

Playing Chinese Chess with Borges: Xiangqi [象棋] in “El jardín de senderos que se bifurcan” and its First Chinese Translation

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Jorge Luis Borges’s story, “El jardín de senderos que se bifurcan,” has generated a multitude of readings since its original publication in 1941.¹ These interpretive paths cross through several book-length studies of Borges’s fiction and appear in article after article. Scholars most often follow the line of argument put forth by one of the story’s characters—the sinologist Stephen Albert—in his conversation with the story’s narrator, Yu Tsun, and contend that the story is about time. However, literary critics from various traditions have also read “El jardín” as everything from an intentional re-writing of Edgar Allan Poe’s initial detective stories, to a story about war, to a fictional portrayal of the “many-worlds” interpretation of quantum mechanics and/or multiverse theory before these concepts existed.²

1 We would like to thank the Translation Studies Research Group at Brigham Young University and Dr. Yu King Hei for providing us with quality feedback on this article.

2 See John T. Irwin’s masterful *The Mystery to a Solution: Poe, Borges, and the Analytic Detective Story* for a powerful reading of “El jardín” as the first in a trio of responses that Borges wrote to Poe’s Dupin stories (417-41). Daniel Balderston grounds the story in the

In this ever-increasing quantity of “divergent, convergent, and parallel” interpretations,³ a number of scholars have focused on the story’s connections to and portrayals of China—Yu Tsun and Ts’ui Pên’s homeland and Albert’s passion. Haiqing Sun, for example, examines Borges’s use of a labyrinth, either “Mi Gong” [迷宫] or “Zhen” [阵], in “El jardín” and contends that the labyrinthine form of the story itself blurs “the idea of ‘China’” (“China of Labyrinth” 105-06). In a separate article, Sun convincingly argues that “El jardín” can be read as Borges’s attempt to understand how Cao Zueqin could have written the complex novel *Hong Lou Meng* [红楼梦 *The Red Chamber*] (“*Hong Lou Meng*” 31). Zhang Yaqui contends that through the interpretation of Ts’ui Pên’s novel/labyrinth, Borges completes another understanding of time, one that can cross or run parallel (46), while Wang Zehao, in a lengthy interpretation of “El jardín,” suggests that, for Borges, the labyrinth is the key to understanding Chinese culture (34). Jonathan Spence makes a similar claim in his reading of the story and argues that, for Borges and his characters, the labyrinth frames the foundational form of Chinese civilization. However, Spence asserts that what fascinates Borges is not ancient Chinese wisdom itself, but rather the resilience displayed in the pursuit of that wisdom (172). Finally, Can Xue offers a creative re-writing of “El jardín” that emphasizes the prevalent Chinese literary themes of death and destiny.⁴

The aforementioned dialogue between Albert and Yu Tsun contains both a hidden clue to understanding “El jardín” and a more overt claim that has influenced a vast amount of the literary criticism surrounding this story. While discussing the complete absence of the word “tiempo”

context of the First World War in *Out of Context* (39-55). For more on Borges and quantum mechanics, see Rojo, Merrell (177-82), Moran, and Cabrera Torrecilla.

3 Here, we use the English translation of Albert’s description of Ts’ui Pên’s belief “en una red creciente y vertiginosa de tiempos divergentes, convergentes y paralelos” (479) to describe the “web” of various readings of Borges’s tale. Both Donald A. Yates (28) and Andrew Hurley (127) translate Borges’s phrase as “divergent, convergent, and parallel times” although Yates avoids the Oxford comma. Helen Temple and Ruthven Todd, contrastingly, choose “diverging, converging and parallel times” in their translation (100).

4 For other readings that examine “El jardín” and China see Jiayan Mi and Arturo Echavarría. Two other recent articles are key to understanding what China meant for Borges and what Borges has meant in China—Rosario Hubert’s “Sinology on Edge” and Lou Yu’s “Borges en China.”

in Ts'ui Pên's labyrinthine novel, *El jardín de senderos que se bifurcan*, Albert and Yu Tsun have the following exchange:

–En una adivinanza cuyo tema es el ajedrez ¿cuál es la única palabra prohibida? Reflexioné un momento y repuse:

–La palabra *ajedrez*.

–Precisamente –dijo Albert–, *El jardín de senderos que se bifurcan* es una enorme adivinanza, o parábola, cuyo tema es el tiempo. (478)⁵

Ts'ui Pên's novel is about time, but chess, not time, forms the narrative structure of Borges's story by the same name. “Ajedrez” as clue, like Poe's purloined letter, sits in plain sight on the surface of the text, and it is even emphasized with italics when Yu Tsun repeats it as an answer to Albert's question. The clue simultaneously hides behind the confusion Borges creates by giving his own story and Ts'ui Pên's novel/labyrinth the same name—with only the italics that mark the novel distinguishing the two titles.⁶ More importantly, this clue also hides behind the linguistic distance between Spanish and Mandarin Chinese because the chess around which Albert forms his riddle, the chess once played by Ts'ui Pên before he left everything behind to create his novel/labyrinth (476), is Chinese chess [xiangqi, 象棋]—not the Western chess that most readers assume when reading the word “ajedrez” or its translations into various European languages. The presence of Chinese chess in “El jardín” has remained so well hidden that, to our knowledge, only one literary critic has even recognized that the “ajedrez” Albert and Yu Tsun discuss is xiangqi.⁷

The reading we offer of “El jardín” in the following pages follows three paths. First, we craft a completely new interpretation of the story that demonstrates how its narrative structure resembles Chinese chess or xiangqi. Then, we provide a brief descriptive study of the story's most prominent Chinese translation—Wang Yangle's “交叉小径的花园”—to show how the translation emphasizes the importance of xiangqi in “El jardín.” Fi-

5 Unless otherwise noted, all uses of italics for emphasis appear in the original sources.

6 To triple the confusion, Borges originally released “El jardín” in a collection of short stories by the same name as his story and Ts'ui Pên's novel—*El jardín de senderos que se bifurcan*.

7 In the closing paragraphs of his article, Ion T. Agheana briefly juxtaposes Western chess and Chinese chess while examining “El jardín” (17).

nally, we place our analysis of “交叉小径的花园” in conversation with Borges’s own thoughts on translation and with discussions in translation studies about culture-specific knowledge to argue that Wang Yangle’s version of the story adds to the source text in positive ways that combat and reject the clichés about loss in translation.

