pampa y el suburbio son dioses III — in

arbitrario) ————— suburbio

duelista estoico si

————— T. n. r., por

{preconizado

El cultor del coraje ————— {recomendado} por E. C.—

Here the indented list of titles was written first and the rest of the annotations are written around them. The titles are those of essays in *El tamaño de mi esperanza* and the Roman numerals correspond roughly with the

order of essays in that book (though one additional item—a collection of reviews of books by Silva Valdés, Gironde, Cansinos Asséns, Shaw and Lugones—was added subsequently, so the Roman numerals in some cases are off by one, while “Invectiva contra el arrabalero” moved from eighth to nineteenth place and the “Carta en la defunción de *Proa*” from tenth to thirteenth place).² Thus for instance “La Tierra Cárdena” is indeed the fifth essay in the 1926 book, but “Milton y su condenación de la rima” goes from being fifteenth to sixteenth. On another page there is a similar list, but without Roman numerals or as complete a list, of the contents of *Cuaderno San Martín*—the poems listed are “La fundación mitológica de Buenos Aires,” “Arrabal en que pesa el campo,” “Elegía de los portones,” and some others that may have been published later with different titles such as “Elegía de Palermo” and at least one that was not included in *Cuaderno*, “Versos para Fernán Silva Valdés” (published in *Proa* in 1925), and a prose piece, “Boletín de una noche,” that is related to “Sentirse en muerte.” Once again, the notes toward *Evaristo Carriego* are written around this list (which is also the case of the proverbs noted from the Segovia dictionary); thus, was a book that was used for several writing “campaigns,” to use the odd military metaphor of French *critique génétique*.

If we subtract the table of contents of *El tamaño de mi esperanza* from the transcription just given, we are left with the following, now in linear rather than diplomatic transcription:

{Las (muchas) divergencias + L. (;muchísimos?) desacuerdos } {entre + los} (la opinión) {entre ??? los dictámenes { (expresados _) en + de} este (libro) {con + y} los de mis predecesores en este asunto + la materia} han sido siempre lo bastante {sencillos + definidos + marcados} y lo señalarlos. ???larios —El alma del suburbio Residuo de fábrica lo único significativo tal vez, {el c —imperfección, una culpa —El guapo (composición) inscrito al también matón electoral (evidente pero quizá más real, está en los énfasis laterales una vinculación (forzada) con Dumas} ??? considerar el in arbitrario) —suburbio

2 There are also notations of some essays not included in that book, such as “Cuentos de Turquestán” (August 1926) and “Las dos maneras de traducir” (also August 1926), as well as the October 1926 essay “La felicidad escrita,” included two years later in *El idioma de los argentinos*, so these chaotic pages are also important in the genesis of the 1928 book. Similarly, references in those lists to Wilde (here Eduardo, not Oscar) and Góngora refer to essays included in *El idioma de los argentinos*.

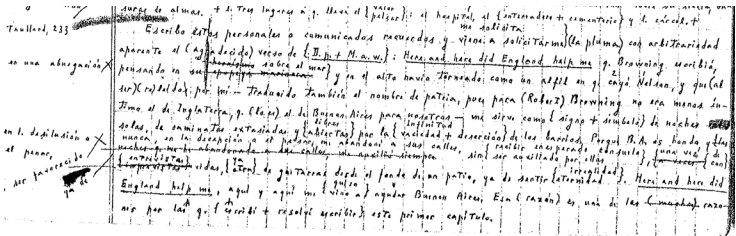
with an additional marginal annotation here that reads: “duchista esteico si T.N.T., por El cultor del coraje {recomendado} {preconizado por E. C.” This is recognizable the beginnings of some comments that are in the 1930 book on several poems from *Las misas herejes*: “El alma del suburbio” (OC 118, 130), “Residuo de fábrica” (OC 126) and “El guapo” (OC 127-28), as well as on Carriego’s enthusiasm for the works of Dumas fils (see OC 116).³

Lower on the same page we can read:

Pues aquí con {irrelevancia + inaplicabilidad} aparente, vuelven ?? ??? {solicitar + buscar} vía {la pluma + el oído} ????

