



Postcolonial Borges: “Colonized Intellectual” and “Double Consciousness” in “The Nothingness of Personality”

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Abstract

Using Du Bois’s “Double Consciousness” and Fanon’s “Colonized Intellectual”, we contend that Borges’s essay “The Nothingness of Personality” can be deemed postcolonial. Our study turns to the postcolonial world of Latin America, with a special focus on Buenos Aires, addressing the alienation, hybridity, “two-ness”, and the othered state of Borges as an immigrant to Latin America after the World War I. “Double Consciousness” is arguably central to the analysis of Borges’s sense of duality in a newly adapted culture with the dilemma whether to behave in accordance with his previously adopted cultural identity, or with a new self in a new culture. Many studies have signified Borges’s attempt to establish the foundation of true Argentinean literature and a revival of cultural heritage—however, there ceases to be a significant study to encompass that Borges is like a “colonized intellectual” who talked back to the center through using the colonizer’s ideology.

Keywords: Postcolonial Borges, “Colonized Intellectuals”, “Double Consciousness”, Subjectivity of Self, “The Nothingness of Personality”

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Introduction

Jorge Francisco Isidoro Luis Borges Acevedo KBE, commonly known as Jorge Luis Borges, is a key literary figure of the postmodern Spanish literature from Argentina whose short stories and poems have been studied from various approaches, including postcolonial studies (Aizenberg, 1992, pp. 21-6; Toro, 2002, pp. 67-94; & Fiddian, 2017, pp. 19-27). However, few researchers have addressed the postcolonial aspects of his profound essays, especially his 1922 essay "The Nothingness of Personality". Given that this essay was written shortly after young Borges's arrival in Buenos Aires, Argentina, as an immigrant from Europe in the aftermath of the World War I, the current article attempts to study Borges's sense of duality and bifocal view in the target culture, in which he was bewildered under the pressure of cultural diversity and cultural difference. This sense of hybridity in the case of Borges led to the formation of subjectivity of his self, the result of which as we claim, was the self-conscious choice of functioning as a "colonized intellectual", talking back to the center from periphery under the veil of objectivity.

In order to better grasp Borges's senses of duality, otherness, and nothingness, it is necessary to study his biography. Thus, a short yet comprehensive biography of Borges is offered with a main focus on his journey before settling down in Buenos Aires in order for us to understand the psychological challenges of the 22-year-old Borges, to analyze the various cultures which he has been through during his wandering years in Europe and Spain, and to elaborate the impact of these cultures on the formation of multiple cultural identities and the resultant sense of otherness in Borges.

Borges was born in Buenos Aires, Argentina on August 24, 1899, into a paternally philosophical and maternally chivalric family, which was suspected to be young Borges's first dilemma. He was not certain whether to follow the way of his father's anti-communist sentiments or to be a prosecutor to honor his maternal grandfather as a freedom fighter in colonial Spain. As John King (cited in Boldy, 2009, p. 8) puts it concisely:

For Borges [. . .] the history of Argentina was a family affair, a conflict between the civilisation of his father's side, equated with books and the English language, and the barbarism of his mother's lineage, synonymous with men of action and the Spanish language. Barbarism expresses both desire and shame. A desire for a simple world of hoodlums, knife fighters and military ancestors.

Borges's early life can be postulated as a life of journeys and incessant immigrations. His first journey started just shortly after his birth, when his family moved to Palermo. This is presumed to be the first location where child Borges was filled with a sense of duality. Although he fantasied about engaging in outdoor activities of rowdy and unscrupulous environment of Palermo (the setting which is believed to impose a great influence on his later works), he resided in the library of his father, the place which he later defined as "the chief event" in his life: "In fact, I sometimes think I have never strayed outside that library" (cited in Boldy, 2009, p. 16).

Borges's journeys were not limited to that of Palermo. He was destined to experience several immigrations as he was maturing. He was obliged to discover Europe as a result of his father's bad health and blindness which caused his early retirement. The family was settled down in Geneva, Switzerland in 1914, which was concurrent with the outbreak of World War I. These circumstances caused the family to experience extreme changes which forced them to seek refuge in Geneva and stay there until 1919 due to rising political unease in Argentina.

Though Switzerland tried to maintain a neutral and objective state in WWI, the Swiss were inevitably included in the war as the frontier. Furthermore, there emerged a grave insidious tension between German-speaking and French-speaking societies where the former was substantiated by political support and oppressed French-speaking class to which the Borges's family belonged. The result of such a double alignment was the cultural identification of each group based on their cultural difference with their opposing force. In a French-speaking society young Borges became familiar with the proponents of the Symbolist movement, especially Walt Whitman, and Schopenhauer who contributed to his Eurocentric views of self and alienation; moreover, he refused the main stream French curriculum and continued his studies in German.

In Switzerland, young Borges became acquainted with nationalistic views through the education he received both in school and university that influenced his views of nativism and advocacy of Argentinean cultural heritage. In *Small Nations and Colonial Peripheries in World War I*, Ingrid Brühwiler and Matias Gardin (2016, p. 14) asserted that

This controversial internal context played out in the realms of the Swiss and Luxembourgish education systems. [. . .] The War's raging storm imposed new priorities on teachers' magazines [. . .] teachers expounded a version of patriotism that would be simultaneously internationalist and multi-lingual as befitted their composite nations.

In 1917, Borges's anti-communist and anti-militaristic views were shaped under the influence of the Russian Revolution. In 1919, after his grandmother's death, Borges's family returned to Spain and wandered among various locations such as Majorca, Seville, and Madrid, nations that inherited the cultural diversity of the colonial period and created a new identity based on the shared European language and culture. In Madrid, he finally found an inspiration in Rafael Cansinos-Assens, with whom he associated himself in a new literary circle, the avant-garde, anti-Modernist *Ultraists*, a group of idealists that met at the Cafe Colonial. Under the spell of their ideologies, young Borges established "one of his first oppositions between writers and concepts, seen in terms of a duel or military conflict, which will become a defining dimension of his mind" (Boldy, 2009, p. 20). These journeys can be presumed to be the reason why Borges felt the excessive hybridity and a sense of otherness as he finally settled down in Buenos Aires in 1921.