XIANGQI IN “EL JARDÍN”

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Claiming that the chess that Albert and Yu Tsun mention is xiangqi prompts a novel reading of “El jardín” that hides on the text’s surface while also influencing the story’s most basic structure. The surface level appearance of xiangqi in “El jardín” almost seems like common sense when we recall the backgrounds of the story’s three principal characters—Ts’ui Pên, Yu Tsun, and Stephen Albert. Ts’ui Pên, a former “[g]obernador de su provincia natal, doctor en astronomía, en astrología y en la interpretación infatigable de los libros canónicos, ajedrecista, famoso poeta y calígrafo,” died “más de cien años” before Albert and Yu Tsun’s conversation in 1916 (476). The chess that he played in the late 1700s, just like the poetry he wrote, the calligraphy he practiced, and the canonical books he interpreted, would have been Chinese. Yu Tsun, a Chinese professor of English and a spy for the German army during the First World War, would certainly know Western chess. However, in the context of his conversation with Stephen Albert—a sinologist who has dedicated his adult life to China and disparagingly refers to himself as a “bárbaro inglés” (476)—no reason exists to assume that the “ajedrez” they mention refers to the Western version of the game. Indeed, Albert’s passion for China and Yu Tsun’s drive to prove to his German leader that the Chinese are not inferior to the Germans all suggest that the two men refer to xiangqi when they speak of “ajedrez.” Finally, their whole conversation takes place in what Yu Tsun calls “mi idioma” (475), Chinese, so while Borges’s Spanish-language text says “ajedrez,” the actual word shared between the two men is literally “xiangqi.”⁸ Along with the specific usage of “xiangqi” in Albert and Yu

8 As our analysis in the second section of this article demonstrates, even if Albert and Yu Tsun simply say 棋 [qi, chess] to one another, rather than 象棋 [xiangqi, Chinese chess], qi means Chinese chess to the Chinese speaker unless the context of the conversation suggests Western chess.

Tsun's dialogue, Chinese chess undergirds the story's narrative structure—including its settings (especially the broader historical backdrop of the First World War and the specific setting of Albert's garden and library); the individual characters themselves (Ts'ui Pên, Stephen Albert, Yu Tsun, and Richard Madden); and the tale's primary plotlines (the encounter between Yu Tsun and Albert that ends in Albert's death, Madden's pursuit and capture of Yu Tsun, and the message delivery from Yu Tsun to his German "Jefe").

Most historians of chess agree that xiangqi and Western chess share a similar origin—the ancient Indian game *chaturanga*.⁹ The first clear reference to xiangqi comes from the late eighth century (Murray 123; Price 21), and written records show the presence of the game in China from that time forward (Murray 123-24).¹⁰ Xiangqi, like Western chess, is a game of strategy with sixteen pieces per side with different moves and values. A player wins the game by placing his/her opponent's general [將] or governor [帥] in checkmate. In contemporary xiangqi, the pieces are all small checker-like disks with their individual identities marked by a Chinese character—in red or in black—on top of each piece.¹¹ The black army is made up of a general or governor, two guards/advisors [士], two elephants [象], two horses [馬], two chariots [車], two cannons [砲], and five privates or pawns [卒].¹² The red army's corresponding pieces make the same moves and have the same values, but some of its pieces go by different names—the most common substations include assistants [相] for elephants and soldiers [兵] for privates/pawns. Regardless of the tradition of giving different names to pieces on each side of the game, some writ-

9 See Price for a succinct summary and brief rebuttal of two alternate theories that argue for a Chinese, rather than Indian, origin of Western chess (21-23).

10 Murray notes that "*Siang k'i* may accordingly mean (a) the Elephant Game [. . .], (b) the Ivory Game, (c) the Astronomical Game, or (d) the Figure Game" (121), and he distinguishes between *Siang k'i*, or Chinese chess, and an older astronomical game in China that is not chess (122).

11 Following the possible meaning of xiangqi as "the Figure Game," Murray suggests that xiangqi "must formerly have been played with figures," rather than "inscribed draughtsmen only" (121).

12 Throughout this article, we use simplified Chinese characters in all cases except when we are discussing the xiangqi pieces themselves since the characters inscribed on the disks in this game are typically traditional rather than simplified.

ers and players use the same terms to refer to the corresponding pieces of both armies.

The xiangqi board [棋盘] resembles a Western chess board in that it is divided into 64 squares with 8 rows of 8 spaces. However, the xiangqi board is cut in half by a long horizontal space called “the river” [河] that separates the two armies at the game’s opening. All pieces except the elephants/assistants can traverse the river, and the privates/pawns or soldiers are also able to move horizontally (along with their initial ability to move forward) once they cross the divide. The board also contains two palaces [宮] or castles—each consisting of four squares split by two long diagonal lines to create a box of nine points.¹³ The general/governor and the guards must remain within their respective palaces, black or red. Finally, xiangqi is played on the lines or paths on the board—with each stopping place or intersection referred to as a point—rather than in the spaces created between the lines like Western chess.

Neither xiangqi the game nor xiangqi the word appears directly in Borges’s “El jardín,” but according to the logic of the story’s primary theorist—Stephen Albert—the very absence of the term/game should signal its centrality to the narrative.¹⁴ After explaining to Yu Tsun that *El jardín de senderos que se bifurcan* is a novel about time, Albert argues: “esa causa recóndita le prohíbe la mención de su nombre. Omitir *siempre* una palabra, recurrir a metáforas ineptas y a perífrasis evidentes, es quizá el modo más enfático de indicarla” (478-79). Applying Albert’s logic about time in Ts’ui Pên’s novel to the absence of xiangqi in Borges’s story of the same name reveals the importance of xiangqi to the narrative. “Ajedrez” appears

13 See Figure 1, a xiangqi board with the river, two palaces, and the corresponding pieces in their starting positions.

14 Here, and in much of his work, Borges seems to foresee the concerns of many post-structuralist thinkers. Albert’s suggestion that the absence of the word “tiempo” in Ts’ui Pên’s novel proves that the novel is indeed about time sounds so much like mid- to late-twentieth century French theory that it justifies Emir Rodríguez Monegal’s somewhat cheeky comment—“Educado en el pensamiento de Borges desde los quince años, muchas de las novedades de Derrida me han parecido algo tautológicas [...] La famosa ‘destrucción’ me impresionaba por su rigor técnico y la infinita seducción de su espejo textual pero me era familiar: la había practicado en Borges *avant la lettre*” (125). And, the play with French theory continues when we remember that the British sinologist theorizing in this story shares his name with the secret city that Yu Tsun hopes to deliver to his German overseer—the French city Albert.

only twice in the story (478), and “ajedrecista” appears just once (476), but in every case the source text’s Spanish denotes Western chess and hides xiangqi from the reader. The absence and/or burial of xiangqi at the textual level leaves a nearly invisible lacuna in the story—a gap that is linguistically concealed by the distance between “ajedrez” and xiangqi and then almost completely filled by the narrative’s turn toward the discussion of time. Once made visible by recalling the Chinese language in which Yu Tsun and Albert’s conversation takes place, however, this hole becomes an alternative space in which the reader can dig to the story’s core. Such excavation unearths a story whose settings, characters, and plotlines resemble a game of Chinese chess.