————— D. P. + M. a. w. {verificar}

{agradecidos} verso (s) de XXXXXXXXXXXXX que {así declaran + reconocen} Here & here did England help me q. Br. escribió, imaginándose {una + la ??} {marinera +} epopeya de uno sobre el mar y el alto barco {trabajado+ torneado} e?? A una {torre + pieza} de ajedrez para {al ser {leido} + probado:} por mí ————— para un... en que cayó Nelson y que — {yo al releer traducido también el nombre de patria, {porque + pues} Robert Burns no era menos {ardiente + querido} en Inglaterra que lo es B. A. para nosotros = me sirven como {recuerdo + signo} de noches solas de {complicadas + alborate? + entretejidas} caminatas {inútiles} por la {soledad + vaciedad + deserción?} en ?? de los barrios. Porque B. A. es honda y (en)² las noches que me he abandonado a sus calles siempre t-????? me ha {auxiliado}, son auxilio de ??? y de ??, y una noche ??, de una sentenciosa milonga q. {escuchó + me concedió} en la calle XXXXXXXXXXXX {jaurés + Bermejo}, en una cuadra de casas pobres entre q... y otra, orillando la Ch. {bisturi + favor + casitía??} sacóme? + dejóme? a la ?? bar ese?? las notas de mi Cuaderno San Martín [H. I. h. ?? ?? me aguardó? Buenos Aires] que



Some of this becomes the final paragraph of the first chapter of the first book of *Evaristo Carriego*:

3 Carriego’s interest in Laforgue and Mallarmé is noted in the left margin of my images numbered 270-75.

Escribo estos recuperados hechos, y me solicita con arbitrariedad aparente el agradecido verso de *Home-thoughts: Here and here did England help me*, que Browning escribió, pensando en una abnegación sobre el mar y en el alto navío torneado como un alfil en que Nelson cayó, y que repetido por mí —traducido también el hombre de patria, pues para Browning no era menos inmediato el de su Inglaterra— me sirve como símbolo de noches solas, de caminatas extasiadas y eternas por la infinitud de los barrios. Porque Buenos Aires es hondo, y nunca, en la desilusión o el penar me abandoné a sus calles, sin recibir inesperado consuelo, ya de sentir irrealidad, ya de guitarras en el fondo de un patio, ya de roce de vidas. *Here and here did England help me*, aquí y aquí me vino a ayudar Buenos Aires. Esa razón es una de las razones por las que resolví componer este primer capítulo. (1st ed., 26–27)

The reference in the manuscript to the 1928 text “Sentirse en muerte” (published in *El idioma de los argentinos*) helps establish the context of the writing of this difficult paragraph. Another excluded reference in the published version is the reflection on the ways in which Robert Burns was as important a poet in England as he was in Scotland, a detail that shows a concern for the ways in which local works travel (including of course in Burns’s case the use of Scots dialect). Similarly, the initial formulation makes a more emphatic use of the first person singular (“yo al releer traducido también el nombre de patria”) and plural (“Robert Burns no era menos {ardiente + querido} en Inglaterra que lo es B. A. para nosotros”) makes the initial version of this section somewhat more immediate than the published version, in which this first chapter is written as a history of the Palermo neighborhood of Buenos Aires with a measure of scholarly distance.