After seven years of longing for his hometown, Borges was puzzled to see a thoroughly different Buenos Aires. In her essay "Borges, Postcolonial Precursor", Edna Aizenberg (1992) emphasized the peripheral state of Buenos Aires in postcolonial years, maintaining that "Argentina is part of geography of the imagination, a territory away from the 'center' that conjures up a cluster of postcolonial topoi: colonization, linguistic displacement, exile, cross-culturality" (p. 24).

Under the influence of the new European identity, and the sense of patriotism and nativism in Switzerland, Borges found solace in his second identity in Macedonio. Fernandez was a follower of Schopenhauer and a great conversationalist whose "eccentric idealism" exerted a great influence on young Borges. To accentuate the impact of Schopenhauer on Borges, Edwin Williamson noted that "the 'unreality' of the material world" and "the non-existence of the 'I', or individual subject"-were the ideas Borges would have encountered in Schopenhauer" (Warnes, 2009, p. 42). Fernandez made Borges deeply skeptical about the material world, human influence, individuality, and personal identity, inciting him to view self as an illusion. In "The Nothingness of Personality" ['La nadería de la personalidad'], the impact of Fernandez's notion of the unreality of the individual personality as well as Schopenhauer's views of transcendental idealism and representational world is vividly presented. As Borges contended, "There is no whole self. Any of life's present situations is seamless and sufficient. Are you, as you ponder these disquietudes, anything more than an indifference gliding over the argument I make, or an appraisal of the opinions I expound?" (Weinberger, 1999, p. 3)

The double-identity had some advantages for Borges throughout his life and career, augmenting his international fame. He continued to flourish in his later years and reached the excellence to be regarded as the pioneering figure of postmodern Latin American literature, one of the most prominent authors to employ Magic Realism, which Homi K. Bhabha claimed to be the "literary language of the emergent postcolonial world" (Warnes, 2009, p. 1). Borges died of liver tumor and cancer on 14 June 1986 in Geneva, at the age of 86.

"The Nothingness of Personality" was published posthumously in *The Total Library: Non-Fiction 1922-1986*, edited by Eliot Weinberger in 1999. The essay deals with the ideology of a Eurocentric Borges and his concept of nonexistence of individual self and personal identity, under the spell of what we call as his "Double Consciousness". As elucidated in the biographical information, young Borges was disillusioned by the experience of WWI and its aftermath which hurled Western thought and ideology of intellectuals into mere nothingness and aimlessness. Moreover, the second disappointment came with his first experience and awareness of a postcolonial and peripheral environment of Buenos Aires. Borges found his old self, European self, completely different from his new self and his status as an immigrant. In fact, he confronted two selves distinct from each other, having nothing in common.

Maria Popova (2017, para 1), at the beginning lines of her essay, "The Nothingness of Personality: Young Borges on the Self", contended that two different

selves “inhabit different geographical and social loci, lead different lives, love different loves, dream different dreams. Hardly a habit unites them. Even most of the cells in the body striding down that street are different”.

The severe tone of Borges’s essay ascertains the subjectivity of a 22-year-old immigrant, which is formed and shaped as a result of the sense of hybridity, otherness, and duality he observed through a bifocal lens in peripheral, marginalized, and post-colonized atmosphere of Argentina. Borges found himself as an outsider who chose to step in the shoes of the colonizers, and adopted their views because, as Memmi states, in the colony the colonizer treated the colonized in the following five ways: 1. Inhumanely, because “the colonizer ha[d] no responsibility to him, just as he ha[d] no responsibility towards animals or objects;” 2. Indifferently, because “the colonizer bec[a]me as indifferent as a stone to the colonized’s pain and anguish;” 3. in an overgeneralizing way, because “if one colonized person commit[ed] a mistake, then blame w[ould] be placed on the whole community as a means of intimidating them;” 4. In a lawless manner, because “since the colonized is reduced to the level of a thing or an animal, he is not ‘protected by the laws of the colony.’” This also helped the colonized degenerate more if they committed a crime against each other. And, 5. in a segregation manner, because the colonized were assumed as animals they were expected to be kept apart from the colonizers (Mehrvand, 2012, p.196).

Research into the postcolonial aspects of Borges’s poems and short stories bears relatively promising results. For instance, Robin Fiddian (2017), in his book *Postcolonial Borges: Argument and artistry*, draws upon postcolonial Borgesian discourse, with a main focus on his short stories, especially that of “Tlon Uqbar, Orbis Tertius”. Fiddian (2017) studied the appearance of postcolonial subjectivity in the works of Borges with the aim of elucidating the political significance of Borges’s essays and short stories (Fiddian, 2017). Similarly, in *Borges, woman, and postcolonial history*, Donna Fitzgerald (2006) analyzes the woman figure, focusing on gender and memory in “La intrusa” (1966), a short story by Borges, and situated the narrative within Argentinean Postcolonial history (Fitzgerald, 2006, p. 227). More comprehensively, in his profound essay, *The peripheral center of postmodernism: On Borges, Garcia Marquez, and alterity*, Carlos Rincon (1993) endorses the triumph of peripheral Latin American authors over that of Europeans as centers, pioneering the pillars of postmodernism, concentrating on their fictions (pp. 163-66). In *Post-coloniality and Post-modernity: Jorge Luis Borges: The Periphery in the Centre, the Periphery as the Centre, the Centre of the Periphery*, Alfonso de Toro (1995) probes into Borges’s essay “The Argentine Writer and the Tradition”, claiming that the major question of Argentinean Writers is that of establishing a true Latin American literary identity. In accordance with Borges, Toro emphasizes the fact that Borges, instead of appropriating the cultural elements from the center, as a peripheral writer employs appropriation, pastiche, and parody, the result of which is a purely Borgesian discourse, i.e. Argentinean discourse. Toro admits that the aim of Borges, in particular, and Argentinean literature, in general, is to resolve the question of “Argentinean identity”, as the periphery wants to become the center, or at least establish an equal dialogue with them. He asserts, “Borges’ discourse presents the battle of difficult relationship between periphery/centre” (Toro, 1995, p. 23).