Chess—whether Western or Chinese—and war often function as metaphors for one another. Players of Western chess and players of xiangqi refer to these games in terms of battle, and military leaders have described wars and individual battles in terms of xiangqi or Western chess. The broader historical setting of “El jardín”—1916, the middle of the First World War—creates a text that is ripe for interpretations that make connections between the story and chess in general, and the story’s nods (both subtle and patent) to China beg for a reading that links the tale to xiangqi. In a game of xiangqi, two sides face off in a battle to contain, capture, and control the other, much like the battle between two waning alliances that was the Great War. Significantly, the story’s opening two sentences—containing a summary from Liddell Hart about a supposedly inconsequential delay in a British offensive—note an attack “contra la línea Serre-Montauban” (472, our emphasis). This frame is the story’s only reference to an actual battle in the war until the tale’s final paragraph, and its focus on a military “line” connects the war itself and “El jardín” to xiangqi and the lines on the xiangqi board.

The specific setting of the climax of “El jardín”—Stephen Albert’s garden in Ashgrove, England—elaborates on this connection. Albert’s construction of a Chinese garden that resembles a labyrinth reveals his obsession with the mystery of Ts’ui Pên’s labyrinth while reifying the initial conflation between the two concepts when Jesuit missionaries built a western labyrinth in China.¹⁵ More significantly for our reading, this gar-

15 Hui Zou notes how the Chinese described western labyrinths as gardens: “An early encounter of Western and Chinese labyrinths took place during the late eighteenth

den/labyrinth recalls the xiangqi board and the possible routes that the various pieces can take during a game of Chinese chess. The garden's labyrinthine structure continually splits, offering multiple paths upon which Yu Tsun could travel, just as a player of xiangqi moves the game pieces along the visible (orthogonal) and invisible (diagonal) lines [线], routes, or paths on the game board toward its points rather than in the squares or spaces. The board's horizontal and vertical lines perpetually intersect, creating points that allow the game's most mobile pieces (the horses) eight different paths while its least mobile pieces (the advisors/guards at four of their five points and the pawns or soldiers before they cross the river) can only move along one route.¹⁶

In this broader context of war and this specific setting of a garden/labyrinth that recalls a xiangqi board, the story's characters move/act in ways that resemble various pieces in a game of xiangqi. "El jardín" has minimal characters, certainly not enough to fill the two sides of a xiangqi board with 16 pieces on a side. Thus, the story's characters do not represent each piece in a game of Chinese chess. However, three of the story's four primary characters—Ts'ui Pên, Albert, and Yu Tsun (who also happen to be the three characters who are connected to China)—demonstrate the characteristics of specific xiangqi pieces while the fourth primary character—Richard Madden—brings a trio of pieces to mind.¹⁷

"El jardín" clearly connects Ts'ui Pên to xiangqi's key piece, the governor. Nothing in Albert's portrayal of Ts'ui Pên links the latter to the more military title of this game piece—the general—but his description openly depicts Ts'ui Pên in the more civilian and still highly privileged and val-

century in the Qing imperial garden Yuanming Yuan, where the Western Jesuits built a labyrinth for Emperor Qianlong. . . . With a rigorously geometrical layout, the labyrinth in the Yuanming Yuan appeared exotic to the Chinese eye but was specifically named by the Chinese as a 'garden' because of its meandering movement similar to Chinese gardens" (80). Tellingly, Albert was a missionary in China during his youth before dedicating his life to the study of China ("El jardín" 476).

16 Just like Ts'ui Pên's novel, the xiangqi board itself, with each point offering a maximum of eight paths, can be read as "una imagen incompleta, pero no falsa" (479) of Ts'ui Pên's theory of continually splitting or branching time.

17 The story's two minor characters—Viktor Runeberg and el Jefe—remain so underdeveloped that the only real traits that could connect them to game pieces depend directly upon their relationships to the primary characters as xiangqi pieces. We will discuss their presence as we develop our readings of the major characters.

ued role of governor. Albert's description of Ts'ui Pên identifies him as both the "[g]obernador de su provincia natal" and an "ajedrecista" (476). This talented leader could not leave behind his work or task—the creation of his labyrinth/novel, *El jardín de senderos que se bifurcan*—once he had taken it upon himself, just as the governor piece in xiangqi cannot leave his nine-point palace. Ts'ui Pên literalizes this connection by building a physical structure—"El Pabellón de la Límpida Soledad"—in the middle of "un jardín tal vez intrincado" and cloistering himself there, unwilling to leave "durante trece años," until he is murdered (476). Along with the overt naming and the metaphorical and literal seclusion of Ts'ui Pên that connect him to the governor piece, both Albert's and Yu Tsun's admiration toward Ts'ui Pên places him in this position of honor and highest value.

On the xiangqi board, the governor is flanked by two guards or advisors who are also confined to the palace; in "El jardín," the sinologist Stephen Albert resembles this defensive game piece. Albert's library, his conversation with Yu Tsun, and his revelation of the secret that Ts'ui Pên's labyrinth is his novel all demonstrate his erudition. He is a highly respected scholar of China who has made discoveries about Chinese history, culture, and individuals that are illuminating to the Chinese themselves—most visibly, his explanation to Yu Tsun (who is Ts'ui Pên's great-grandson) that *El jardín de senderos que se bifurcan* is not a nonsensical book, but instead, a novel that attempts to portray Ts'ui Pên's belief in perpetually forking time. Albert's identification as a sinologist also links directly to the guard or advisor piece whose alternate name is scholar; indeed, the Chinese symbol [士] which appears on the advisor/guard/scholar piece in xiangqi—[仕] for the black army and simply [士] for red—is also the first character in scholar [士人].¹⁸ Via his scholarship, Albert guards Ts'ui Pên. He cannot, of course, protect the long-dead governor, but Albert watches over, defends, and even salvages Ts'ui Pên's image, both from the passing of time and from the confusion caused by the original publication of *El jardín de senderos que se bifurcan* without any explanation of what the novel actually is. Albert's scholarship protects and revitalizes Ts'ui Pên's reputa-

18 Yu Tsun enhances Albert's role as scholar even more by claiming that Albert "no es menos que Goethe" (473).

tion, suggesting that he is both a guard and a scholar or that his character simultaneously lives up to both of the piece's titles.