The reference to “Sentirse en muerte” is complemented by a reference to “Boletín de una noche,” an unpublished prose piece whose original is in the Small Library at the University of Virginia. These texts, all of which originate to some extent in the jottings in a Spanish version of Aulus Gellius’s *Noctae atticae*, refer to an experience (which some have tentatively ascribed to the year 1926) of an epiphany (some would even say a mystical experience) during a nighttime walk in Buenos Aires. By tying this here to the notes to *Cuaderno San Martín* Borges allows us to associate it with one night in particular, during the campaign of Hipólito Yrigoyen, when Borges walked outside the wall that borders the Chacarita Cemetery (“la Ch.”) with the poet Osvaldo Horacio Dondo and encounters an Unión Cívica

Radical party club where some compadritos were entertaining themselves with a guitar under the watchful eye of “El Hombre,” the nickname for Yrigoyen. This can’t be the same night, though, because in the “Sentirse en muerte” and “Boletín de una noche” texts Borges is walking alone, and his experience of feeling that he is dead (or living, but at a moment prior to his own birth, in the published version) is one that is not shared, and that he himself experiences as evanescent, ecstatic, impossible to grasp hold of. “Caminatas extasiadas y eternas por la infinitud de los barrios,” the phrase in the published version of *Evaristo Carriego*, makes this a plural experience, not a singular one. The manuscript allows us to establish a tight network of texts that Borges had in mind at the time of writing, some of which are implicit or can be inferred in the published version but the explicitness of the manuscript adds specificity to the references, as in this case the complex “caminatas nocturnas – yo – barrio – Sentirse en muerte – Boletín de una noche – nota a *Cuaderno San Martín* – popular poem on death – compadritos – Chacarita – Osvaldo Horacio Dondo – caminatas nocturnas.” To see in the same passage that the first person singular alternates with the first person plural is to confirm that this experience of the presence of the past, of the coming sharply up against popular tradition, is a social, not purely individual, process.

To take another example, the scribbles in my images 264–69 begin thus:

obligue a) relatarle a otro individuo la vida de un tercero, es
 paradoja suficiente. L. individuos + hombres} se comprometa al {despertar +
 recrear} en otro(s) ??? mado de que me él mismo es su poseedor. . . + + Y el
 hecho de haberlo yo conocido a Carriego no
 ————— finita? zanguanga?
 me ??? —??? ??? — disminuye + restañe} lo paradójico de {la empresa + l
 empeño}. Yo ??? pues ??? ??? La { + } que + retratos y retratos y mínimos
 desviaciones??? originales habrán crecido ————— pamperada
 pastorear -- pastorador
 ??? — mantienen su? idiosincrasia

This is recognizably the beginning of the second chapter of the 1930 book, which reads:

Que un individuo quiera despertar en otro individuo recuerdos que no pertenecieron más que a un tercero, es una paradoja evidente. . . Creo

también que el haberlo conocido a Carriego no rectifica en este caso particular la dificultad del propósito. Poseo recuerdos de Carriego: recuerdos de recuerdos de otros recuerdos, cuyas mínimas desviaciones originales habrán crecido, en cada nuevo ensayo. (31, 1st ed.)

In this case, obviously, the annotations on “pamperada,” “pastorear” and “pastoriador” are prior notes to words in the Segovia dictionary (in this case page 133 for “pampero” and page 256 for “pastoreador,” a definition in which the conjugated verb “pastorea” is used), while the rest is the rough beginnings of the opening of the second chapter of the book.

Another interest detail is in my images 276–81: “~~compadrito~~ : R.A. :: ~~cockney~~ : Londres.” This mathematical formula becomes, in one of the footnotes in *Evaristo Carriego*, “Lo que a Londres el cockney, es a nuestras ciudades el compadrito” (1st ed., 92). To find it originally expressed using the symbols of mathematical logic confirms Borges’s early and serious interest in that discipline (perceptible in later manuscripts when, for instance, the notes toward “El escritor argentino y la tradición” include a marginal reference to John Stuart Mill’s *System of Logic*).