Several studies, including, but not limited to the above-mentioned ones, have addressed postcolonial status, social awareness, and cultural consciousness in various poems and short stories of Borges. However, until now there has ceased to be a study to analyze the postcolonial aspects of the first Borgesian essay, namely, "The Nothingness of Personality". One may speculate that the reason why this essay has not been examined from a postcolonial perspective could be due to the prevalence of the absurdist theme of the essay and its explication of lack of identity and individuality, which overshadows its postcolonial significance. This study attempts to argue that "The Nothingness of Personality" can be deemed a postcolonial essay if we draw upon the two important concepts of "Double Consciousness", which is elaborated by W. E. B. Du Bois in *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903), and "Colonized Intellectuals" as discussed by Frantz Fanon in *The Wretched of the Earth* (2005).

Our study has three aspects to its argument: the postcolonial world, Du Bois, and Fanon's suggested concepts. To begin, this article turns to the postcolonial world of Latin America, with a special focus on Buenos Aires. Furthermore, it addresses the alienation, hybridity, "two-ness", and the othered state of an immigrant to Latin America after World War I, especially in case of Borgesian discourse. This article secondly argues that the concept of "Double Consciousness" is central to the analysis of Borges's sense of duality as an immigrant as he felt in a newly adapted culture; struggling with the dilemma whether to behave in accordance with his previously adopted cultural identity, which is believed to be foreign and other in the new culture, or to act in concord with a new self in a new culture, the result of which is assumed to be a mere subjectivity of the self that reshapes the boundaries of cultural and personal identity. Thirdly, we argue that it is possible to extend Fanon's concept of "Colonized Intellectuals" to Argentinean Writers, in general, and Borges, in particular. Researchers such as Kristal (2009, p. 8), Boldy (2009, p. 261), and Hart (2009, p. 272) have endeavored to signify Borges's attempt to establish the foundation of true Argentinean literature and a revival of cultural heritage. Nonetheless, there has been hardly a significant study to encompass the concept of Borges's state of being colonized in an Argentinean context. By considering Borges's speaking and acting as a Fanonian "colonized intellectual", we tend to confirm that "The Nothingness of Personality" is a protest essay, resisting against the sense of colonization, postcolonial Eurocentrism, and Communism Borges perceived in a new culture of Buenos Aires, viewing it as a hindrance to the individuality of authors in particular, and the whole Latin America in general. A postcolonial reading of "The Nothingness of Personality" will help us to suggest that Borges conquered the sense of duality and lack of identity by choosing to be a "colonized intellectual" who attempted to talk back to the center through using their ideology and employing it as a revelation for the colonized society.

Argentina's Postcolonial Status

Postcolonial studies include the controversial subjects, namely, the identities and personalities of hybrid subjectivities that are becoming extensively important, especially in the field of neocolonial studies. "The Nothingness of Personality" can

be summarized as the representation of Borges's sense of hybridity and otherness in Argentina during the 1920s.

Argentina was considered to have been colonized by Spain from the 16th to the 19th century, until Argentinians declared independence on May 25, 1810. That is why the status of Argentina after this period is referred to as postcolonial. However, colonization continued even after the independence of Argentina and this phenomenon prompted critics like Vadney (1999, pp. 409-82), Salvatore (2008, pp. 757-91), Isham (2012, pp. 302-21), and Dennison (2013, pp. 185-95) to study the neocolonial state of Argentina and control of ex-colonies after political independence. Similarly, in his essay entitled, "History and Dystopia and the Language of the Future" from his book, *Postcolonial Borges: Argument and Artistry*, Robin Fiddian (2017, p.90) contended that "Stranded on the periphery, the situation and status of the country [Argentina] are effectively those of a colonial dependency, reminiscent of James Joyce's Ireland at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth."

The colonized Argentineans, though celebrated the first centenary of independence from Spanish forces, still felt the excessive sense of being controlled by a superior power, especially due to the mass immigration of Spanish and Europeans to Argentina after WWI, which boomed the sense of alienation in the natives. According to Fiddian (2017), "Buenos Aires and Argentina seem destined and almost doomed to continue in the roles of simulacra or clones, their anxieties and situations a metaphor of powerlessness" (p. 91).

The idea of continuity of colonization and neocolonial state of Argentina has been emphasized by Alfonso de Toro. In his article entitled, "The Foundation of Western Thought in Twenty and Twenty-first Centuries: The Postmodern and Postcolonial Discourse in J. L. Borges", Toro (2002) contended, "Argentineans are estranged from past, separated from Europe, and thus it is as if they were to find themselves in the first days of creation" (p. 85).

One can claim that 22-year-old Borges, while returning to his native land and being under the influence of serious Nationalist and anti-communist educations in Switzerland, has chosen to preserve his grandfather's reputation as a freedom fighter in colonial Argentina, and wittingly reconciled his first duality by being philosophical and chivalric ideologies that were inherited from paternal and maternal ancestors, respectively. In other words, Borges's essay is presumed to be a brilliant use of literature to awaken national pride and revelation in the natives to become aware of their colonized state and lack of personality and control.

In the epigraph to "The Nothingness of Personality", Borges asserted that the only way of survival is through perseverance and dedication to past inheritance and nativism. "... My purpose is (...) but to consider the Calvary toward which idolaters of themselves are on a fatal course" (Weinberger, 1999, p. 3). This epigraph, which is considered to be a metaphorical allusion to the literature of postcolonial period in Argentina, is also a mimicry of the colonizer by the colonized to form their new sense of nationalism and national literature, albeit unconsciously. By referring to the

literature of postcolonial Argentina as Calvary as symbol of crucifixion of Christ, and extensive suffering and pain, Borges likens postcolonial writers to idolaters who eradicate true Argentinean literature through following colonist ideology. Borges emphatically rejected this blind imitation of the colonizers and equated it to a fatal course which ended with the death of true Argentinean literature. Similarly, in his essay "The Regional Novel and Beyond", Brian Gollnick (2005) admits that "Argentina was trapped between the civilizing force of European culture and the barbarity incarnate in Latin America's untamed nature" (p. 45).

Borges, as Sara Castro-Klaren (2008) asserted, belonged to a group of "new elite that longed to be the equal of the European aristocracy", who intended to castigate and reprimand the colonizers and Europeans through criticizing their ideologies and accentuating ethnic and traditional values (p. 427). This ideal accompanied Borges throughout his life as he always endeavored to revive *Gaacho* trend. Castro-Klaren (2008) claims,

This was, for instance, the case with many texts authored during the long centuries of colonial life, or some texts authored by women and other subaltern subjects whose plan of action was not so much to comply with the models offered, but rather to interrupt the flow of the colonial power-knowledge complex, and inscribe their memory or position. (p. 5)

After expounding the post/colonial status of Argentina and some historical facts about the context through which Borges's (1999) essay was written, we intend to discuss the sense of Hybridity and "Double Consciousness" in Borges and his function as a "colonized intellectual".