Yu Tsun takes more action than any other character in "El jardín," but his decisions remain tied to or are dictated by the desires of others; both his compromised agency and his inferiority complex suggest that he is a private or pawn. As Yu Tsun pens his narrative—looking back on the choice he made to murder a man who had dedicated his life to the study of Yu Tsun's homeland, a man who revered Yu Tsun's Chinese culture above his own English nationality, and a man who had discovered and then shared with Yu Tsun the answer to a riddle that had baffled and embarrassed Yu Tsun's family for over a century—he claims to have killed Albert in order to prove that his race and his ancestry are not inferior to the Germans under whose command he works. He avers: "No lo hice por Alemania, no. Nada me importa un país bárbaro, que me ha obligado a la abyección de ser un espía. . . . Lo hice, porque yo sentía que el Jefe tenía en poco a los de mi raza –a los innumerables antepasados que confluyen en mí. Yo quería probarle que un amarillo podía salvar sus ejércitos" (473). This decision to kill the man who has salvaged his ancestor and to simultaneously re-bury the secret about Ts'ui Pên that Albert has uncovered—for Yu Tsun will be executed by hanging, and the newly revealed secret will die with him—requires agency and determination on Yu Tsun's part, but it is an agency controlled by el Jefe and his disparaging ideas about the Chinese. As a pawn of his German overseer, Yu Tsun fulfills the Jefe's desires, delivering the message about which city should be bombed because it holds the British artillery, and he simultaneously damages the very Chinese culture that he seeks to prove is not inferior.

Out of all of the primary characters, Capitan Richard Madden is the most difficult to match to a singular *xiangqi* piece. Like Yu Tsun, Madden is caught in a racial hierarchy that affects his actions. Yu Tsun notes that Madden "estaba obligado a ser implacable. Irlandés a las órdenes de Inglaterra, hombre acusado de tibieza y tal vez de traición ¿cómo no iba a abrazar y agradecer este milagroso favor: el descubrimiento, la captura, quizá la muerte, de dos agentes del Imperio Alemán" (472). Yu Tsun's description makes Madden appear like another pawn, simply on the opposite side, but this interpretation fails to comprehend Madden's character for at least three reasons. First, it is given to the reader by Yu Tsun whose own

inferiority complex undoubtedly skews how he interprets other characters. While historical tensions between the Irish and the English certainly could create the emotional impact that Yu Tsun describes, the story never develops Madden's character enough for the reader to see if he feels this way or if Yu Tsun is simply reading his own insecurities into the character of his antagonist. Second, Madden's title—"capitán"—whether police or military is a mid-tier rank above the level of private or pawn. Third, Madden's mobility throughout the story is far more fluid than the restricted movement of a pawn in *xiangqi*.

This mobility suggests that Madden is a different and more powerful piece—perhaps a cannon/catapult or a horse. In *xiangqi*, the cannon/catapult moves orthogonally as many spaces as the player wishes, but to capture an enemy piece, it must have another piece—a screen or cannon platform [炮台], either from its own side or from the opposing army—between it and the captured piece for it to catapult over. Thus, the cannon/catapult strikes from a distance but still relies on other pieces to be able to capture opposing pieces.¹⁹ Similarly, Madden travels far to capture Yu Tsun (at least from Viktor Runeberg's apartment to Yu Tsun's room to Albert's garden), but he needs Albert's presence as screen or cannon platform to hit his target. The story problematizes this characterization of Madden because the reader knows that Yu Tsun actually wants Madden to catch him, but only after he kills Albert, so that the newspapers will print the bizarre story of this murder and Yu Tsun's German *Jefe* will read the papers and put the puzzle together to then bomb the French city Albert. Thus, Albert serves as Madden's screen for the latter's capture of Yu Tsun, but Albert also serves as a platform for Yu Tsun, the pawn, to take upon himself a grander role and deliver an important message over a great distance. Indeed, Yu Tsun decides to go after and kill someone named Albert immediately after thinking about how "un pistoletazo" (the miniaturized version of a cannon shot) "puede oírse muy lejos" (473). If Madden is a cannon, then Yu Tsun has developed a cunning strategy that allows his

19 We can compare the cannon/catapult to the more valuable chariot/car which also moves and captures up to any distance orthogonally but does not need (and can't jump over) a piece in its path in order to capture opposing pieces. The chariot is like a rook in Western chess while a cannon/catapult resembles a rook combined with part of the unique leaping ability of Western chess's knight.

enemy to capture him but uses Madden's particular long-distance capabilities for his own purposes—disclosing and, hopefully, destroying his enemy's artillery or cannons.

Reading Madden as a cannon that captures Yu Tsun but that Yu Tsun simultaneously uses to deliver his secret message probably casts Yu Tsun's "victoria" in terms that are too positive, especially considering Yu Tsun's own lamentation that closes the story—"nadie puede saber" mi innumerable contrición y cansancio" (480)—and the frame from Liddell Hart that opens the tale and lets the reader see that the British artillery had not yet arrived in Albert when el Jefe acted upon Yu Tsun's message and ordered the bombing of the city. In this case, the final option for Madden on the xiangqi board is the role of the horse. The horse is the most mobile xiangqi piece, with a maximum of eight paths to choose each time it moves. The horse moves one point orthogonally and then one point diagonally; thus, it is the only piece in the game that travels on both the board's visible and invisible paths, another demonstration of mobility. However, the horse can be blocked in one or more of its paths if a piece or pieces rest directly adjacent to it on its horizontal or vertical lines. Madden demonstrates his mobility by both killing Viktor Runeberg and capturing Yu Tsun in distinct locales on the same day, but he also shows the horse's weakness of being blocked since Runeberg's encounter with Madden allows Yu Tsun to make an initial escape and eventually kill Albert. Runeberg's blocking of Madden ultimately requires his life, but it buys Yu Tsun just enough time to board the train and leave Madden behind until the next train departs. Apart from these movements that connect Madden to the horse, Borges also leaves a textual clue (as he did with both Albert and Ts'ui Pên) to connect Madden to a specific xiangqi piece as Yu Tsun recalls the "rosto acaballado de Madden" (473).

With the primary characters identified as xiangqi pieces, the plot of "El jardín" now reads like a game of Chinese chess. Madden, a horse, attempts to capture Yu Tsun, a pawn, but is initially blocked by Runeberg (who could be operating as the defensive piece the elephant/assistant). Runeberg's blocking of Madden allows Yu Tsun to board the train which functions as the river on the xiangqi board. Upon entering the train and realizing that Madden has been left behind, Yu Tsun shudders and then "pas[a] a una felicidad casi abyecta" in which he feels sure of "la victoria

total” (474). Upon exiting the train (crossing the river), Yu Tsun’s mobility as pawn increases along with his confidence. He can now move laterally as well as forward. Such lateral movement is key for Yu Tsun to encounter Albert, the guard/scholar, in his library (or palace) since the garden that leads to this edifice is a labyrinth that requires Yu Tsun to “dobra[r] a la izquierda” at “cada encrucijada del camino” (474). The mapping of Albert’s labyrinth onto the *xiangqi* game board here is imperfect since continual left turns on a grid of squares would leave a piece stuck in a repeating loop. But, if Yu Tsun is the pawn that begins the game at the far right-hand side of the board, crosses the river, and then alternates his turns between left and right (or lateral and forward) at each of the intersections he encounters, he will reach the outer edge of the palace (where Albert and Ts’ui Pên await him) in only five moves after crossing the river. Alternate five-move paths from river crossing to the palace exist, but unless Yu Tsun is the centrally placed pawn, all of those paths require the ability of lateral movement that comes with crossing the river or disembarking the train.