It is curious that Borges chose to begin writing his first real book (and one of the few organic “books” he wrote, the others being the later manuals on the *Martín Fierro*, British and US literature, and Leopoldo Lugones) in the cramped spaces of the Segovia dictionary, made even more cramped by the presence in them of prior notes. At the same time, it is apparent that the very cramped and irregular spaces available there may have seemed propitious for the beginnings of an account of the limited and cramped life of Carriego, someone whose poetry flows from the circumscribed circumstances of his life (born in Paraná, Entre Ríos, like Borges’s father, but whose productive life took place in a few blocks of the Palermo neighborhood of Buenos Aires, now so fashionable but a despised hinterland then). The narrow range of themes, the geographic limits referenced, and the constrained repertory of the language and rhetorical figures all mark Carriego as someone whose poetry differs markedly from the writing of the poets just before him (the “modernistas”), while his evocation of small melodramas of popular life were important to the lyricists of the “tango-canción” that began five years after his death. Borges says in *Evaristo Carriego* that Carriego “invented” the outlying neighborhoods (“suburbios”) of Buenos Aires, by which he seems to mean that he discov-

ered in them a literary theme (one that would become extremely important a few years later when tangos began to have words and began to be recorded). It is fitting, then, that this is a book that he begins to write in the pages of a dictionary of Argentine vocabulary and expressions. Segovia was not Borges's only source for this kind of language. In the scribbles in this dictionary there are a few notes on Garzón's similarly titled dictionary and references to Borges's own *El idioma de los argentinos* (1928), so the concern with *Argentine* language is powerful in this period (reflected also in other references to Taullard, Rossi, Salvarría, Bilbao and Fray Mocho).

Another important segment of *Evaristo Carriego* is the "discovery" of the poet by the French immigrant writer Carlos de Soussens (perhaps remembered mostly today because he is the subject of some lines of Piglia's *Respiración artificial*). In the Segovia dictionary, we read:

"La noche que Soussens me descubrió":

Carlos de Soussens = La noche que S. me descubrió = era una de las fechas que C. solía invocar en el diálogo con [no afectada + entera] seriedad + (más??) habituales ^{acostumbrados} en la conversación de C.} + C. sentía repulsión y afecto por él (casi) por las razones — Le {agradaba + gustaba} su condición de francés, de hombre asimilado a las prestigiosas de A. B., de Hugo o (a) las napoleónicas?? le molestaba su condición {asaz + insoportable} de gringo; d. hombre sin muertos en América. Por lo demás, el (amplio) Soussens era apenas francés de aproximación y era como él decía y repetía ^{circunloquiaba} C. en un verso — caballero d. Friburgo {hombre? + por} q. no le ?? alcanzaba??
?? ???

The ways in which the "discovery" of Carriego happens through the eyes (and ears) of a French immigrant writer establishes another tacit nexus in the manuscript with the ways in which the "local" poet Hilario Ascasubi was more erudite than the "cosmopolitan" Paul Groussac, to whose journal *Anales de La Biblioteca* reference is also made in the manuscript. In the manuscript version of the encounter between Carriego and Soussens the emphasis falls not on the talent that Soussens perceives in Carriego but on the ways in which Carriego felt disdain (and fondness) for the oddities of the Frenchman. This is related in the manuscript to the amusement that the compadrito feels in face of the Italian *gringo*: not xenophobia but a mild amusement. In turn, though, Borges casts a critical eye on the *grotesco criollo* genre of the *sainete*, so popular in the 1920s, in which the new "Italianate" gaze on the criollo "native" turns the latter into a mere

figure of amusement, of *divertimento* (and if I am right in reading the blurry photograph here, the use of the Italian word reinforces the game of mirrors through which *gringo* and *criollo* see each other).

A final tantalizing bit that I would like to transcribe, though my photographs are not up to the task here, reads:

Suplementos + Páginas com.
 ??? de Buenos Aires — Apéndices [despegables + ???] orillas
 — ??? de Evaristo Carriego — (?? elementos (el capítulo <con ??>