Extending "Double Consciousness" and "Colonized Intellectual" to Borges

William Edward Burghardt Du Bois was an African American sociologist, civil rights activist, author, and writer whose scholarly work, *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903) included some groundbreaking remarks about the concept of "Double Consciousness". In this book, a part of which was previously published in the magazine *Atlantic Monthly*, there were fourteen chapters on the topic of race, and duality of African Americans in America. Du Bois (1903) defined the concept of "Double Consciousness" as "[the] sense of always looking at oneself through the eyes of another", emphasizing the alienation of blacks in their own country (p. 3). He knew that "Double Consciousness" created a split personality that gives rise to a sense of exclusion. Du Bois argued that African Americans should resist and survive the psychic violence of these contradictions. He further contended that "The history of the American Negro is the history of this strife—this longing to attain self-conscious manhood, to merge his double self into a better and truer self ..." (Du Bois, 1903, p. 38).

Despite the fact that "Double Consciousness" is a term originally related to the contradictory state of African Americans, there have been recent attempts to extend this racial term to non-African American contexts, too. For instance, in his essay

“CHUS: An unfinished Journey of Transnationalism”, considering the duality of Chinese historians in the United States, Wang Xi states that “Double Consciousness” is “experienced, universally, by those who, by default and by choice, live across the boundaries of politically organized communities, whether such communities are organized along the boundaries of race, ideology, nation-state, or international divide” (Xi, 2008, p. 165). Xi redefines the duality of Chinese Americans as “double presents (personalities)”, asserting that “No matter how wishfully one tries to embrace *one* present (American) and abandon the *other* (Chinese), or vice versa, one is always aware of the two presents” (Xi, 2008, p. 165). Similarly, in “The (double) Consciousness in African American Crime Fiction”, Kristof Hoppen (2008) declares that “Double Consciousness” is not an ethnically bounded phenomenon, rather it is an “identity conflict and [...] a schizoid phenomenon evident in all human interactions and communications” (p. 7). Therefore, it is still appropriate to apply Du Bois’s racial concept to Borges and Argentina.

In his essay entitled “Double Consciousness”, Booker Cook (2013) claimed that “Double Consciousness refers to the state of being cognizant of two experiences that impact life” (p. 2). In *The Souls of Black Folk*, Du Bois (1903) stated that this sense of duality and hybridity resulted in “a painful self-consciousness, an almost morbid sense of personality and a moral hesitancy which is fatal to self-confidence” (p. 71). It is possible to analyze the colonized state of Borges and his sense of “two-ness” in Argentina in accordance with what Perinbam (1982) mentions in *Holy Violence: The Revolutionary Thought of Frantz Fanon*: “Colonialism strips the colonized of group identity, cultural heritage, language, and any semblance of who they were before crusader presence” (as cited in Cook, 2013, p. 4).

In case of Borges, “Double Consciousness” can be redefined as the process of reformation of an immigrant’s self under the conditions of alienation, oppression, and otherness. This process of reconstruction of a new self leads to mere subjectivity of a presumably nonexistent self and conscious awareness. So, this study aims at interrogating the shifts in an immigrant to postcolonial society and the way he, as the peripheral and the other, acts in the colonized system. Borges’s duplicity can be better perceived by Du Bois who asserted, “Such a double life, with double thoughts, double duties, and double social classes, must give rise to double words and double ideals, and tempt the mind to pretense or revolt, to hypocrisy or radicalism” (Du Bois, 1903, p. 71).

T. Owens Moore (2005) and Marc E. Black (2007; 2012) have attempted to comparatively study Du Bois’s Double Consciousness and its relevance to Fanon’s ideology. Nevertheless, until now there has ceased to be a study about the impact of “Double Consciousness” and duality of a colonized writer on the formation of revolutionary subjectivity of Borges as a Fanonian “colonized intellectual”. Moore (2005), for instance, in his essay entitled “A Fanonian Perspective on Double Consciousness”, studied Fanon’s *Black Skin, White Masks*, arguing for the commonality between Fanon and Du Bois, and their mental conflict about the sense of duality each felt under white supremacy. After a thorough discussion on the historical parallelism between Fanon and Du Bois, Moore concluded that both of them

fought against their mental conflict and tried to fully express themselves: "Fanon and Du Bois were on a collision course for the meeting of their minds" (Moore, 2005, p. 756).

Another critic who studied the commonalities between Fanon and Du Bois was Marc E. Black. In "Fanon and Du Boisian Double Consciousness", Black (2007) connected Fanon's work with Du Bois's concept of "Double Consciousness", to stress "similarity of Double Consciousness between people of color in the U.S. and colonized people historically supports the claim of close connections between racism in the U.S. and colonialism internationally" (p. 393). Black concluded that it is through a multilateral "Double Consciousness" that a healthy dialogue between center/periphery is established.

In another essay written in 2012, Black returned to the same topic by connecting the negativity of "Double Consciousness" to the negativity of self as proposed by Borges. In "Meanings and Typologies of Du Boisian Double Consciousness within 20th Century United States Racial Dynamics", Black further expanded on the idea of the negativity or absence of "self consciousness", emphasizing that subjectivity and consciousness of the colonized is reshaped through fusion of double identities:

In Du Bois' writing, self consciousness is what develops from a reconciliation of Double Consciousness as a position of negation. He is seeking to determine and develop what fills a void (self consciousness) by first identifying and defining the void (Double Consciousness). Du Bois is defining an actual, but yet unexplained, existence (involving self consciousness) from a position of non-being (involving Double Consciousness). That is why Double Consciousness is first defined negatively, as the absence of self consciousness. Then, with that background of negativity, within that void of DuBoisian Double Consciousness, the meanings of self consciousness can be seen as they fill in their absence. (Black, 2012, p. 12)

Drawing upon Black's findings, we assert that "The Nothingness of Personality" represents an amalgam of duals which tries to reveal an actual existence of a self within the background of negation. In other words, Borges maintains a true individual subjectivity in deceit of objectivity. Borges's essay deals with a definition of and identification with lack of personality in the colonized people. Through this essay, he aimed at awakening Argentinean's state of being colonized by European invasion.