When Yu Tsun reaches the nine-point palace, he can either kill Albert or wait (as he knows that Madden is still on the other side of the river). He chooses to wait and only kills Albert after Albert has solved the enigma of Ts’ui Pên’s labyrinth and novel for him and, more importantly, after Madden arrives. The revelation that Albert shares with Yu Tsun does affect Yu Tsun emotionally as he carries out his plan—he both trembles upon thanking Albert for this knowledge and finally kills Albert “con sumo cuidado” (479)—neither of which would have been likely had Albert not revealed to him such an intimate family secret. But, like a pawn in *xiangqi*, Yu Tsun cannot retreat because this piece must move either forward or sideways until it reaches the back line of the board, at which time it can only move laterally for the remainder of the game. The inability to retreat sheds new light on Yu Tsun’s advice to those who would commit horrible acts. He claims that “[e] ejecutor de una empresa atroz debe imaginar que ya la ha cumplido, debe imponerse un porvenir que sea irrevocable como el pasado” (474). Thus, Yu Tsun brings his awful plan to fruition even after realizing that such movement requires him to kill the scholar who has guarded the reputation of his great-grandfather and even though this action puts his own ancestor, Ts’ui Pên, in check—destroying the secret holder, and thus, erasing the secret itself and the salvaged image of Ts’ui

Pên. He takes these steps as a pawn who cannot go back just as a person cannot undo an action in the past.

The story's climax also highlights Albert's immobility and his sacrificial nature and Madden's ultimate mobility and desire to capture the pawn that threatens the governor. As the guard/scholar, Albert is even more limited in his movements than Yu Tsun. He cannot and will not leave the center of his own garden which, as Yu Tsun observes, is full of intellectual treasures.²⁰ This palace of the intellect effectively traps Albert since this particular forking of time in which he and Yu Tsun exist is one in which they are enemies, although Albert still believes that they are friends. Albert continues to protect the governor, Ts'ui Pên, even though it requires his death. This scholar gives his life to the pursuit of knowledge that redeems the governor and then guards the governor for just enough time for the horse to arrive and take the governor out of check. Madden's timely arrival, especially considering the fact that he could not have known at which station Yu Tsun would disembark since the latter bought his train ticket for a station beyond Ashgrove, proves him to be as "implacable" (472) as Yu Tsun initially suggested and as mobile as the horse, the most nimble piece on the xiangqi board. The horse captures the pawn that has placed the governor in check, but not in time to save the scholar.

Without a clear checkmate, the question remains of who wins and who loses as the game of xiangqi in "El jardín" concludes. Yu Tsun delivers his message about the artillery in Albert. In an effort to prove his personal, ancestral, and racial worth, he has sacrificed a man who devoted all of his efforts to the study and praise of Yu Tsun's culture and to the redemption of his ancestor, the governor Ts'ui Pên. Madden, then, would appear to be the victor, but the story, when read like a game of xiangqi, is doubly ironic. Just as Yu Tsun feels that he "[a]bominablemente h[a] vencido" (479), Madden—in capturing the pawn who threatens the governor—unknowingly destroys the very reputation of that governor, the reputation that Albert the guard/scholar had been guarding all along. Madden effectively dismantles Albert's work by sending the pawn Yu Tsun, now the

20 Among the shelves of books in Albert's library, Yu Tsun sees tomes that are both rare and valuable: "Reconocí, encuadernados en seda amarilla, algunos tomos manuscritos de la Enciclopedia Perdida que dirigió el Tercer Emperador de la Dinastía Luminosa y que no se dio nunca a la imprenta" (476).

only character who knows the governor's secret, to the gallows. In short, no one wins—an outcome that seems fitting when we recall the context of the First World War in which “El jardín” takes place.

XIANGQI IN “交叉小径的花园,” THE FIRST CHINESE TRANSLATION OF “EL JARDÍN”

“El jardín de senderos que se bifurcan” has been a staple in Borges's canon in China from 1979 (when he was first translated into Mandarin) until now, and Borges's Chinese translators have offered several different versions of the story during those four decades. In 1979, translator Wang Yangle introduced Chinese readers to Borges when he published his translations of four of Borges's stories, including “El jardín,” in the journal 《外国文艺》 [*Foreign Literature and Art*] (Lou Yu 8). Wang Yangle republished that translation in the first Chinese book of Borges's fiction, 《尔赫斯短篇小说集》 [*Anthology of Stories by Jorge Luis Borges*], in 1983, and the story has been translated by various other translators ever since—most recently by Wang Yongnian in 2015.²¹ Xiangqi receives emphasis in these Chinese translations in two ways: first, through specific translation choices that the particular translators make, and second, through culture-specific knowledge that a Chinese reader brings to various moments in the translation—moments that are already latent in Borges's Spanish-language source text.²² While different Chinese translators handle these culture-specific elements in distinct ways, the translations we have read suggest that some emphasis on xiangqi will be present in most, if not all, Chinese translations of “El jardín” that do not radically veer from Borges's source text.

We focus on Wang Yangle's translation, “交叉小径的花园,” in this article because it plays an important introductory role for Borges in China—as the first Chinese translation of “El jardín”—and because the re-appearance of this translation in Borges's first book in Chinese suggests

21 See Lou Yu's bibliography at the end of “Borges en China (1949-2017)” for a comprehensive bibliography of translations of Borges's works in China.

22 Various strains of translation studies examine culture-specific knowledge or culture-specific items (CSIs), but they almost always do so from only the perspective of the source culture/language. In the third section of this article, we will return to CSIs as possible spaces for translation gain instead of loss.

that later translators (and possibly, later readers) would be aware of this translation—that this translation may influence later versions of the story in Chinese. In addition, Wang Yangle makes certain translation decisions that highlight *xiangqi* more powerfully than the later translations we have read while also emphasizing *xiangqi* via culture-specific elements that other Chinese translations of this story also produce.

The primary moment in which Wang Yangle highlights *xiangqi* through specific translation decisions occurs in the previously analyzed exchange between Albert and Yu Tsun concerning the chess riddle and Ts'ui Pên's theory of time:

–En una adivinanza cuyo tema es el ajedrez ¿cuál es la única palabra prohibida? Reflexioné un momento y repuse:

–La palabra *ajedrez*.