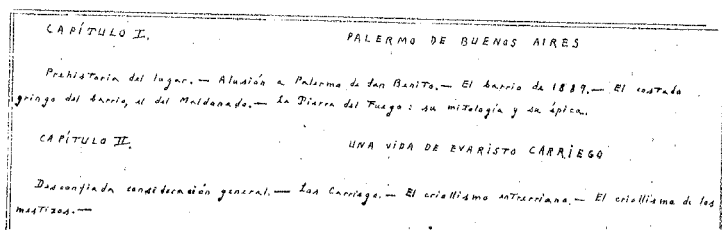
which is followed by a couple more lines that are not legible at all in my pictures. This reference to supplemental material refers directly to the “Páginas complementarias” with which the 1930 edition concludes, first “Del segundo capítulo” with some “décimas en lunfardo” that Carriego published in 1912 under the pseudonym El Barretero, and then “Del cuarto capítulo” in which the famous texts “El truco” and “Las inscripciones de carro” (elsewhere called “Séneca en las orillas” or the definitive “Inscripciones en los carros”) appear. The latter text ends with a declaration that in some sense the wisdom found in proverbs and popular poems (or in this case, brief inscriptions on the backs of oxcarts) is “democratic” and anonymous, and yet that the reader has to know that the text is not fixed: “Nos duele admitir que nuestra opinión de una línea pueda no ser final” (118).

NOTEBOOK

The notebook version of the manuscript of *Evaristo Carriego* is much more complete. It is written in a notebook of the brand “1910” (perhaps related to the notebooks called “Lanceros argentinos de 1910” that Borges used on other occasions). The front and back cover have fragments of writing, as does the inside of the front cover; there are 36 pages of dense writing and one loose sheet that was inserted; only two pages and the inside of the back cover are blank. Many of the pages are numbered by Borges but the numbering system is not from the beginning to the end because there are numerous page numbers that are marked “bis” or “b” and one entire section (which corresponds to the second chapter of the published book, the one called “Una vida de Evaristo Carriego”) that starts off with number 1 and (with some internal insertions) goes through a new page 5. As with

many of his other notebooks, Borges has chosen a notebook of graph paper, perhaps as a way of disciplining his handwriting which, in addition to being tiny, had a tendency to droop down to the right when he was writing on unlined paper.

The first page of the notebook that is marked as graph paper (the page facing the inside back cover) contains the following:



CAPITULO I. PALERMO DE BUENOS AIRES
 Prehistoria del lugar. – Alusión a Palermo de San Benito. – El barrio de 1889. – El costado gringo del barrio, el del Maldonado. – La Tierra del Fuego: su mitología y su épica.

CAPITULO II. UNA VIDA DE EVARISTO CARRIEGO
 Desconfiada consideración general. – Los Carriego. – El criollismo entrerriano. – El criollismo de los mestizos. –

Below this there are a few scrawled lines written from bottom to top to the left. The next page is blank, and the one after that shows a series of false starts for the phrase “Pienso que el nombre de Evaristo Carriego pertenecerá a la eclesia visibilis de nuestras letras,” and ending with the reference to “el doctor Marcelo del Mazo,” continuing on the recto page after with the reference to Groussac. Interesting, it is the latter page, the continuation of what will become the beginning of the first chapter of the book, that announces itself as the manuscript of the first chapter, with a Roman numeral I and the underlined title Palermo de Buenos Aires. The manuscript of the first chapter continues in tiny script to what Borges numbered as page 4 of the notebook (actually recto page 5). This is followed on recto page 6 with “III Las misas herejes” (Borges’s numbering page 5), that then runs through recto page 9, though on recto page 8 Borges has a long insertion “para intercalar en el capítulo II”). On recto page 10 we find “II Una vida de Evaristo Carriego,” and on recto page

11 “III La canción del barrio.” Recto page 13 contains a new version of “I Palermo de Buenos Aires,” and Borges numbers those pages (after an unnumbered first page) as follows: 2 (the verso of page 12), 3 (recto page 14), 4 (verso page 13) and 5 (recto page 14). What I have given here is a schematic account, though, since the whole is full of renumberings and insertions, the last of which (on recto page 17, almost at the end of the notebook) is marked “para intercalar en el capítulo IV.” What is clear even in this schematic account, though, is that the book is not written in the order in which the chapters appear in the published version: chapter I (“Palermo de Buenos Aires”) is begun near the start of the notebook but then continued later; and chapters III and IV (on Carriego’s two collections of poems) are written before chapter II (the biography of Carriego). I will undertake a fuller study of this notebook in the coming months, but would like here to examine the particular passages that already appeared *in nuce* in the Segovia dictionary, to show how Borges began to work from the dictionary to the notebook version, and presumably after that to some fair copy that preceded the 1930 book publication (which may or may not survive: fair copies of Borges texts seem usually not to have survived).