In *The Wretched of the Earth*, Frantz Fanon gives an account of the colonial system that constitutionally underestimates the cultural heritage of the colonized bodies and ascribes an inferior hierarchy for the colonized in the society. The only way he prescribes for the survival and the revival of pre-colonized cultural identity is through creation of "new-men", or "colonized intellectuals" whose mission was to awaken people, to join them, and to support them in prophetic manner, and whose final aim was decolonization of the minds of the colonized people. Fanon (2005) viewed colonization as diminishing of the colonized's past:

Colonialism is not content merely to impose its law on the colonized country's present and future. Colonialism is not satisfied with snaring the people in its net or of draining the colonized brain of any form or substance. With a kind of perverted logic, it turns its attention to the past of the colonized people and distorts it, disfigures it, and destroys it. This effort to demean history prior to colonization today takes on a dialectical significance. (p. 149)

Fanon (2005) further describes the formation of what we call the "Double Consciousness" of the "colonized intellectual", European and native consciousness, as a natural process from which he (as a "colonized intellectual") has often no ability or willingness to choose:

Stumbling over the need to assume two nationalities, two determinations, the intellectual who is Arab and French, or Nigerian and English, if he wants to be sincere with himself, chooses the negation of one of these two determinations. Usually, unwilling or unable to choose, these intellectuals collect all the historical determinations which have conditioned them and place themselves in a thoroughly "universal perspective". (pp. 155-6)

Fanon summons the intellectuals to abandon the contact with colonialist bourgeoisie, since the contact serves the colonizer's purposes, whereas he wants a "colonized intellectual" to touch "base again with his people" (Fanon, 2005, p. 11), to become advocate of national culture and heritage, to highlight the negative effect of colonial system, to recall what is good about nativism, and finally to "commit himself body and soul to the national struggle" (Fanon, 2005, p. 167). Furthermore, he emphasizes the "the pointlessness and superficiality of the work[s] produced by the colonizers and Westerners (Fanon, 2005, p. 158). According to Reiland Rabaka (2011), Fanon expressed his suspicion against European ideology and their products, for he fervently asserted that "it was Europeans that perpetually spoke of 'the welfare of Man' yet 'murder men everywhere they find them'" (p. 139).

In *The Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon (2005) indicates the liberating function of the "colonized intellectuals" through revival of their self-defined cultural identity and heritage. For Marc E. Black (2007), "Liberation, in Fanon's sense, includes assessing one's colonized perspective through one's indigenous perspective" (p. 397). This liberating process demands a positive manipulation of the sense of duality by hybridized intellectuals to establish a state where a dialogue on an equal basis between the colonizers and the colonized would be possible. The first and the most important qualification of a true "colonized intellectual" in his prophetic quest is defined by Fanon as the positive aspects of the duality. As Fanon states,

He is therefore obliged to live a dual personality and play the part of a well-known patriot who has been taken out of circulation as a precautionary measure. The aim of the operation is to attack from the inside those elements that constitute the national consciousness. Not only must he collaborate, but he is given orders to discuss 'freely' with opponents and holdouts in order to

win them over. This is an efficient way of getting him to give leads on patriots and using him, therefore, as an informer. (Fanon, 2005, pp. 213-14)

Moreover, Fanon asserts that, it is only through realization of the true meaning of cultural heritage, nativism, and its contributions that the negative, peripheral, and othered association of the self diminish in the colonized society, giving way to a positive awareness of the self. This positivistic view of the self will generally lead to equilibrium between the personal self and the imposed self of the colonized, and between DuBoisian Doubles. In this regard, Fanon encourages the "colonized intellectuals" to "establish similar organizations so as to mobilize the masses and put pressure on the colonial administration. The formation of nationalist parties in the colonized countries is contemporary with the birth of an intellectual and business elite" (Fanon, 2005, p. 63).

Borges's Duality

Borges, in 1922, arrived in Buenos Aires where the colonizers, Europeans, were blinded by the dazzle of their ideologies and customs and judged Argentinians from within that pop culture, creating a hierarchy of inferiority for natives and privileging what was European. Similar to Joseph Conrad who "challenge[d] the idea of superiority of whites to other races" (Mehrvand & Talebi, 2020, p. 189), young Borges, filled with nationalism, viewed himself as an outsider and an author who was not acclaimed. Booker Cook (2013) emphasizes this sense of alienation as "feeling of not being acknowledged as a human being of equal standing in society ... of not being seen or acknowledged by mainstream society, a type of nonexistence unless needed for service of the dominant culture" (p. 4). Rather misjudged and misunderstood by the colonizers, Borges's personality, family lineage, cultural identity, national values, and in general his view became clouded and blurred in his motherland. Now the main question to be answered is how subjectivity of an immigrant intellectual was constructed.

To answer the above question, we draw upon Du Bois's (1903) concept of "Double Consciousness" to analyze Borges's pathological identity as an immigrant to Argentina. Furthermore, we elucidate a combination of various cultural identities he had been through during his wandering years in Europe, and to highlight the reflection and representation of this exoticism in his views toward personality and denial of existence of a whole self and unified identity.

In "The Nothingness of Personality", Borges denied the existence of a self and tangible memory and past:

He who defines personal identity as the private possession of some depository of memories is mistaken. Whoever affirms such a thing is abusing the symbol that solidifies memory in the form of an enduring and tangible granary or warehouse [...] Moreover, if I root personality in remembrance, what claim of ownership can be made on the elapsed instants [...] Heaped up over years, they lie buried, inaccessible to our avid longing. And that much-

vaunted memory to whose ruling you made appeal, does it ever manifest all its past plenitude? Does it truly live? The sensualists and their ilk, who conceive of your personality as the sum of your successive states of mind, are similarly deceiving themselves. On closer scrutiny, their formula is no more than an ignominious circumlocution that undermines the very foundation it constructs, an acid that eats away at itself, a prattling fraud and a belabored contradiction. (Weinberger, 1999, p. 4)