–Precisamente –dijo Albert–, *El jardín de senderos que se bifurcan* es una enorme adivinanza, o parábola, cuyo tema es el tiempo; esa causa recóndita le prohíbe la mención de su nombre. (478-79)

Wang Yangle offers the following translation:

‘有一个谜语，它的谜底是棋；在这个谜语中，禁止使用哪个字？’我想了想，回答说：‘就是棋这个字。’‘对了，’阿尔贝说，‘《交叉小径的花园》本身就是一局巨大的棋，或者说是寓言，它的主题是时间。这种**缜密的游戏**，禁止提到它本身的名字’ (our emphasis).

[“There is a riddle whose answer is chess; in this riddle, which word is forbidden?” I thought about it and replied: ‘The word chess.’ ‘Correct,’ Albert said, ‘*The Garden of Crossing Paths* itself is a *huge game of chess*, or a parable, whose theme is time. This *meticulous game* prohibits mentioning its own name.”]²³

In the story's only passage to mention “ajedrez,”—although “ajedrecista” does appear earlier (476)—Wang Yangle effectively doubles the presence of the game by calling Ts'ui Pên's novel itself “a huge game of chess” [“一局巨大的棋”] rather than an “adivinanza” and by substituting “meticulous game” [“缜密的游戏”] for “causa recóndita.” The first

23 With our back translations, we have opted for a fairly smooth and domesticating rendition of the Chinese translations into English rather than a direct and more foreignizing approach.

move is an overt addition to Borges's source text while the second clearly shifts the meaning of Borges's wording. Both decisions make the Chinese reader interpret Ts'ui Pên's novel as more than a parable—*El jardín de senderos que se bifurcan* is also a game of chess.²⁴

This same passage also offers a powerful example of how a Chinese reader with culture-specific knowledge will “see” xiangqi in the translation even when the translator does not label the chess as Chinese. Wang Yangle uses the character 棋 [chess] when he adds chess to his translation and in both places where Borges's Spanish-language text says “ajedrez” rather than introducing the character 象 [elephant], which, when combined with 棋, creates 象棋 or xiangqi—the elephant game or Chinese chess. Yet, the Chinese reader interprets this use of chess as Chinese chess because 棋 will always signify xiangqi unless a specific context is given to make the reader think of international chess [国际象棋] instead. A Chinese reader's culture-specific knowledge emphasizes Chinese chess in this translated passage without the translator needing to add 象 to 棋.

This culture-specific knowledge is significant because it allows Wang Yangle to maintain a key concept from Borges's source text—Albert's theory about absence as presence. Wang Yangle can hide xiangqi as the answer to the riddle whose answer is chess, following Ts'ui Pên's example of not openly revealing the true theme of his novel, while knowing that the meaning of xiangqi will come across to his reader on the surface level. By moving the text from Spanish to Chinese, the translator can rely on the reader's cultural-specific knowledge and emphasize Chinese chess without even having to say the word xiangqi.

Other culture-specific translation moments that emphasize xiangqi abound in Wang Yangle's rendition of Borges's text. For example, Albert begins to explain that Ts'ui Pên's labyrinth and novel are one and the same in the following passage:

24 The comparison between chess and labyrinths, or the description of chess as a labyrinth, that Wang Yangle's translation suggests is fairly common in Chinese-language literature about xiangqi. For example, the idea of chess as labyrinth clearly converses with Wei Zhixin's 1990 chess manual—*Chess, the Odd Game* [象棋奇局]—in which the author places 象棋 [xiangqi] and 迷宫 [mi gong] side by side. While describing certain moves in xiangqi, he claims that players travel through a “象棋迷宫” [“chess labyrinth”] (235).

–Aquí está el Laberinto –dijo indicándome un alto escritorio laqueado.

–¡Un laberinto de marfil! –exclamé–. Un laberinto mínimo...

–Un laberinto de símbolos –corrigió–. (476)

Wang Yangle renders the source text as follows:

‘那座迷宫就在这里，’他把一座高高的漆得光溜溜的写字台指给我看。

‘一座象牙的迷宫！’我喊起来，‘一座小型的迷宫……’ ‘一座象征的迷宫，’他纠正我说 (our emphasis).

[“The labyrinth is here,” he showed me a tall lacquered desk. ‘An ivory labyrinth!’ I cried, ‘a small-scale labyrinth...’ ‘A symbolic labyrinth,’ he corrected me.”]

The translation is quite direct, but for the reader of Mandarin “ivory” and “symbolic” recall the origins of xiangqi since the game was initially played with ivory pieces and since one of its ancient names, along with “elephant game,” was “the symbolic game.”

Some culture-specific items that highlight xiangqi in Wang Yangle’s translation are parts of the Chinese language itself. Borges opens the story with a reference to Liddell Hart, noting that the British military planned an attack with “trece divisiones británicas (apoyadas por mil cuatrocientas piezas de artillería) contra la línea Serre-Montauban” (472). Wang Yangle’s translation uses 砲 [cannon], the same character used to designate the cannon pieces in xiangqi, for “artillería,” and 线 [line] for “línea,” the same character used to describe the lines on the xiangqi board. In both the source text and the Chinese translation, hundreds of massive guns move against a defensive line, but in the target text the very language invokes the same cannons and lines that the Chinese reader recognizes as inherent parts of Chinese chess. The Chinese translation of the word “labyrinth” leads to a similar circumstance. Every time that Borges uses “laberinto” in his story, Wang Yangle uses maze—迷宫 [Mi Gong]. 迷 has various meanings, one being “lost,” while 宫 means “palace”—the same character used to describe the two palaces on the xiangqi board. Thus, each time the Chinese reader sees 迷宫 in Wang Yangle’s rendition of the tale—22

times total—she is also reminded of the palaces on the Chinese chess board.²⁵

Apart from the reappearance of palace, cannon, and line throughout the story, several other Chinese characters connected directly to *xiangqi* also appear, once or repeatedly, in Wang Yangle's translation, including 馬 [horse]—as a part of Madden's name; 車 [chariot]—in discussions about trains, train stations, streetcars, and carts or carriages; and 博士 [doctor or scholar]—in descriptions of both Yu Tsun and Stephen Albert. 馬, 車, and 士 all appear on specific game pieces in *xiangqi*: the horses, chariots, and guards/advisors. While the usage of any one of these Chinese characters does not inherently “make” the story about *xiangqi*, their repeated usage in a story with both explicit and implicit discussions of Chinese chess highlights *xiangqi* for the Chinese reader just as words like pawn, knight, or rook would stand out for an English-language reader in a story that both mentions and hints at Western chess.

Combining these culture-specific items with Wang Yangle's decision to increase the visibility of chess in the story's key section of dialogue brings the possibility of Chinese chess in Borges's source text, an element that remained hidden by the distance between Spanish and Mandarin in “El jardín de senderos que se bifurcan,” to the story's surface in “交叉小径的花园.” What remains latent in “El jardín” comes into being in Wang Yangle's version of the text to the point that the first Chinese translation of the story can be read as a story about *xiangqi* as much as a story about time.