For an example of the relation between this manuscript and the scribbles in the Segovia dictionary, let’s return to the first version of the end of the first chapter of *Evaristo Carriego*:

Pues aquí con {irrelevancia + inaplicabilidad} aparente, vuelven ?? ??? {solicitar + buscar} vía {la pluma + el oído} ????

— D. P. + M. a. w. {verificar}

{agradecidos} verso (s) de XXXXXXXXXXXX que {así declaran + reconocen} Here & here did England help me q. Br. escribió, imaginándose {una + la ??} {marinera +} epopeya de uno sobre el mar y el alto barco {trabajado + torneado} c??? A una {torre + pieza} de ajedrez para {al ser {leído} + probado} por mí — para un .. en que cayó Nelson y que — {yo al releer traducido también el nombre de patria, {porque + pues} Robert Burns no era menos {ardiente + querido} en Inglaterra que lo es B. A. para nosotros = me sirven como {recuerdo + signo} de noches solas de {complicadas + alborate} + entretejidas} caminatas {inútiles} por la {soledad + vaciedad + deserción} en ? de los barrios. Porque B. A. es honda y ^{(en) 2} las noches que me he abandonado a sus calles siempre 1-^{?????} me ha {auxiliado}, son auxilio de -?? y de ??, y una noche ??, de una sentenciosa milonga q. {escuchó + me concedió} en la calle XXXXXXXXXXXX {jaures + Bermejo}, en una cuadra de casas pobres entre q. . . y otra, orillando la Ch. {bisturi + favor + casitia:??} sacóme.?

dejóme? a la ?? bar ese?} las notas de mi Cuaderno San Martín [H. l. h.?? ?? me
aguardó? Buenos Aires} que

In the “1910” notebook, this has been filled out as follows:

Escribo estos ~~personales y comunicados~~ comunicados y personales
recuerdos y me sollicita con arbitrariedad aparente el agradecido verso de
(Ð. p. + M. a. w.): ^{de Home-thoughts}: Here and here did England help me q.
Browning escribió, pensando en u. abnegación sobre el mar y en el alto
navío torneado como un alfil en que {Nelson ~~cayó~~ ^{cayó Nelson}, y q. releído
por mi – traducido también el nombre de patria, pues para (Robert) B. no
era menos ~~íntimo el de Inglaterra, q. lo es B. A. para nosotros~~—^{inmediato}
el de su Inglaterra – me sirve como símbolo de noches solas, de caminatas
extasiadas y libres ^{eternas} por l. Infinitud de los barrios. Porque B. A. es
hondo y nunca, en l. desilusión o el ~~pesar~~ ^{penar}, me abandoné a sus calles,
~~sin ser favorecido por ellas~~ ^{recibir inesperado consuelo}, ya de sentir eternidad
^{irrealidad} ya de guitarras desde el fondo de un patio, ya de ~~entrevistas of-
das~~ ^{cazadas roce de vidas}. Here a. here did England help me, aquí y aquí me
~~quiso~~ ^{vino a} ayudar Buenos Aires. Esa razón es u. de las razones por las q.
{resolvi + decidi} ~~escribir + redactar~~ ^{componer} este primer capítulo.