The above quotation delineates a severe criticism of sensualists, who were the forerunners of dominant philosophical view during the 19th century Europe and viewed sensations and perceptions as the basis for human cognition. The analysis of this essay draws upon some evidence for the interpellation of European identity and Eurocentrism in Borgesian view, which forces him to present the absurdist view of human alienation and self-less state without specific aim, which predominantly emerged as off-spring ideology of WWI. Borges's criticism of this ilk shows how farcical and ludicrous the dominance of perception can be for the colonized philosopher whose senses and percepts are controlled and established by the colonizers. In "Literature between the Wars: Macedonio Fernández, Jorge Luis Borges, and Felisberto Hernández", Adriana J. Bergero argues against the social convenience of immigrants to Argentina,

New social agents [...] began to shape their own discursive formats; an immense ideological/ representational palimpsest (anarchism, socialism, communism, feminism, and fascism) strained the public sphere; immigrant languages newly arrived in Argentina and Uruguay mixed Creole Castilian with Genovese and Yiddish [...] all of them newcomer hybrids embedding themselves into an indecipherable modernity. Leftovers, bifocal identities, and foreignness: symbols of the laid-open grotesque body that discomfits social life. (as cited in Castro-Klaren, 2008, p. 443)

Considering the biographical information of Borges's family life and early years of his literary career, he had acquired a bifocal, if not to claim a multi-focal, lens through which he attempted to choose whether to function as a hybrid immigrant with no identity (other and objective) or a "colonized intellectual" to prophetically awaken people about their state of being colonized (subjectivity of self in the colonized). In "Jorge Luis Borges and the Nothingness of the Self", Venkat Ramanan (2016) states,

[...] the self that Borges tries to present in his work may nevertheless not be always congruent with the self he may have wanted to convey. This is because his quest is influenced by a number of factors, not least the fact that the self-creation process is affected by our interplay with the external world. (p. 106)

Harriford and Thompson (2010) argued the positive aspects of "Double Consciousness" in "Condoleezza Rice, W. E. B. Du Bois, and Double Consciousness". They signified "Double Consciousness" as "second sight" that enables the colonized to "recognize their alienation" and to "step outside the

stereotype, to see projection as an illusion" (Harriford & Thompson, 2010, p. 43). In a similar reflexive attempt, Borges tried to resist being viewed as inferior and dehumanized by colonial supremacy. Similarly, Du Bois felt so, when he claimed that "Double Consciousness" is a sense of "measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity" (Du Bois, 1903, p. 3). That is to say, Borges refused being interpolated as a peripheral author. He denied his experience of "Double Consciousness" just to merge with a truer self, asserting that "what I do deny is that all our convictions must be adjusted to the customary antithesis between the self and the non-self, and that this antithesis is constant" (Weinberger, 1999, p. 4). Borges intended to illuminate the experience of his post-war alienation through identity denial and personal consciousness, which resulted in hybridity and a sense of central colonial oppression.

In "Richard Wright's Response to Garveyism and 'Double Consciousness' in *Lawd Today!*", Ahad Mehrvand (2010) remarked that the double choice of African Americans under the impact of racial oppression made African Americans either denounce their African heritage by assimilating to white culture or reject it by reclaiming their motherland as Africa. Mehrvand concluded, however, many African Americans in general and the characters in *Lawd Today!* in particular chose a yet another route "by projecting their hatred of whites onto weaker members of their families and communities" (Mehrvand, 2010, p. 87).

The same situation, to some extent, can be found in case of immigrant Borges who confronted the double choice between Eurocentrism and Nativism. Though Borges chose to take the third alternative, he did not resort to violence as it was the case with black characters in Wright's novel, rather he chose the positive manipulation of this sense of duality and alienation that will be discussed in the following section thoroughly. In brief, drawing upon Du Bois's concept we claim, Borges was incarcerated between opposing cultural selves, i.e. he was perplexed between European self and the colonized non-self. Under the influence of this duality Borges was forced to view himself from both the main stream cultural European view (colonizer) and from his own native Argentinean view (colonized). In essence he claimed the sameness of every human being (all the colonized are the same), "being an individuality is in all ways identical to mine and to that of any human specimen, and there is no way to separate them" (Weinberger, 1999, pp. 4-5).

Though Borges strived to maintain a mere objectivity in this regard, he is metamorphosed into what we call "a colonized intellectual" and implicitly presented a great subjectivity of self in the pretense of illusionary objectivity. This fact is evident in his essay in following criticism of Western ideology which intends "to erect upon them [the ideas about lack of prominent self] an aesthetic hostile to the psychologism inherited from the last century, sympathetic to the classics, yet encouraging to today's most unruly tendencies" (Weinberger, 1999, p. 3).

When Borges entered Buenos Aires, he had already acquired a set of selves, which were to be used by him to talk back to the colonizers as a "colonized intellectual" that will be discussed in the following sections thoroughly. These selves

were converged by his new experience in a new culture, as a European-Argentinean in postcolonial state of peripheral context under oppression of central colonizers; all of which contributed to his sense of alterity (otherness) and alienation. Borges's situation can be defined similar to "Double-colonization" under the oppression of WWI in Switzerland and his real experience of a postcolonial society of Argentina. The concept of "Double-colonization" was used by postcolonial feminists, such as Kirsten Holst Petersen and Anna Rutherford in 1986, to refer to women being colonized by both the colonizers and patriarchy in postcolonial world. "Double-colonization", we suggest, influenced Borges's lifelong view of nationalism and nativism.

HarriFord and Thompson (2010) emphasized the empowering nature of "Double Consciousness", stating, "This consciousness opens space in people's psyches for movement, to embrace ambiguity, to find ways out of oppression that go beyond the visible door" (p. 43). Although categorically denied by Borges in his essay, this sense of oppression and alterity, shapes his sense of consciousness, subjectivity, and identity that is reflective in his attempt to talk back in a protest essay to revolt against lack of personality and influence of peripheral author. This idea is harnessed in the opening sentence of his essay, "Intention", in an aggressive tone: "I want to tear down the exceptional preeminence now generally awarded to the self ... I propose to prove that personality is a mirage maintained by conceit and custom, without metaphysical foundation or visceral reality" (Weinberger, 1999, p. 3).

In his 2013 article, Glenys Lobban attempted to answer questions such as "What is the subjective experience of the immigrant as she attempts to hold two sets of selves?" (p. 556). Through analyzing Du Boisian "Double Consciousness" and multiplicity, Lobban tried to conceptualize the immigrant's experience and to reconcile his two selves, the foreign self and the new self, which can create a sense of hybridity. Furthermore, she expressed the sense of invisibility and otherness that an immigrant sensed in a new culture and was bewildered by cultural difference, and was forced to act and behave in a way that was demanded by mass culture of target culture.