BORGES AND GAINS IN TRANSLATION

Borges, the prolific author, was also a translator;²⁶ he wrote early and often about translation, and his ideas on the subject were fairly radical for the time period in which he produced them. Unlike many of his contemporaries and most people who had theorized translation before him, Borges

25 Along with its appearance as a part of 迷宫, the character 宫 also appears when Wang Yangle translates Borges's use of “palacio” (478) from Albert's reading of Ts'ui Pên's novel aloud to Yu Tsun.

26 Borges translated many literary works during his long career. For extended analyses of Borges's work as a translator, see Waisman, Kristal, and chapters 3 and 4 of Esplin.

was extremely optimistic about translation and its possibilities. He opened his 1926 article, “Las dos maneras de traducir,” with these thoughts about the potential of translation:

Suele presuponerse que cualquier texto original es incorregible de puro bueno, y que los traductores son unos chapuceros irreparables, padres del frangollo y de la mentira [...] En cuanto a mí, creo en las buenas traducciones de obras literarias (de las didácticas o especulativas, ni hablemos) y opino que hasta los versos son traducibles. (256)

His belief in the possibility of quality translations casts doubt on the supposedly inherent superiority of source texts, and his later writings would challenge this hierarchy in an even more direct fashion.

From “Las dos maneras de traducir” onward, especially in the pieces “Las versiones homéricas” and “Los traductores de *Las 1001 Noches*,” Borges discussed what he saw as two types of translation—a literary or loose type of translation more concerned with meaning than fidelity and a literal or word for word approach. Borges preferred to read (and to practice) the former type of translation, but he refused to completely disregard more literal translations since they, too, occasionally offer an unexpected gem.²⁷ Instead, he claimed to simply enjoy the “[h]ermosa discusión Newman-Arnold” (“Las versiones” 241, “Los traductores” 400)—the public debate from the 1860s between Francis W. Newman and Matthew Arnold about literal vs. nonliteral translation practice.²⁸

His reticence to condemn literal translations, however, did not lead him to espouse fidelity in translation. On the contrary, his ideas about fidelity and the so-called authority of originals over translations became increasingly bold. In “Las versiones homéricas” in 1932, he argued: “Presuponer que toda recombinación de elementos es obligatoriamente inferior a su original, es presuponer que el borrador 9 es obligatoriamente

27 Borges hints as much in these essays on translation, but he is more direct in *This Craft of Verse* in which he claims that a literal translation can occasionally surprise the reader with a moment of beauty when/if a literal rendition of a word or phrase in the target language produces something strange that did not exist in the source text (65-68).

28 Much later in his career—1975—Borges more directly argued against literal translation when referring to the Newman-Arnold debate. In response to the question “¿Qué recomendaciones se le pueden hacer a los traductores de prosa?” in a survey on translation, he stated: “Desde luego que no deben ser literales,” and he then expanded Arnold’s critique of literal translations (“Problemas” 322-23).

inferior al borrador H—ya que no puede haber sino borradores. El concepto de texto definitivo no corresponde sino a la religión o al cansancio” (239). Referring to both originals and translations as “borrador[es]” levels the playing field between the two by stripping the original of its authority and suggesting that both original and translation are simply different versions of a text, effectively placing both source texts and target texts in a conversation between equals. Over a decade later in the short piece “Sobre el ‘Vathek’ de William Beckford,” Borges went a step further with a famous quip about Beckford’s novel—“[e]l original es infiel a la traducción” (133). Reversing the places of original and translation in this otherwise banal sentence flips the millennia-old practice of worshipping originals and critiquing the fidelity of translations on its head, creating a space in which a source text can be judged by its target texts rather than the other way around.

Borges was also early in the realization that culture, time, and/or space alter—improve and/or impoverish—texts even if the language of a text does not change. In “Las dos maneras de traducir,” he suggested that the works of the Buenos Aires poet Evaristo Carriego “serán más pobres” for a Chilean than for an Argentine (256)—even though both readers approach Carriego in Spanish. Borges clearly acknowledged that something is lost for the Chilean who reads the work of this particular poet, whose poetry was so closely tied to a very specific time and space. However, Borges made the inverse argument in his iconic story “Pierre Menard, author del Quijote,” in which a twentieth-century Frenchman’s word for word Spanish-language rendition of Cervantes’s text is “casi infinitamente más rico” (449) for a twentieth-century reader than the same words from Cervantes’s seventeenth-century source text. In short, Borges’s play with the concept of fidelity, his unwillingness to treat originals as sacred texts to which translations can never positively compare, and his recognition that a text (whether translated or just reread in the source language) can lose or gain meaning in time and space allow for readings of translations that highlight positive gain in the target language/culture.

Although Borges is now an accepted authority figure for many scholars of translation, most schools of thought in translation studies still favor the source text/culture when dealing with culture-specific items or knowledge (often called CSIs in the literature). In other words, while

several groups of academics and translators in translation studies—Descriptive Translation Studies (or the “Manipulation School”) and scholars who follow Steiner’s “hermeneutic motion” could serve as just two examples—find real value in translations themselves, most scholars who discuss culture-specific items or knowledge do so in terms of what is lost from the source text or culture when a text moves from source to target via translation. The very definition of CSIs suggests that they only exist on the side of the source culture/text.

Three examples from different types of translation studies scholarship should make this bias quite clear. First, Javier Franco Aixelá defines the very concept of CSI, in an essay with theoretical value for a broad range of translation studies scholars, as follows: “Those textually actualized items whose function and connotations in a source text involve a translation problem in their transference to a target text, whenever this problem is a product of nonexistence of the referred item or of its different intertextual status in the cultural system of the readers of the target text” (58). For Franco Aixelá, a CSI exists only when the target culture is lacking, not the other way around.²⁹ Mona Baker takes a similar approach in her textbook for translators—*In Other Words: A Coursebook on Translation*. She lists “culture-specific concepts” as the first of several “common problems of non-equivalence,” and like Franco Aixelá, she defines these concepts as though they only exist in the source culture: “The source-language word may express a concept which is totally unknown in the target culture. The concept in question may be abstract or concrete; it may relate to a religious belief, a social custom or even a type of food. Such concepts are often referred to as ‘culture-specific’” (19). Finally, Birgit Nedergaard-Larsen, in an article specific to “culture-bound problems” in film subtitles, notes that “culture-bound elements” can be cultural, linguistic, or the inherent com-

29 Franco Aixelá emphasizes that CSIs are context-based and that the same item, experience, or idea might be a problem when attempting to enter one specific target language/culture while not being a problem in the translation to a different language or culture. In his terms, however, the context never shifts to notice gain on the side of the target, only loss. “[I]n translation a CSI does not exist of itself, but as a result of conflict arising from any linguistically represented reference in a source text which, when transferred to a target language, poses a translation problem due to the nonexistence or to the different value (whether determined by ideology, usage, frequency, etc.) of the given item in the target language culture” (57).

bination of the two as they “exist in the source language culture” (209). She offers a compelling case study of Danish and Swedish subtitles for French films—analyzing diverse strategies for translators—but the “culture-bound elements” in discussion are always those of the French source.