A few insertions clarify the process that must have been reflected in the clear copy: where in the paragraph I just transcribed Borges wrote “Nelson cayó,” then crossed that out and put “cayó Nelson,” in the left margin he returned to “Nelson cayó” (as in the published text); similarly, the vacillation between “penar” and “pesar” is resolved in the left margin with “penar” (as in the 1930 book). The only detail that is not clarified in the revision from the notebook version to the published one concerns the omission of the reference to Robert Burns, which as we saw was important to him in the notes in the Segovia dictionary but disappears from the published text. This is an important detail, since in the dictionary annotations Borges is concerned with the ways in which Burns—who wrote in Scottish dialect—was as important in London as in Edinburgh: that is, in the ways in which “local” writing can be “global” within the language in question. This is central to his thinking about Carriego, and in his reevaluation of his own *criollista* writings of the 1920s. (After this, Borges would only occasionally return to “local” dialect, the most important instance being the 1933 story “Hombre de la esquina rosada.”) Other than that, this is substantially what we can find in the published version, already quoted above.

For a final example, let's return to the scribbles in Segovia, to the first version of the beginning of chapter II, the famous reflection on the art of biography. In Segovia, Borges writes:

obligue a) relatarle a otro individuo la vida de un tercero, es
 paradoja suficiente. L. individuos + hombres} se comprometa al {despertar +
 recrear} en otro(s) ???mado de que me él mismo es su poseedor... + + Y el
 hecho de haberlo yo conocido a Carriego no
 _____ finita? zanguanga?
 me ??? — ??? ??? disminuye + restañe} lo paradójico de {la empresa + l
 empeño}. Yo ??? pues ??? ??? La { + } que + retratos y retratos y mínimas
 desviaciones??? originales habrán crecido—
 pamperada
 pastorear -- pastoriodor
 ??? — mantienen su? idiosincrasia

In the “1910” notebook, at the beginning of the section “II Una vida de Evaristo Carriego,” this is mysteriously transcribed as:

Q un individuo quiera despertar en otro individuo (21 renglones)
 Carriego era entrerriano (12 renglones)

The latter fragment corresponds to a loose page that is inserted into the notebook, that begins, “Carriego era, de generaciones atrás, entrerriano,” and that consists of 11 lines, not 12. The first bit, which may also have been on a loose piece of paper, was not in the notebook when I examined it, so the reflection on biography is missing from the notebook. In any case, “recuerdos de recuerdos de otros recuerdos, cuyas mínimas desviaciones originales habrán crecido, en cada nuevo ensayo” (31, 1st ed.) is an adequate description of Borges’s method, as is this passage a few pages later:

Los días fueron ^{eran} un solo día. . . .
 Las variantes raleaban: sus días eran un solo día. Hasta su muerte
 Los días eran un solo día. Las variantes raleaban. Desde XXX_{los} seis años
 vivió en el 84 de Honduras, ahora ^{hoy} 3784. . . .
 Las variantes raleaban: sus días eran un solo día.

The fourth and last of these versions ends, speaking about Carriego’s continuing presence almost two decades after his death: “Lo repiten {infinitamente + multitudinariamente} en ~~nuestros~~ ^{nosotros} destinos ,

como si C. {estuviera^{anduviera} + perdurara^{+persistiera}} disperso en nuestros destinos, como si c/u de nosotros fuera por unos segundos Carriego.”

Borges accumulates fragments, then—passages from Carriego’s works, quotations, jottings of his own—and assembles them into a whole, a vindication of Carriego that blurs into a vindication of his own practice. If in Carriego’s case “las variantes raleaban,” what to say of a manuscript that fills, in a dizzying way, the interstices left by earlier jottings in the blank pages of a dictionary, and that fills a notebook almost to the brim. *Evaristo Carriego* is an eloquent testimony to Borges’s capacity to construct a whole out of precarious fragments, leaving the seams of his work visible, daring to write imperfect pages (as he argues around this time in “La supersticiosa ética del lector”). Variants, vacillations: there is a method here, one pointed to in the epigraph to the book, from De Quincey: “a mode of truth, not of truth coherent and central, but angular and splintered.”

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