In the essay, Borges wrote that he came to realize that some racial, social, and religious groups were privileged over others under the spell of colonization and center-periphery diagram. What was expected from Borges was to completely deny his foreign self, his education, and his European ideology of nationalism which was created in the post war period and to completely adopt and acquire what was needed by the colonial system, the system which thoroughly eliminated the facets of European Borges and casted a negative effect on him, by obliging him to be a mere subversive intellectual. This sense of being defined as a colonized Argentinian created the sense of invisibility and otherness in Borges as a "colonized intellectual", provoking him to align more closely with his Swiss ideology of Nationalism and anti-communistic view; best elucidated in a revolt against communistic ideals of the colonizers that claimed all were the same. He stated, "he was like everyone else: that is, that he was no one, or little more than an unintelligible cacophony, persisting in time and wearing out in space" (Weinberger, 1999, p. 5).

Borges emphasized the benefits of cultural pluralism through Walt Whitman's ideal in "The Nothingness of Personality". He argued that by rejecting pluralism, the colonizers failed to realize the contribution of multiculturalism that Borges obtained from both experience of various cultures and extensive readership, so it forced him to follow popular culture. Moreover, Borges endeavored to positively view his colonized state through adaptation of target culture in peripheral context, which made him, as we assert, a Fanonian "colonized intellectual". He asserted his subjectivity would act against collective supremacy and function as a true "colonized intellectual" who desires to preserve his pre-colonized ideals and cultural identity. Generally, the current article assumes that the subjectivity of self in Borges gave way to an assimilation of selves. His personal identity was constructed by a variety of different subjectivities, in other word, an amalgam of foreigner self (the other) and new self (colonized one). All in all, it is discerned that "The Nothingness of Personality" is the search for a new identity for the colonized periphery, other than the communal colonized identity created by the colonizer.

Borges as a "Colonized Intellectual"

Borge's (1999) essay "The Nothingness of Personality" had a decolonizing effect because we claim that he was well aware of the fact that his essay would modify everyone's conception of the self and individuality. That was why he chose, to function as, what we call, a Fanonian intellectual. Edna Aizenberg (1992) highlighted that, "In Borges one finds the 'unevenness', the clashing order, the disjunctive language of narration that result in large measure from the disorder left behind by colonization; but it is the disorder that calls to answer established rhetoric[s]" (p. 24). Reiland Rabaka (2011) argued for the decolonizing function of a "colonized intellectual", stating

Colonialism inherently gives colonized intellectuals an intellectual inferiority complex. In order to initiate the process(es) of revolutionary decolonization, the anti-colonial intellectuals must radically rupture their relationship with their (neo-)colonial (mis)education and practice critical conceptual generation, putting forward dialectical theory and praxis particular to, and in the best interest of, their specific historical struggle against colonialism, capitalism and racism, among other (post)modern socio-political issues and ills. In a word, colonized intellectuals must 'decolonize their minds' [. . .]. (p. 131)

In another essay entitled, "The Argentine Writer and Tradition", Borges (1951) admitted that "Argentineans, South-Americans in general, [we] can handle every European topic . . . without superstition, with an irreverence which can, and in fact has, fortunate consequences" (as cited in Toro, 2002, p. 88). This Borgesian ideal is in line with what Frantz Fanon contended: "the colonized intellectual will endeavor to make European culture his own" (p. 156) because what the colonizer did, as Memmi (1990) asserted, "was largely based on negation" so much that even the colonized's "humanity and individuality" were rejected (Mehrvand, 2018, p. 35). In this fashion Borges avoided what Marc E. Black (2007) believed to be the "harm of unilateral

Double Consciousness” (p. 400), and doing so he deconstructed the privileging system of the colonizer and equally weighed the personality of the colonizer and the colonized. By adapting a Eurocentric view and language of the colonizer, Spanish, Borges challenged the center by talking back and serving as a revealer to the colonized. Through this act, we can find Borges a postcolonial writer because postcolonial works can “reveal the rebellion of the colonized/ oppressed against the dominant discourse in their country and write back to any means of dominance in the form of racism, capitalism, colonialism, and imperialism” (Mehrvand, 2016, p. 28). Aizenberg (1992) noted that this is the ambiguity of postcolonial society where, on the one hand, the “speaking back, the challenge to metropolis” functioned as the “modus operandi of fortunate literary labor” and, on the other hand, the continuous concern of “myths of identity and authenticity, with establishing a linguistic practice, with place and displacement, with canonicity and un-canoncity” (p. 25).

This equalization creates a bilateral “Double Consciousness” and equal state of cultural exchange in which the colonizer’s ideology is criticized and the colonized man is awakened to his state of being colonized, i.e. the colonizer’s view of lack of personality and sameness within colonial system are criticized and the colonized’s state of impotence and powerlessness are revealed. The state of equality which Fanon defined is established in this Borgesian essay: “The intellectual who, for his part, has adopted the abstract, universal values of the colonizer is prepared to fight so that colonist and the colonized can live in peace in a new world” (p. 8). Up to now issues related to Borges’s duality and his function as a “colonized intellectual” have been covered. In the following section, we are discussing Fanon’s three proposed stages that can be validated for evolution of Borges as a true “colonized intellectual”.

Fanon’s Three Phases for the Advancement of a “Colonized Intellectual”

In *The Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon (2005) prescribed three phases for the progress and evolution of a “colonized intellectual”, namely, assimilation, immersion as an outsider, and galvanizer of People. By assimilation, Fanon meant the process of assimilating with “the colonizer’s culture” during which the literary works produced by the intellectual highly resembles that of European ideology (p. 158). Symbolist and surrealist writers are the prominent examples of the colonized writers. In the second phase, according to Fanon, “the colonized writer has his convictions shaken and decides to cast his mind back” (Fanon, 2005, p. 159). The “colonized intellectual”, who has been deemed as an outsider by his natives, integrates with his people in this process, remembers his childhood memories, and revives cultural values of the past. In other words, “Old childhood memories will surface, old legends be reinterpreted on the basis of a borrowed aesthetic, and a concept of the world discovered under other skies” (Fanon, 2005, p. 159). The final phase is the function of the “colonized intellectual” as the galvanizer of the people, i.e. the combat stage, where the “colonized intellectual” “will rouse the people” (Fanon, 2005, p. 159). During this phase, the intellectual redefines himself and his ideal in a close alliance with the people, turns out to inspire people, and whatever literary piece produced by him/her can be categorized as revolutionary and protest literature.