What most of the literature about culture-specific items, knowledge, or elements seems to miss is the somewhat obvious fact that the target language and culture also have culture-specific knowledge that does not exist in the source language and culture. So, while a translator has to wrestle with how to bring CSIs from the source into the target, she can also benefit from culture-specific knowledge inherent to the target culture and language to deepen, develop, or even improve the source text. George Steiner’s idea of “hermeneutic motion” (312) suggests as much by arguing that a translation can “enhance” (316) a source text and by proposing that “the real translation infers that the source text possesses potentialities, elemental reserves, as yet unrealized by itself” (318). A translator can use culture-specific knowledge from the target culture to bring a source text’s latent meaning to the forefront of the target text, changing the source text, but in terms that the source text already insinuates. Susan Bassnett’s thoughts on loss and gain in translation also leave a space for this type of achievement. She states: “[i]t is again an indication of the low status of translation that so much time should have been spent on discussing what is lost in the transfer of a text from SL to TL whilst ignoring what can also be gained, for the translator can at times enrich or clarify the SL text as a direct result of the translation process” (39).

Returning to Wang Yangle’s translation of “El jardín” as “交叉小径的花园,” we find this enhancement, enrichment, or improvement of the source text via the translation’s treatment of *xiangqi*. Chinese chess remains unstated in Borges’s source text, but “El jardín” is teeming with cultural potential that is unleashed when the text crosses from Spanish to Chinese. The culture-specific knowledge of the Chinese reader pulls *xiangqi* from its latency—in a source text that features a conversation between a Chinese national and a British sinologist about the esoteric theory of time espoused by the ancestor of the former—to the surface of the target text. Or, to follow a metaphor more apt for a garden, the Chinese reader’s culture-specific knowledge nourishes the seed of *xiangqi* that is buried beneath the soil (the focus on time) in “El jardín” so that it sprouts

and grows to full fruition in Wang Yangle's translation. This growth is gain, not loss, and it depends on the translation process itself.³⁰

Wang Yangle's Chinese translation of "El jardín" also offers intriguing thoughts about the us/them or inside/outside dichotomy, about what a text and a culture can gain from being viewed from within and from without. Wang Zehao claims that Borges offers China a valuable reading of its culture by commenting on it from the outside (34). Our article suggests that Chinese readers offer a valuable improvement on Borges's source text from the inside—by being part of the target group and reading the translation within and as a part of Chinese culture. However, for the rest of the world—for readers of "El jardín" in its Spanish source language and in any of its other translated versions in various tongues—Wang Yangle's Chinese version of "El jardín" comes from the outside and enriches the text by emphasizing *xiangqi*, a culture-specific element that is clear to readers of the story in Chinese. Just as Borges's viewpoint as a cultural/literary critic gives China something both novel and worthwhile, so too Wang Yangle's translation of "El jardín" provides something new and valuable to the field of Borges studies.

The final upshot of our analysis of *xiangqi* in "El jardín" is what the reading says about translation—that translation can be a positive process, a site of gain rather than loss. Our interpretation supports Borges's own thoughts on translation, and it suggests that Wang Yangle's "交叉小径的花园" is, indeed, very much a Borges text. While we hesitate to argue that the Chinese translation is *better* than the Spanish-language original, we do not shy away from claiming that the translation offers a richer understanding of the latent Chinese culture with which the source text engages. Wang Yangle's translation emphasizes the hidden theme and structure of *xiangqi* in "El jardín de senderos que se bifurcan," and it creates a text

30 That this gain in translation happens in Chinese seems fitting since Borges, who did not know Chinese, was intrigued enough by Chinese literature and history to write eight book reviews of Chinese texts—texts that he could not read in the original. Hubert examines these reviews in "Sinology on the Edge" and argues that in these pieces "Borges acts as a Sinologist, a critic and translator of Chinese literature. Given Borges's ignorance of Mandarin and the scarce scholarship on Chinese culture in Argentina, Borges translates without an original and defines a personal canon" (83). She avers that these book reviews demonstrate Borges's ideas about "the superiority of translation over the original" (89).

that gains Chinese cultural significance without losing Borges's touch. “交叉小径的花园” becomes a garden in which both time and Chinese chess perpetually fork, a 象棋迷宫 [xiangqi mi gong] or chess labyrinth that serves as a practical example of Borges's radically egalitarian theory of translation.

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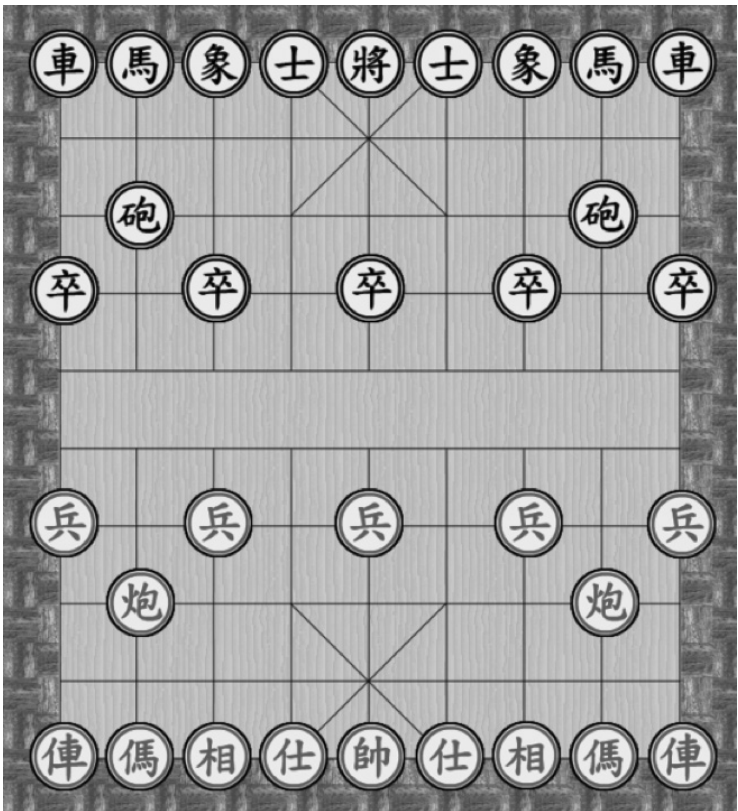


Figure 1: Xiangqi board, with black pieces (at the top) rotated for readability.

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