To Borges, the assimilation process is related to the time of his education in Europe, Switzerland, during which he attended the College Calvin and became familiar with symbolist literature. Furthermore, he recognized the relevance of abstract literature with the world outside through reading works of Decadent French poet Paul Verlaine, Surrealist Jean Nicolas Arthur Rimbaud, and French symbolist Stephane Mallarme. There, Borges acquired his nationalistic sense in school and university years in Geneva, and considering his philosophical quest, he got to know Schopenhauer, his favorite philosopher. These assimilations changed the course of Borges's life, opening the doors of a new world of ideas waiting to be explored. His assimilation process was in complete consensus with what Fanon (2005) demanded a "colonized intellectual" to do in *The Wretched of the Earth*:

His works correspond point by point with those of his metropolitan counterparts. The inspiration is European and his works can be easily linked to a well-defined trend in metropolitan literature. This is the phase of full assimilation where we find Parnassians, Symbolists, and Surrealists among the colonized writers. (p. 158)

As long as the subjectivity of the "colonized intellectual" is considered, Fanon emphasized the fallacious nature of objectivism in the "colonized intellectual" under the spell of Eurocentric views. He added that "Their [intellectuals] preoccupation with objectivity constitutes the legitimate excuse for their failure to act. But this classic attitude of the "colonized intellectual" and the leaders of the nationalist parties is by no means objective" (Fanon, 2005, p. 25). The above Fanonian ideal is a validation of the main assertion of the current article that seeks to prove the subjectivity of self in Borges in an essay describing the lack of personality and individuality. Subjectivity of self, in Fanon's ideology, is resulted from developing a "psychology dominated by an exaggerated sensibility, sensitivity, and susceptibility" (Fanon, 2005, p. 157).

Fanon's second phase can be applied to Borges by considering his visit to his motherland after seven years of longing only to find colonial Argentina, the conditions which influenced him to a great extent and caused his European ideologies to be used as instruments for revival of the past values and Argentinean cultural heritage. This stage of Borges's journey can be considered the very moment of epiphany during which his "Double Consciousness", double alienation and double awareness gave him a prophetic vision.

As Borges progressed to see the real state of a colonized without the veil of Eurocentric view, he came to sympathize with the colonized and revolted against colonial oppression, exploitation, alienation, and inferior hierarchy in colonial society that made him as an Argentinean inferior to Europeans and not acclaim his artistry. Parallel to the notion of immersion, Fanon remarked that, "put them [intellectuals] in touch with the masses, to allow them to see the extreme, unspeakable poverty of the people and at the same time witness the awakening of their intelligence and the development of their consciousness" (Fanon, 2005, p. 130). Furthermore, Fanon stressed that "intellectual feels the need to return to his unknown roots and lose himself, come what may, among his barbaric people" (Fanon, 2005, p. 155).

To emphasize the revival of past and native culture as the only survival for the colonized society, Fanon (2005) perceived, “some magnificent and shining era that redeems us in our own eyes and those of others” (p. 148). In line with the ideology of revival of pre-colonized culture, Borges strived to revitalize the pre-colonized poetic fashion of Argentina by publishing his *Fervor de Buenos Aires* in 1923.

As an attempt to achieve decolonization, Borges bountifully labored to revive Argentinean Gaucho poetry until the very end of his life that served as a proof for his being a true “colonized intellectual”-activist. Rabaka (2011) announced what the duty of a Fanonian intellectual-activist ought to be:

Instead of mindlessly mimicking Eurocentric Marxists, the revolutionary intellectual-activists should [...] systematically and critically study their own history, culture, and struggle [...] with an eye toward anything and everything that could be employed in the present anti-imperial struggle. (p. 135)

Another way of decolonization that was followed by Borges was the intent to shape an identity that would influence his forerunners. In other words, he tried to transform the course of Argentinean philosophy and literature in a more comprehensive scope. As Aizenberg (1992) remarked, “According to Borges, every writer goes further: he *creates* his own forerunners” (p. 24).

As the galvanizer of the people, Borges ventured to dismantle the domination of European ideology, to make the colonized question the essence of their existence, and to seek their personal and cultural identity in their colonies. In this protest essay, Borges criticized European ideology through explicit approval of the non-existence of metaphysical individual self. This essay is considered to be the accomplishment of Borges’s mission as a Fanonian “colonized intellectual”, which provoked Aizenberg (1992) to disclose Borges’s state of being the forerunner of Argentinean Third World authors (p. 22).

Conclusion

A considerable number of postcolonial studies has been conducted on short stories and poems of Jorge Luis Borges, the key literary figure of the postmodern Spanish literature in Argentina. However, few researches have addressed the postcolonial aspects of his profound essays in general, and his 1922 essay “The Nothingness of Personality” in particular. Given that this essay was written shortly after young Borges’s arrival at Buenos Aires, Argentina, as an immigrant from Europe in the aftermath of World War I, the current paper was an attempt to study the sense of duality and bifocal view of an immigrant in the target culture, in which the immigrant was bewildered under the pressure of cultural diversity and cultural difference. The analysis provided prominent insights to the sense of alienation and alterity of 22-year-old Borges who felt as an immigrant under postcolonial oppression and who confronted inferiority complex. Surprisingly Borges’s essay, in particular, has not been analyzed from postcolonial perspective, entailing the duality between self and non-self. This article attempted to argue that young Borges as an immigrant in a new

culture of his own country experienced a sense of duality, hybridity, otherness, and alienation, which was much in line with the African Americans' experience of pathological identity introduced by Du Bois's Double Consciousness, i. e. the contradiction between foreign self and new self. Furthermore, the current paper proved Borges thought and acted as a Fanonian Colonized Intellectual, who attempted to awaken the colonized people of his society through writing a protest essay. In this essay, he manipulated European ideology of alienation as a means to create an equal social status, wherein the colonized was awakened and the colonizer's view was criticized.

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